

## Between Berlin and Tel-Aviv

### The Weakening of the Stigma of the *Yored*

The Zionist ethos has traditionally regarded emigration from Israel as a betrayal of the national vision, as a sign of a regrettable and unfortunate weakness, both of the individual and society. This attitude found expression in the derogatory term *yored*, used to designate an emigrant. The word *yored*, a noun form deriving from the Hebrew verb “to descend”, points an accusatory finger, implicitly making a strong, negative judgment on the emigrant’s personal value system and priorities. This is in contrast to the term *oleh*, which derives from the Hebrew verb “to ascend” and has displaced the more neutral term “immigrant” to refer to those who immigrate to Israel, thus conferring upon immigrants and the act of immigration a positive connotation. In effect, the word *yored* brands the emigrants as “traitors and defectors”. This negative branding was the consequence of what was perceived as their turning their backs on an otherwise unified and idealistic society, totally committed to its fight for survival. Indeed, the negative branding of the emigrants may have been a bit cruel, but it was also perhaps necessary under the prevailing circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

As Israel opened up to the world and transitioned to competitive market economics, the antagonism toward emigrants lessened and the notion of Israelis living in other countries began to gain at least a silent legitimacy. The word *yored* began to appear less and less frequently in the media, to the point where it practically disappeared from public discourse.

The current revolution in communications and in mobility—reduced airfares, fast Internet connections and international cellular networks—has made

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1 Gur Elroi, *Immigrants: Jewish Immigration to Eretz Israel at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute Jerusalem (Ed.), 2004 (Hebrew); Yehoshua Kaniel, “Extent of emigration from Eretz Israel during the periods of the First and Second Aliyah (1882–1914)”, in: *Cathedra*, Vol. 73, 1994, pp. 115–138; Meir Margalit, “The longing to emigrate: On Jews who did not manage to realize their desire to emigrate from Eretz Israel during the 1920s”, in: *Cathedra*, Vol. 125/2007, pp. 78–98 (Hebrew); Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, Tel-Aviv: UC Press, 1997 (Hebrew).

spending time outside the homeland, even for long periods, part of the lifestyle of businessmen, scientists, doctors, lawyers, communications specialists, artists, athletes and others. In Israel as well, population mobility began to be seen as natural, particularly among educated and creative people seeking to inspire and be inspired, to learn, to break into new markets and to maximize profits. The digital communications revolution has also contributed to reducing the stigma, for it enables Israelis abroad to maintain ongoing contacts with their friends and relatives back home.

The creeping legitimacy of emigration also stemmed from changes in the ethical code, and mainly from the growing dominance of a more and more individualistic and materialistic societal orientation. The housing crisis and the cost of living have helped mitigate the image from another direction. As parents became aware of how difficult it is for their children, members of Generation Y, to make a living and purchase an apartment in Israel, they began to support their children's decision to try their luck overseas.<sup>2</sup>

Today, not only does Israeli society condemn emigrants less, many Israelis even express admiration for those who have made it in the 'international league' and see those emigrants who have succeeded as 'the pride of Israel'.

## The Comeback of the *Yerida* Discourse

Nevertheless, the discourse on *yerida*—emigration—refuses to disappear from the Israeli agenda. Recently it has reemerged in a new form, reflecting the economic crisis and the sense of uncertainty and despair in the wake of worsening security risks.

This new discourse began in 2002 when in preparation for the upcoming 2003 elections then Knesset member Moshe Arens proposed extending the right to vote to Israelis living abroad. Data collected on the *yordim*—emigrant Israelis—leading up to discussion of this proposal in the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee indicated that at any given moment there are approximately one million Israelis living abroad, half of whom have the right to vote.

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2 For the sociological profile of the Israeli Generation Y, cf. Oz Almog and Tamar Almog, *Generation Y – Research Report*, Haifa: The Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research Press, 2015. (Hebrew)

The data also showed that the highest rates of leaving Israel are among those between the ages of 20 and 34.<sup>3</sup>

As expected, politicians from the different camps used this information to goad one another. When it became clear that voting by Israelis living abroad was liable to skew the entire election campaign, the proposal was diluted to grant the right to vote only to official Israeli delegates abroad, amounting only to a few hundred people.

A survey by the German Adenauer Foundation conducted in 2007, one year after the Second Lebanon War, again resulted in the waking of the sleeping giant. The survey showed that close to 42% of Israelis are entitled to citizenship in one of the countries of the European Union or in the United States and Canada based upon citizenship held by their parents or grandparents. While many of these people plan on continuing to live in Israel, they nevertheless are taking action to acquire foreign citizenship for themselves and their families 'just in case'.<sup>4</sup> The fact that dual citizenship is permitted in Israel has contributed to the rising demand. Many are also purchasing property abroad, both for investment purposes and to acquire an additional family home, an act that also indirectly gives them an additional citizenship or at least another national affinity.

Another survey was conducted the same year by Gallup World Poll. Twenty percent of the Israelis who participated in the survey claimed that they would permanently emigrate to another country if given the opportunity.<sup>5</sup> Here we must point out that these findings contradicted, and continue to contradict<sup>6</sup>, another finding that appeared in the same survey and that was suppressed in the reports: The average score Israelis gave to their quality of life was much higher than the world average and relatively close to that of Denmark, which is at the top of the chart. Nonetheless, even then another trend began to emerge, one that characterizes Israel to the present day. Among those in the younger age groups,

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3 Cf. *Smadar Shmueli*, "Israel 2002: Around a million Israelis live abroad", in: *Ynet*, March 5, 2002. (Hebrew)

4 Mitchell Barak and Lars Hänsel, *Measuring the Attitudes of Israelis Towards the European Union and its Member States*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung/Keevoon Research (Eds.), slides 29–30, 2007.

5 Gerver Torres, *Gallup World Poll and Migration. Sixth Coordination Meeting on International Migration, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, United Nations Secretariat, New York, 2007. (Hebrew)

6 Even though Israelis love to complain about their country, in the most recent World Happiness Report Israel ranked 11th on the scale of citizen satisfaction. This report measured the quality of life in 158 nations around the world during the years 2012–2014. Cf. John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeffrey Sachs (Eds.), *World Happiness Report 2015*, 2015.

the tendency to want to live outside of Israel is stronger than among the older Israeli population.

The public reverberation aroused by these surveys led the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption to formulate a plan to encourage emigrant Israelis to return to Israel. Another reason for formulating this plan was the sharp drop in the number of new immigrants to Israel because the immigration potential from the former Soviet Union had been exhausted.<sup>7</sup>

Discussions surrounding the topic of *yerida* took on a new twist following the publication of a comprehensive report by economists Arik Gold and Omer Moav entitled “Israel’s Brain Drain”<sup>8</sup>. According to them, what is worrisome about *yerida* is that thousands of Israeli hi-tech personnel and scientists have no choice but to work and live abroad.

Before the publication of these studies, which were extensively reviewed in the media and also discussed in the Knesset, the image of the *yored* was of a superficial and greedy individual. After their publication, *yerida* became associated with the leading echelons of Israeli society. The focus of accusation also underwent a symbolic conversion. Instead of accusing the *yordim* of treason, the accusatory finger was pointed at the state that has betrayed them.<sup>9</sup>

Another study published in 2008 by economist Dan Ben-David added fuel to the fire. This study claimed that the ratio of Israeli academic faculty members in the United States to their counterparts in Israel is higher than the ratio in every other country.<sup>10</sup>

The young people’s protest of 2011 again brought the issue of emigration from Israel to the public agenda. This time it was tied to the burning and worrisome issue of the cost of living—particularly in terms of food and housing—and of inequality in shouldering the burden of societal responsibilities. Toward the end of June 2011, an article appeared in the op-ed section of *Ynet*, written

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7 Yael Bernovsky, “The number of immigrants to Israel is at an 18-year low”, in: *Ynet*, December 23, 2007. (Hebrew)

8 Arik Gold and Omer Moav, *Israel’s Brain Drain*, Shalem College, Economic-Social Institute, May 2006. (Hebrew)

9 Data from the research on the topic of “Israel’s Brain Drain” was presented by Dr. Omer Moav from Shalem College and discussed at the Knesset Science and Technology Committee, June 28, 2006. (Hebrew)

10 For example, it was reported that the number of Israeli academic faculty members in the United States is 25% of the total number of academic faculty members in Israel. Dan Ben-David, “A canary called the brain drain”, in: *Haaretz*, March 10, 2008. (Hebrew)

by a young man named Yoni Geva who identified himself as a director and producer living in Tel Aviv. His outcry was genuine:

*We gave the best three years of our lives to defend this country with our bodies, in exchange for a miniscule and symbolic salary. . . . We are the ones who look to the countries of the West and understand that our purchasing power is much less than that of our contemporaries in the rest of the world. We earn less than they do and pay more. We are starting to think to ourselves, at first quietly and then out loud, that maybe it would be better to leave. . . . Among ourselves, in the pubs and cafes and at work, this question comes up again and again: maybe we should immigrate to a place where with an average salary you can buy a car, rent an apartment, buy food at a reasonable price and enjoy convenient public transportation. Yes. The longings will be tough, but when we look at the future and do the simple math, the numbers tell us we will not be able to live here with self-respect, never mind raise a family. . . I am not planning on leaving. I love this country with all my heart. My family and my friends and my culture are here. But I would be lying if I said that I didn't do the math, didn't check the numbers, and right now they are against me and against my friends. And it feels like no one really cares. This is what we are fighting for.<sup>11</sup>*

A few days later, an article that was no less moving appeared in the same section. This article titled “The Grass in Germany is Greener”<sup>12</sup> was written by a 26-year-old student named Tsachi Barda who lives in Berlin:

*After three years of service in the IDF, five years working for a salary barely reaching the average and one failed attempt at academic studies I was capable of paying for, I'd had enough. I decided to pack up my notebooks and try my luck overseas. I don't like the word 'yored'. Israel is still my home, the place I love, the place I want to return to. I don't feel like someone who has turned his back on the country, but rather as someone that the country has turned its back on. I feel that even though I gave*

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11 Yoni Geva, “I'm not threatening to emigrate, I'm not promising to stay”, in: *Ynet*, July 30, 2011. (Hebrew)

12 Tsachi Barda, “The grass in Germany is greener”, in: *Ynet*, August 4, 2011. (Hebrew)

*three years of my life, went on to pay 23% income tax on a salary that in any case is not really enough to cover more than rent, transportation and food unless your parents help you—and I didn't receive the minimal help—there is no chance to set out on my life as an adult without a daily struggle for my existence.*

Barda went on to list the advantages of life as a student in Berlin:

*Public universities in Germany do not charge tuition. This is not only the case for citizens but for everyone. . . . My rent for a 60 sq. meter apartment with a roommate and a balcony in the center of Cottbus, a 15-minute walk from campus, is 1100 shekels per month. This includes electricity, water, taxes, heat, Internet and telephone. Students are entitled to a 50% discount on public transportation, and for 1000 shekels per year I get a card that entitles me to ride free of charge on intercity and intra-city transportation in all the cities of the district. The public transportation operates seven days a week, 20 hours a day. . . . When I want to relax and enjoy myself, I pay between 10 and 15 shekels for a glass of beer and a similar amount for a serving of shawarma. And when I felt like taking a vacation, I flew to London for 250 shekels round trip. That's right, less than a flight to Eilat. . . . Instead of trying to keep us, the young people who serve, work in and study in the country, Israel pushes us away and makes the possibility of fighting for the opportunity to live here and build a better future less and less reasonable. I want to return. I miss the people, the sea, Maccabi beer, the Betar soccer games, bamba snacks and hummus. But as time goes by life in Israel seems like a luxury, like something I can allow myself for two or three weeks a year but not as a way of life.*

This article drew a distinct and direct correlation between the cost of living in Israel and emigration and it received hundreds of responses, some derogatory and some supportive. Here is one of them:

*There's no reason to be angry at you. All you did was describe the way things are. That same reality that here in Israel we complain about from morning to night without doing anything about. So now this is the last chance for the society to convince the young people to stay. And here's a*

*hint—cursing those who want to leave is not a good way to start. Good luck to all of us.*

The article was a promo for a growing and heated debate—mainly on *Ynet* and *Facebook*—about young people leaving Israel due to difficulties making ends meet. Each time the ongoing debate was reignited by similar straightforward articles protesting and challenging the socio-economic status quo.

In 2012, the daily newspaper *Haaretz* published a survey indicating that 37% of Israelis are considering moving abroad sometime in the future. For most, the main reason they gave was their difficulty in improving their financial situation. It should be noted that only 2% of those surveyed indicated that they were quite certain they would move to another country. That is, for most this was mainly something they fantasized about, though to be sure even a fantasy expresses a worldview and serves as an ethical gauge.<sup>13</sup>

This identification with the *yordim* by significant numbers of Israelis led to a sense that not everyone is against the emigrants and not everyone sees them as traitors. Many naturally regarded emigration as being tied to the economic situation and the political crisis. In their view, the act of emigrating was a political statement, or at least an understandable step in light of what was described as the country's betrayal of its citizens. The message was the following: "You have betrayed us, so don't be surprised if we leave."

The sense of belonging among Israelis is also progressively weakening. Many believe that, in a process which has been going on for dozens of years, the country itself has unraveled the thread of belonging connecting it to a large number of its citizens. The political corruption, the unequal shouldering of the burden of societal responsibilities and the unequal distribution of resources, the crumbling legal system, the deterioration in its institutions of education, the vulgarity in human relations—all these have led to the feeling that Israel is becoming more religious, more nationalistic and more materialistic with a more self-centered citizenry, so much so that people who define themselves as humanistic have difficulty relating and connecting to it.

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13 The tendency to consider moving to another country was significantly greater among those who voted for the left, people between the ages of 30 and 49, secular people and salaried employees, as well as among those living in the south and in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. (It is important to note that the work on the article and the survey were carried out before the Pillar of Defense operation in Gaza, though at the time tensions were escalating in the south, as were the winds of war with Iran.) Cf. *Sivan Klingvale and Shani Shila*, "I have another country: Why are almost 40% of Israelis considering leaving?", in: *Haaretz*, December 14, 2012. (Hebrew)

## A Tempest in a Pudding Container

In July 2013 a young man named Chen Ben-Ari published a provocative and symbolic post on the *Statusim Metsitsim* (Status Hunter) Facebook page. The first lines resonated:

*I am 27 years old, the grandson of a man who fought in the Palmach, who together with his comrades raised the mythological Ink Flag (handmade Israeli flag raised during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War to mark the capture of Eilat), who crossed the canal with his pickup truck in the Yom Kippur War and who was one of the founders of Kibbutz Malkiah, and I've decided to leave Israel. Why? Because I am a patriot!*

He finished the post with the following words: *I am leaving Israel. I'll be back when things are normal here! So long!!*

As expected, most of the talkbacks were critical of the writer. But there were more than a few respondents, most of them young, who praised his honesty and supported his contentions. The post received no less than 9850 likes and 3300 shares.

Around the time Ben-Ari posted this status, another young man named Ben Segev posted a status with a photograph of a receipt listing purchases he had made in a store in Berlin. At the end of the status he wrote: *Do you want to guess how much I paid? The total was 22.70 Euros, or 107 shekels. How much would this purchase have cost in Israel? Twice as much? Three times?*

A few months later, Matan Hodorov, Channel Ten's young economics reporter, broadcast a series of three reports on the evening news describing the sad economic plight of young people in Israel. In the wake of these reports, the reverberations caused by the discussion grew in intensity and the number of participants in the talkback threads escalated significantly. The three reports focused on different elements contributing to the young people's situation: "The Pensionless Generation" focused on the inferior retirement arrangements that people under the age of 50 can expect in the future; "This Crazy Land" examined whether the state has an interest in raising the price of housing for young couples; and finally "The New Yordim" documented the move of young Israelis to



Europe and the United States due to the high cost of living in Israel.<sup>14</sup> The interviewees in the series of reports were single young people and those with families living in prosperous locations across the globe—New Jersey, London and the crowning glory, Berlin. They all enjoy quality of life stemming from, among other things, the ability to live comfortably on their incomes. As is customary in journalistic reports, these reports did not show all the implications of this uprooting from Israel. Yet the effect of young people who not only did not attempt to justify their choice to live abroad but rather flung accusations at Israel and tied their decision to the 2011 protest (in a sense saying, “We told you so!”) made its point. Hodorov did not make do only with interviews. In order to validate his findings, he initiated a survey which found that “no less than 51 percent of Israelis have considering leaving Israel due to the high cost of living and the deepening housing crisis. This finding does not of course include those who have already taken this step.”<sup>15</sup>

The media went wild. Even Yair Lapid, Minister of Finance, was quick to respond: “Excuse me if I’m a bit impatient with people who are willing to toss the only country the Jews have into the garbage because Berlin is more comfortable.” This grumbling response from someone already broadly perceived by the media and by many young people as maker of false promises only fanned the flames.

*Ynet*, which even before this had given broad coverage to the distress of young people in Israel, jumped on the bandwagon and published a series of articles (most written by young people who had emigrated) under the provocative heading: “Immigrate or Stay?” This series prompted thousands of emotional responses and opinion pieces.<sup>16</sup> Other communications media also devoted articles to this issue, and the Internet was flooded with responses.

Critics wrote irate and sarcastic responses along the following lines: “You don’t leave your homeland simply for a few thousand dollars a year.” “There are

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14 In June 2014 the series of reports on “The New *Yordim*” won the Bnai Brith organization’s annual award for journalism.

15 *Matan Hodorov*, “The new *yordim*”, in: Nana 10, October 3, 2013. (Hebrew)

16 The titles of these articles say it all: “Corner of Alexanderplatz and Rothschild”; “Back from Australia to give you another chance”; “An apartment in Kiryat Ono costs the same as a street in Berlin”; “Have connections, or purchase a bathroom”; “In London despair is more comfortable”; “I’m not comfortable in Rome”; “Addio Milano, Ciao Raanana”; “My heart is in Tel Aviv and I’m in New Jersey”; “This is not the country where I grew up: The immigrant’s dilemma”; “Will the Holocaust stop us from moving to Berlin?”; “I’m also an Israeli”; “My brothers, the Milky pudding heroes”; “When Berlin was called Dimona”; “I discovered America and I’ve come back for good”; “Stopping in Thailand on the way to Berlin”; “I leave the past in Italy, Israel is the future”.

so many countries in the world, so why does it have to be Germany?” “Everything is cheap in Berlin. Especially for Jews the gas is free . . . and showers are on the house.” “Don’t forget that the soap is free, haircuts are free, you don’t need an identity card because the number is marked on your hand!” “They are living an illusion. Their deeply rooted anti-Semitism has never disappeared.” “We’ll see you when the skinheads finish with the blacks and take you on.” “There’s nothing like living with and getting a passport from those who murdered your family.” “I heard that Dachau is beautiful at this time of year.” “I heard that the work in Berlin will set you free.”

This debate would have died out quickly, as do most fiery debates in the media, if an Israeli living in Berlin had not in September 2014 opened a *Facebook* community called *Olim LeBerlin* (Immigrating to Berlin). He also posted a picture of a receipt and wrote: “One of the things we most miss from Israel is Milky chocolate pudding. Note the picture of the price of the Berlin version of Milky, which is also bigger in Germany—only 0.19 Euros. That’s 0.80 shekels, while in Israel Milky costs more than 3 shekels per unit.” This status, which was also quoted on *Ynet*, ignited a huge media bonfire.<sup>17</sup>

Naor Narkis, the provocateur who received media coverage on this matter in Germany as well, at first chose to remain anonymous, which only served to heighten interest. But later, when the pressure in the media increased, his name and identity were exposed in an interview for Channel Ten news. He was revealed as a 25-year-old who answered the stereotypical Israeli description of the salt of the earth. In the past, he had served as chair of the Ramat Gan municipal student council, had studied at Blich High School and had served in the IDF as an officer in the research division of the intelligence unit after being trained in the prestigious Havatselot program.

In an interview Narkis attacked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:

*All day long he is busy dealing with Iran, the Islamic State and Hamas. I do not belittle these matters, they are dangerous matters, but more dangerous is his total disregard for the way Israelis live. . . . Our life has to be good for us to stay here. Maybe your generation that was born in the shadow of the Holocaust feels it is sufficient simply to survive in Israel.*

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 17 Merav Kristal, “An Israeli in Berlin: A Milky-like dessert costs 87 agurot”, in: *Ynet*, October 5, 2014; cf. Neri Livne, “Berlin for young people”, in: *Haaretz*, October 9, 2013 (Hebrew); Tal Shneider, “Thanks to Berlin for opening our eyes”, in: *Maariv online*, October 7, 2014. (Hebrew)

*MGeneration Y says to you, yes, you have to survive, but we need to live well in Israel in order to be there. If things are not sufficiently good in Israel, people will leave. I am a Zionist and I need to live well.*

He went on to tell the reporter, who by that time had received more than 10,000 responses:

*I invite the prime minister to read responses from Israelis who say that I am afraid to make my home in Israel because I won't have money. Do you know what has to happen for a 69-year-old woman in Israel to write me and ask, 'How can I move to Berlin?' Let the prime minister do something about that. It's his personal failure that all the lines to the foreign consulates in Israel are full of people requesting visas. It's embarrassing that Israeli citizens stay here simply because they have no other choice.<sup>18</sup>*

Tying these scathing remarks protesting the high cost of living to the call to emigrate, in particular the call to emigrate to the capital of Germany with all its symbolic associations, only added fuel to the nationalist fire. What intensified the significance of these remarks was that they were made by a young person who would be considered by most to be both educated and normative. On the one hand, the *Olim LeBerlin Facebook* community attracted more and more supporters (with more than 15,000 members) and led to the emergence of other communities on the social network that encourage and help Israelis relocate overseas (immigrating to Canada, immigrating to Miami, immigrating to New York and others as well). On the other hand, anger and social criticism of the open call to emigrate increased and spread. *Facebook* turned into an arena of struggle in the stormy conflict between right and left, or more precisely, between Bibi's supporters and his detractors.<sup>19</sup>

At this point the Minister of Finance also changed his tune. Right before the budget was approved and at the height of the renewed protest against the cost of living in Israel, he made an appearance in the *Ynet* studio, stating: "These folks are right. We'll initiate supervision of product pricing."<sup>20</sup>

18 [N.N.], "Initiator of the Milky protest exposed: Netanyahu is busy only with Iran and ISIS and has neglected the Israelis", in: *Ynet*, October 19, 2014. (Hebrew)

19 On the media coverage see "The Milky Protest" in *Wikipedia* in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olim\\_L\\_Berlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olim_L_Berlin) [last accessed: November 30, 2015].

20 *Atila Shumplevi and Moran Azulai*, "Lapid to *Ynet* on the Berlin protest: These folks are right.

The discourse on the topic of *yerida* was rekindled once again in the wake of the 2014 Operation Protective Edge in Gaza, which worsened the tensions between right and left, and again led to serious considerations regarding the vulnerability of the State of Israel. Another factor in renewing the discourse on *yerida* was the deepening political crisis, which ultimately led to early elections and a change in the government. This time the trigger for the stormy debate was a provocative article published by journalist Rogel Alpher in *Haaretz* under the controversial heading, “I need to leave the country.” The article ended with the following words:

*It is clear to me that Israel offers me a bum deal and there are far better deals out there in the world. Like any parents who believe that their children have no patriotic duty toward the Israel of today, and they do not need to risk their lives or die serving it, I have no doubt that I am doing them wrong by raising them here.<sup>21</sup>*

Alpher is not a member of Generation Y and it is doubtful whether most of the young people from that generation can identify with the critical argument he makes. On the other hand, clearly he has expressed a mood that is becoming more prevalent, without regard for political orientation: the consideration of whether to live in Israel is not only not ideological, and perhaps not even primarily not ideological, but rather functional—“how comfortable will life be for me here?” This was also reflected in the type of responses to Alpher on the social network.

## To Live in the Homeland of the Murderers

No one knows exactly how many Israelis live in Berlin. Estimates range from 17,000 to 40,000. The Israeli population of the city is diverse: single people, couples (including Israelis married to Germans), artists, salaried workers, business

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We'll initiate supervision of product pricing”, in: *Ynet*, October 7, 2014. (Hebrew)

21 Rogel Alpher, “I need to leave the country”, in: *Haaretz*, August 31, 2014 (Hebrew). The article attracted a sharp response from Prof. Yehuda Bauer and a no less sharp response from Alpher. Others joined in this debate in *Haaretz* and on *Facebook*, among them Uri Avneri, Prof. Carlo Strenger and Ilana Hammerman.

owners, students and others. Experts estimate that a large numbers of Israelis living in the city, if not all of them, are members of Generation Y.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that not all these Israelis, and perhaps not even most of them, consider themselves immigrants. Most are potential immigrants who are examining the possibility of living in Germany, most after one to three years outside of Israel. Among them are those who have lived in Berlin quite a few years, even as many as ten, but are still not decided about their choice. Only a few of them are veteran immigrants, most of these over the age of 35.

While from a demographic perspective, the scope of immigration to Berlin is negligible, it still arouses curiosity. It is superfluous to note that Berlin is not just any European city but is rather the capital of the Third Reich, with all the historical, moral and symbolic associations that go along with this. Ostensibly it could be expected that the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Holocaust victims would recoil from living in such an emotionally charged place and even more so from adopting the German language and culture. Less than seventy years ago, strong protests were held in Israel against the Reparations Agreement with Germany, and through the 1970s purchasing German products was considered an abomination. And yet despite this emotional baggage, it seems that many Israelis are leaving their homeland and flocking to Berlin to build a future for themselves, with many others planning to follow.

Current surveys have shown that the image of Germany in the view of the Israeli public has undergone an amazing metamorphosis. In effect, on average most Israelis see Germany today in a more positive light than Germans see Israel.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Osborne Clarke legal and business experts, *Germany: A Non Start-Up Nation?*, Israel Innovation Conference, Tel Aviv, May 22, 2014; *Ofer Aderet*, "Tel Aviv takes Berlin", in: *Haaretz*, October 6, 2013.

The Israeli consul in Germany said in an interview with the *Maariv* newspaper: "It is not possible to define who qualifies as an Israeli living here. Is it someone who is studying in Germany for three months? Or perhaps someone who has come for a year? Or maybe someone who stayed longer or who went back before that? I assume there are around forty thousand Israelis in Berlin, some with Romanian or Polish passports. You can say that Berlin is one of Israel's mid-sized established cities. According to Israeli law everyone who lives in another country is supposed to register at the embassy as a foreign resident. Very few do this, and only if they have some interest in doing so." Cf. Gerver Torres, *Gallup World Poll and Migration, Sixth Coordination Meeting of International Migration, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, United Nations Secretariat, New York, 2007.

23 *Eldad Beck*, "A Different Germany", *Yedioth Sefarim*, 2014; Tuvia Tenenbom, *Catch the Jew!* Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2013 (Hebrew); Gilad Margalit and Yfaat Weiss (Eds.), *Memory and Amnesia: The Holocaust in Germany*, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2005 (Hebrew). Surveys conducted by the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* indicate that between 1998 and 2010 the image of Germany in Israel improved significantly. The rate of agreement with the notion that Germany today is

It seems that time has had an impact. The generous economic and defense aid to Israel, the good and strong political relations between the heads of state, the daily and wide-ranging contacts between Germans and Israelis (tourism, science, art, youth delegation exchanges and the like), the impact of market economics (German products are considered high quality) and the media (many today associate Germany with the multicultural and brilliant Bundesliga soccer league and the German teams broadcast on the sports channels)<sup>24</sup>—all this can explain the change in the image of Germany. Yet still there is a big difference between a positive image and becoming a target destination for Israeli emigrants. Why did this happen? In addition to the image, three other factors have contributed: changing Israeli values, including the discourse on immigration; the special nature of Berlin as a young European capital; and the special nature of Generation Y, whose members have begun to look at the world and especially at emigration from Israel with different eyes than their parents.

Berlin is one of the most popular cities in Europe for tourists and immigrants in general and for young people in particular.<sup>25</sup> It has all the advantages of a large

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among the countries that are friendly to Israel increased from 41.5% in 1998 to 60% in 2010; agreement that Germany is among the world's most enlightened nations increased from 61% to 76%; and agreement that hatred of foreigners in Germany resembles that in every other nation in the world increased from 43% to 59.5%. Similarly, the belief that Germany today is similar to Nazi Germany decreased from 43% to 32%. The interviewees believe that even though at the time most of the German people were involved, at least emotionally, in the destruction of the Jews, today the degree of hatred of foreigners in Germany is similar to that in other countries and will not lead to the rise of a Nazi regime. Cf. Efraim Ya'ar and Yasmin Alkalai, "Political and Social Attitudes of Israeli Youth: Trends over Time", Ralf Hexel and Roby Nathanson (Eds.), *All of the Above: Identity Paradoxes of Young People in Israel*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, December 2010, pp. 121–217. Yet contrary to the positive change in recent years in the image of Germany in the eyes of Israelis, the Germans exhibit an opposite trend. Dr. Arie Kizel, head of the Department of Learning, Instruction and Teaching at the University of Haifa, headed an Israeli team that together with a partner team from Germany examined textbooks in the two countries. Kizel stated the following in an interview in the *Makor Rishon* newspaper: "A large portion of the German population, around 40 percent, believes that the Israelis behave like Nazis in their treatment of the Palestinians, including the accusation that Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians. From my examination of textbooks I already understood that the trend in Germany is becoming increasingly negative. But the real surprise was in the Israeli textbooks. This may be astonishing and may even elicit outrage in some, but Germany is represented in junior high school and high school textbooks in Israel in a much more open and multidimensional manner than Israel is represented to German students. The Israeli textbooks focus on German culture and national development in historical contexts from the Middle Ages onward. The German researchers also found that Israel also refers to 'all the non-Jewish groups that were persecuted by the Nazis,' i.e., homosexuals, gypsies and all those who did not fit into the category of the 'superior race.'" Cf. *Amnon Lord*, "Surprise: Here's How Israel Looks in German Textbooks", in: *Makor Rishon*, July 21, 2015. (Hebrew)

24 Cf. *Eyal Gartman*, "Is there a different Germany? Yes, and not only in soccer", in: *Ynet*, June 29, 2008. (Hebrew)

25 Up to 2000 Germany's immigration policy stated that "Germany is not an immigration country." Germany treated the migrants in the country, and particularly foreign workers, as people who

city, including convenient transportation, interesting sites, an impressive river and green parks. The cost of living is among the lowest in Western Europe.<sup>26</sup> The city boasts neighborhoods populated by young people, a broad range of artistic and intellectual activities and of course among the liveliest nightlife scenes on the continent (clubs, bars, restaurants and the like).<sup>27</sup> Indeed Berlin is a global and pluralistic metropolis that welcomes tourists and immigrants.<sup>28</sup> For Israelis, moving to Berlin symbolically and in practice softens the move to Germany, because even though it is the capital, it is the least “German” city in Germany. Furthermore, the Islam that has washed over the large cities of France, Britain and Scandinavia is less dominant in German cities, and this also contributes to Israelis’ sense of security. The Germans also show more sensitivity regarding the safety of Jews living in their country.

It is important to note that the German or European passport held by many of the Israeli immigrants affords them a variety of significant benefits from the government authorities, such as unemployment compensation, scholarships and discounts. Thus Berlin offers outstanding advantages when it comes to higher education: high quality institutions with tuition exemptions and often generous scholarships as well.<sup>29</sup>

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were there temporarily. But a shrinking and aging population led Germany to rethink its policy and to determine that “Germany needs immigrants”, cf. *Friedrich Heckmann*, “From Ethnic Nation to Universalistic Immigrant Integration Germany”, *Friedrich Heckmann and Dominique Schnapper* (Eds.), *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence*, Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, Vol. 7, 2003, pp. 45–78. Today Germany is the second largest country in the Western world, after the United States, with respect to the number of immigrants living in it, both in absolute numbers—close to 11 million—and also as a percentage of the entire population—13.1%, cf. *International Migration Report 2009, 2011*. According to 2011 figures posted on the Berlin municipality website, around 3.2 million people reside in the city, of whom 370,000 or 12% hold foreign citizenship ([www.berlin.de](http://www.berlin.de)). Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are also immigrants with German citizenship (including a considerable number of Israelis living in the city), so that we can assume that the number of immigrants in the city is greater than that mentioned above.

26 *Gerver Torres*, “The new *yordim*: How Berlin became a city of refuge”, in: *nrg*, May 11, 2013; *Lior Friedmann*, “Here’s how Israeli artists conquered Berlin”, in: *Mako*, September 26, 2012.

27 *Lior Cohen*, “Berlin for young people – Recommendations for young people in the city”, in: *Lametafel*, October 22, 2013. In recent years Berlin has become one of the hottest spots in Europe, with vibrant night life, wild parties, great bars, clubs where anything goes, hot gay scenes, as well as cultural centers and performances for those seeking more conventional entertainment.

28 *Yinon Cohen*, “Israeli-born emigrants: Size, destinations and selectivity”, in: *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 52 (1–2), 2011, pp. 45–62; *Ingeborg Beer, Alev Deniz and Hanns-Uve Schwendler*, “Berlin: urban, social and ethnic integration – an urban policy challenge”, *William Neil and Hanns-Uve Schwendler* (Eds.), *Migration and Cultural Inclusion in the European City*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 47–136.

29 In October 2014 Lower Saxony became the last state in Germany to abolish tuition payments at public universities. This means that studying at all government universities in Germany is free of charge. This tuition exemption applies not only to German students but to international students

In recent years Berlin has also established itself as an important arena for the hi-tech industry in general and for start-up companies in particular. Precisely in a country that relies upon heavy industry as the core of its economy, a need arose for companies of a different type that complement the industrial branch and adapt it to the new age.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, young Israelis meet young Germans during their after-army trips to the Far East and South America, as well as through youth meetings in Germany and in Israel. The close and cordial ties created in these meetings also help ease the decision to move to Germany.

Quite a few Israeli artists are attracted to Germany because Israel is simply too small for them and they have difficulty surviving both economically and professionally. People from the radical left also receive a warm welcome in Berlin because Germany is a hotbed for the critical left, including strident political criticism of Israel.<sup>31</sup>

Germany is also home to a not insignificant community of Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union,<sup>32</sup> and their organizations, alongside other Jewish organizations like Chabad, create Jewish niches in the German space (synagogues, interest groups and the like) that also meet the needs of the immigrants from Israel.<sup>33</sup>

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as well. A lawmaker in the Lower Saxony legislature explained to the German Pulse website that the decision was made "because we do not want higher education to be dependent on parents' wealth." The findings of a report submitted to the Knesset Science and Technology committee in 2014 point to a drop in the rate of Israeli students studying in the United States (from 25% of all Israeli students studying abroad in 2006 to 15% in 2010) compared to a rise in the percent of students studying in Germany and Italy. Nevertheless, the report noted that "the United States is still the main target country for the brain drain", cf. Knesset, Research and Science Center, *Information on Israeli college grads abroad and actions to absorb academics who return to Israel*, January 30, 2014.

30 Ronit Domka, "The city that produces a new start-up every 20 hours", in: *The Marker*, December 28, 2013. (Hebrew)

31 Many developed a real aversion for Israel. The perception is that the country is racist, discriminatory, tramples on human rights, is militaristic and the like. Thus not only does it not bother them to join anti-Israeli organizations abroad, but rather this is an inseparable part of their identity. Paradoxically they remain extremely involved in what is going on in Israel. This feeling has strengthened considerably in recent years among young people with left-leaning tendencies, because there is a sense that the right has settled deeply into politics and that the left is and will remain behind for many years.

32 The government of Germany has invested in rebuilding the Jewish community in the city as part of encouraging many Jews from the Former Soviet Union to settle in Germany and become citizens. Cf. Karin Amit, Olna Bagno, William Bridge et al., "Economic integration of immigrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to four countries: A comparative analysis", in: *Hagira*, Vol. 1, 2012, pp. 51–79; Ynon Cohen, Yitchak Haberfeld, Irena Kogan, "Who went where? Jewish immigration from the Former Soviet Union to Israel, the USA and Germany, 1990–2000", in: *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 17/1, 2011, pp. 7–20.

33 In Germany there are around 120 Jewish communities and 250,000 Jews. A study that examined



And what does Berlin offer for Generation Y? Berlin is appropriate for Generation Y because the German style of work is more responsive to the balances they are seeking in their lives and are unable to find in Israel. One of the young Israelis we interviewed in Berlin stated the following:

*Here you finish work at five. No one expects you to answer an e-mail on the weekend. This makes life much more relaxing and you can have a good time with your friends. When I worked at a hi-tech company in Israel we had a joke that when someone left work at seven we'd say to him, 'ah, half a day today.' In Israel the standard procedure is that the land is on fire and the fires need to be put out. Here there's a strategic plan for twenty years and everything else is serene.*

Yet the following question still hangs in the air: How can it not bother them to live in a country in which some of the murderers and most of their children and grandchildren still live? How can a Jew live in a city that is saturated with memories of that awful time—a city that was the center of the Nazi regime, where the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe was proclaimed?

The answer to this is found in the worldview of Generation Y, which we examined in our research. When your primary motto in life is “take wing on your dream”, it is easier to separate ideological “distractors” from personal interests. One young woman wrote the following:

*I did not leave Israel because of the three shekel difference in the price of this or that cheese or because of the cost of rent. I lived in Tel Aviv and got a fantastic job offer from an international company located in Berlin, and in life you need to know how to take advantage of opportunities. Particularly when the business development is impressive and the salary is as*

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the life patterns of Israelis who immigrated to the United States found that the distance from Israel created a need to draw closer to Judaism. Even though most of the immigrants are not religious, they have adopted a Jewish lifestyle that found expression in “fixed everyday customs, such as keeping kosher, which more than half the Israeli Americans do, celebrating the Sabbath by lighting candles (more than two-thirds of the Israelis), and celebrating the main holidays—Hanukkah and Pesach—as do close to nine out of ten Israelis.” In contrast, “those in the second generation, including those who arrived in North America at a young age, feel at home in the country to which they immigrated and tend more to become assimilated into the majority, both Jewish and non-Jewish.” The researcher believes that it is possible to mitigate or prevent the natural process of assimilation by reinforcing the connection between the children of Israeli immigrants and the local Jewish community. *Lilach Lev-Ari*, “Israeli immigrants in America: Israelis or Americans?”, in: *Kivunim Hadashim*, Vol. 25, 2011, pp. 190–202.

*well. My decision was not based on considerations of being pampered but on rational considerations, the desire to develop a career and mature thoughts about saving for the future. A simple comparison between here and there, responsibilities and rights, earning power and opportunities for independence.*<sup>34</sup>

This is the reason that the emigrants and evidently a large number of their contemporaries who, despite everything, prefer to remain in Israel do not view emigration in dramatic terms and certainly do not perceive it as treason, as did prior generations. So yes, it's true that many made sacrifices on the altar of the Zionist dream. But that was in the past, and today there's a new world. These emigrant Israelis are focused on themselves and on their own self-interest. They are neither cognizant nor conscious of the fact that emigration to Berlin of all places is like a dagger in the hearts of Holocaust survivors. Israelis who move to Berlin do not see the utter insensitivity, the lack of aesthetics and the gross selfishness in the step they have taken.

Ilan Weiss, known as "the tribal chief of the Israelis in Berlin," said in an interview with *nrg*:

*There is an ongoing diminution in Israelis' attitude toward the Holocaust. With time it is passing. I for example am first generation, but young people from the third generation are now arriving. For them the Holocaust is a chapter in history. As time passes the impact becomes less and less. A generation has emerged whose central motif is to have a good time. This is a hedonistic generation that has no problems except for financial problems.*<sup>35</sup>

It also is easier for young people today to emigrate than it was for their parents and for their parents' parents because their outlook is superficial and they do not take the future into consideration.

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- 34 Lish Li Avner, "Should we not move to Berlin because of the Holocaust?", in: *Ynet*, October 14, 2013. Lish Li Avner, 27 years old, works in hi-tech, has been living in Berlin for two years at the time of writing this article, her second time in Berlin after having lived there five years ago.
- 35 Weiss, an insurance agent, set up the website *Yisraelim Beberlin* (Israelis in Berlin), which is the first place that Israelis seeking to settle in the city turn to. He also established the community's monthly meeting called "Israeli Table". In addition, he hosts Jewish humor evenings and has even published two books on this topic. Practically every Israeli immigrant in Berlin has consulted him or at least the website he runs. Cf. Shimri Torres, "The new yordim: How Berlin became a city of refuge", in: *nrg*, May 11, 2013.

In interviews with young people living in Berlin we asked the following questions: On the realistic assumption that you will fall in love with a German man or woman, how will your child feel with one grandparent who is a Holocaust survivor and the other who served in the Wehrmacht? Will it bother you that German will be the mother tongue of your son or daughter? Most answered that this would indeed be a problem but in the same breath stated that at the moment this does not bother them. Many also are not concerned with the significance of the rise of the radical right and Islam in Europe. They prefer to see the friendly Germans and to repress the complex social reality in Europe.

Life abroad is also captivating for young people because in any case they love to remain sitting on the fence in a never-ending between-time, an intermediary period in which they do not have to commit to any long-term life plan or direction. For them, remaining uninvolved either in Israeli politics or in German politics is an ideal situation. And as is customary for this generation, they also join together in urban tribes and share with one another. Berlin offers restaurants and institutions established by Israelis, a *Facebook* community with 7000 members who help one another wade through German bureaucracy, and new friendships and professional relations between Israelis and Germans.<sup>36</sup>

## Does Berlin Pose a Threat to Israel?

The discourse on the *yordim* has always reflected the Israeli tendency to exaggerate. The balance of emigration from Israel to abroad (Israelis who left relative to those who returned to Israel) has been improving since 2001. Indeed, 2012 was the year with the lowest rate of *yordim* in forty years—only 0.7 *yordim* for every 1000 residents. Such a low rate was last seen in the early 1970s during the Yom Kippur War.

Even more significant is the fact that the number of Jews who left Israel since its establishment is negligible compared to the number of immigrants who have come to Israel.<sup>37</sup>

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36 *Lish Li Avner*, “Should we not move to Berlin because of the Holocaust?”, in: *Ynet*, October 14, 2013.

37 The dry statistical figures indicate that in the area of positive immigration, Israel’s situation is much better than that of other countries in the world that absorb large numbers of immigrants, such as the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand, cf. *Sergio Della Pergola*, “The Global Context of Migration to Israel”, Daniel Judah Elazar and Morton Weinfeld (Eds.), *Still Moving: Recent Jewish Migration in Comparative Perspective*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction

The fear, or more precisely the scare tactics, regarding mass emigration from Israel is also not congruent with the actual situation in the country. Despite the high cost of living, the housing crisis and the considerable internal and external

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Publishers, 2000, pp. 13–60; *Yinon Cohen*, “Israeli-born emigrants: Size, destinations and selectivity”, in: *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 52 (1–2), 2007, pp. 45–62. Even Switzerland has a higher rate of outgoing emigration than Israel, despite apparently being the ideal country for its residents and with a population equivalent to that of Israel. Even in absolute numbers, the problem of the *yordim* is not as significant as it tends to be depicted (for emotional and political reasons and also out of ignorance). In 2012, experts from the Central Bureau of Statistics estimated that the number of those who had left Israel since the founding of the state reached a total of 684,000, most of whom lived in the United States and Canada. Of these, 120,000 died abroad. That is to say that today around 570,000 *yordim* live abroad, not counting their children who were born abroad, cf. *Yossi Greenstein*, “Last year the number of emigrants leaving Israel was smaller by only 15.6 people”, in: *nrg*, August 6, 2012 (Hebrew). In effect even the dry figures are exaggerated, for the statistical definition of a *yored* is quite problematic for a number of reasons:

First, the Central Bureau of Statistics defines a *yored* as someone who has lived outside of Israel for more than a year. This definition is so detached from reality that it is hard to believe that a national research institute continues to use it.

Second, a large portion of *yordim* return within a few years and only a minority remain abroad permanently. For example, in 2010 15,600 people emigrated from Israel, 94% Jews (and immigrants from Russia) and 6% Arabs. The net number of *yordim* (after deducting the 10,200 who returned) totaled 5400 people, based on records of border entries and exits of Israelis, cf. *Yossi Greenstein*, “Last year the number of emigrants leaving Israel was smaller by only 15.6 people”, in: *nrg*, August 6, 2012. Israelis are known to be tied by an umbilical cord to their country and it is difficult for them to feel at home elsewhere.

In effect, the border control authorities do not ask every traveler the purpose of his or her trip, so it is difficult to determine who is leaving and for how long. Furthermore, according to Israeli law every Israeli who lives in another country must register at the embassy as a foreign resident. Very few do so, and only those who have some interest in doing so. Most people do not leave in order to emigrate, and only a few declare their intention to leave their homeland forever. For the most part this is a gradual and ongoing process that only sometimes ends in emigration.

Third, calculating the number of *yordim* also includes the descendants of the emigrants with various levels of affinity to Israel. The estimate is that more than one-third of the residents of the United States defined as Israelis are the children of emigrants, though many of them have never lived in Israel and have never even visited. (The 2000 U.S. census shows that 107,000 people reported that their parents or grandparents are Israelis. Of these, 51 percent reported that their country of birth is Israel/Palestine, 39 percent reported that they were born in the United States and 3 percent reported they were born in Russia or another Eastern European country, with the remaining 7 percent born in other countries; taken from the *Wikipedia* entry on *Yerida*).

Fourth, the data on the *yordim* does not distinguish between longtime residents who were born in Israel and new immigrants (*olim*). The rates of *yerida* are greater among the new *olim* who were not absorbed in Israel or who already had made one change, so that another change is not so difficult for them. Some of these *olim* migrate to a third country, almost always in the West, and some return to their countries of origin. (In a discussion in the Knesset Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs it emerged that the rate of *yordim* among the new *olim* was five times higher than among the veteran population. The committee received data from a study conducted by the Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption among those who immigrated to Israel from the countries of the former Soviet Union between 1989 and 2002. The data show that 1.5 in 1000 native-born Israelis left Israel during that period, while among the FSU immigrants, the rate of *yordim* was much higher, reaching 7.4 in 1000. During the period examined, out of 939,000 *olim*, approximately 72,000 (7.6%) left Israel. Of these, 9100 went to Russia and 5250 to the Ukraine. Over the years the rate of *yerida* among the FSU immigrants increased: 3.8% of those who immigrated to Israel in 1990 left during their first five years in Israel. In 1997, 6.7% of those who immigrated left during their first five years in Israel. Cf. *Miri Hasson*, “Emigrants from Israel: Five times more immigrants than veteran Israelis”, in: *ynet*, October 25, 2006. (Hebrew)

security threats, Israel is still an attractive country in international terms. It's not that there are not difficult problems that Israelis must grapple with, but today the neighbor's grass is not as green as it was before. This becomes even clearer in view of rising anti-Semitism in the Western world,<sup>38</sup> which has already led more than a few Jews, mainly from France, to immigrate to Israel. It is also quite evident in light of the economic slowdown and unemployment in Europe and the United States, once desired immigration locations.

In essence, the notion of emigration symbolizing uprooting people from their origins needs updating.<sup>39</sup> In the past emigration entailed social and cultural uprooting, at least to some extent. But in today's global and mobile world of ultra-communication, old notions of emigration and uprooting are no longer relevant. When people move to another country, they do not detach themselves from their homeland. Cellular technology and the Internet enable all of us to remain up-to-date in real time and to stay in constant contact with family members and friends almost everywhere and anytime. Airfares are dropping from year to year, and frequent trips home mitigate the sorrow of separation. In general, moving from one country to another is becoming more and more prevalent worldwide.<sup>40</sup> Today people leave and return for limited periods of time because the world is dynamic. Many people own homes and apartments in several countries, and the rate of international marriages is on the rise, as is the number of people who hold two passports. In general borders have become more open and nationalities are becoming mixed, though the current refugee crisis threatens to change this situation. Today most of us have more than one affinity or one significant identity in our life. Many of us even divide our support for a soccer team between a local team and a team outside of Israel. This is part of the healthy evolutionary process of human beings around the world. Israel has been blessed with talented human capital and it is natural that individual potential cannot

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38 Cf. Ben-Dror Yemini, *The Industry of Lies*, Yedioth Sefarim, 2014 (Hebrew); Tuvia Tenenbom, *Catch the Jew!*, Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2013; *Anshel Pepper*, "In Europe they don't distinguish between Israel and Jews", in: *Haaretz*, August 12, 2014 (Hebrew); *Yisrael Fisher*, "The cover of Newsweek: Why are the Jews again fleeing Europe?", in: *The Marker*, July 30, 2014 (Hebrew); *Tali Farkash*, "Dramatic worsening of anti-Semitism in the wake of Operation Protective Edge", in: *Ynet*, September 11, 2014 (Hebrew); *Adam LeBor*, "Exodus: Why Europe's Jews are Fleeing Once Again", in: *Newsweek*, July 29, 2014.

39 Roni Floman, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Israeli Community in the San Francisco Bay Area*, Carmel, 2007. (Hebrew)

40 According to figures from the United Nations Population Division, in 2010 214 million people lived in a country different from the one in which they were born. In 2000, in contrast, this figure was 179 million. Cf. *Sivan Klingvale and Shani Shila*, "I have another country: Why are almost 40% of Israelis considering leaving", in: *Haaretz*, December 14, 2012 (Hebrew).

always be realized here, due to supply, budgets, experience, markets and other factors. There is nothing unacceptable about someone who chooses to emigrate in order to realize a dream, to develop and contribute. Moreover, the success of many Israelis abroad—among them scientists, doctors, businessmen, artists, athletes and models—illustrates that sometimes a citizen who left us in order to graze in foreign pastures can serve as a wonderful ambassador for the country and add to its prestige.

Those who emigrate also serve as a monitor for the quality of life here, warning us of failures that need improvement. This may be what will force us as a society and a nation to improve and become more attractive. Indeed, those who left kibbutzim also served as a monitor that accelerated positive change.

Yet despite the above, perhaps an existential threat is hanging over Israel related to the potential of being uprooted. The discourse in Israel on emigration and on the *yordim* has recently undergone a change, and the Internet has taken it one step further. For the first time, arguments encouraging emigration for the sake of self-fulfillment are being aired in public. Even more importantly, more and more Israelis are allowing themselves to publicly express “heretical” notions that perhaps Zionism has failed. One disaster follows another on a daily basis. Rocket barrages, terrorist attacks, political scandals and the like leave us no respite, no moments of quiet and calm. True, Israel has lived under threats since its inception, but the dangers have grown and Israel appears to be weaker and more helpless. The enemy outside is cruel and better equipped, and the blows are destructive and strike at the heart of the civilian space.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the sense of mission and vision, the source of Israel’s great attraction has always been the warm relationships and the sense of community and belonging. Over the years, this source has lost its strength. In its first decades, the country offered something very profound and rewarding to its citizens: a sense of vision, mission and deep existential meaning. Therefore the citizens were willing to absorb losses and lived with a sense of justification. They thought about the future of the coming generations as if they were religious people who believed with all their heart and soul in the coming of the Messiah. As the naïve Zionist ethos weakened and materialism, egoism, cynicism, callousness and a lack of faith began gaining control of our lives, the profound existential meaning

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41 Already in 2004 only 73% of adolescents, compared to 87% of adults, saw their future in Israel. For them the security situation was the primary motive for leaving, as opposed to the economic situation, which was the prime reason among adults, cf. *The Israel Democracy Institute*, May 23, 2004.

by which Israelis were emotionally engaged became neutralized. If the main goal of life is to make money and have a good time, one does not necessarily have to live here.

With the weakening of the national pillar of fire, a simple question remains: Where is life most pleasant? Many young people see the ideological discourse surrounding the issue of emigration as anachronistic. Many see emigration as something natural for national groups and individuals. People seek to move elsewhere in order to seek a better life.

Here is how one young man expressed this: “All in all, what have I done? I didn’t abandon anything, didn’t betray anyone, didn’t sell any state secrets. All I did was move to a country that in my view is more pleasant to live in than Israel.”<sup>42</sup>

For Generation Y moving to another country is not as difficult as it was for previous generations because our style of life has become global. The members of this generation speak a common language with young people abroad, who are like them. They in essence live the same style of life, are familiar with the same technology and the same brand names, watch the same television programs and surf the same Internet sites. The Windows operating system is the same on all computers across the globe, as are the smartphone applications. We are on our way to a global language. So what is the point of making an effort to preserve Hebrew culture?

The mobility and openness of the global world have also increased the potential for Israelis to meet a partner from another country. Love for a romantic partner in many cases wins over love for the homeland.

The global encounter in the large metropolises is also very important for minority groups such as the LGBT community. An Israeli member of this community is likely to feel a stronger natural affinity for someone from the German or French LGBT community than for a member of the straight community in Israel, for they share a common fate.

The rise in the demand for foreign passports and the increase in the rate of those who give positive answers on surveys with respect to the possibility of living abroad perhaps do hint that we can expect a large wave of emigration from Israel. True, moving abroad in the meantime is more in the realm of fantasy, like

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42 Naor Karkoano, “In London despair is more comfortable”, in: *Ynet*, November 17, 2013 (Hebrew). Naor Karkoano, 31 years old, originally from Ashdod and before moving to the UK lived in Tel Aviv for ten years. Today he lives in north London and works for a British financial company.

dreaming about moving to a new house or changing one's job or profession. But it is also true that there is a new reality, for, when the affinity for a place declines, when human relations are poisoned and when moving to another country becomes practically and technically more feasible, then the potential for emigration increases.

*For years the thought of living abroad has been buzzing in my head. It's a fantasy that can be realized, though the realization keeps getting put off for one reason or another. I'll just finish my studies. I'll just work for a year or two. I'll just wait until the lease on my apartment is up. Maybe I should try to find work there first. I'll prepare a portfolio of my work and then go. We'll get through the winter and see. In the spring. ...*

*Seems that I'm not the only one with this fantasy of moving. Anyone I talked to about this responded positively. No one said, 'But what's so bad here?' Only I said this to myself, and that may be the reason I haven't gone, at least not until now. Things are not bad for me here... Everything is very close and very familiar.*

*But paradoxically, it's this sense of comfort rather than discomfort that is causing me to get a move on and brings me to the need to burst through boundaries. Because it's small here, everything is too close and too similar, and there is no real urban alternative to Tel Aviv... The reality here is also becoming too heavy, with every political remark or move made, every security measure taken, all the corruption and injustice that is exposed. The eye, the brain and the heart are becoming dulled.<sup>43</sup>*

We believe that the greatest threat to the State of Israel is the development of a high quality Israeli alternative abroad. Already today there are 'Israeli kibbutzim' in California, Australia and other places around the world. These can be 'kibbutzim' of businessmen, scientists, artists, potheads and grass smokers, students and even pensioners, who live in less expensive locations because Israel

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43 Efrat Ini, 33 years old, graphic designer, cf. *Sivan Klingvale, Sivan and Shani Shila, Shani*, "I have another country: Why almost 40% of Israelis are considering leaving", in: *Haaretz*, December 14, 2012 (Hebrew).



has become a place where it is more difficult and less safe to grow old. Berlin is only one example and a metaphor illustrating this process.

*I returned from Thailand. Just as I promised, I am not part of the brain drain. But among the mountains of pineapples and the shakes that are still filling my body, a small seed of doubt was planted. Doubt about what the future has in store for us. Doubts about the collapse of our plans and hopes for our retirement. Doubts that if one day we want to retire honorably we will end up in the role of the nightingale of the King of Siam. Whether we are aware of it or not. I assume that this small seed is planted in the brain of every young person who goes there on a trip after the army.*<sup>44</sup>

For the time being these 'kibbutzim' are small, but if one of them grows and turns into a town or even an Israeli city, it can certainly attract a large number of high quality people and dilute the minerals in the eroding Israeli body politic.

The Israeli emigrants themselves are no longer ashamed of having left, and many of them establish, by themselves or in partnership with the local Jewish population, a variety of settings and institutions serving the Israeli community, such as media forums, educational settings, religious and prayer settings, support groups and mutual assistance, volunteerism and leisure activities.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, leading politicians, scientists and artists make frequent appearances in the large centers of *yordim* in the United States and Canada, and meeting with these *yordim* is a sign of tolerance and mutual affection.<sup>46</sup> Many of

44 Haniel Elmakis, resident of Yeroham, 35 years old, communications systems engineer and graduate student in politics and government, cf. *Haniel Elmakis*, "Stopping in Thailand on the way to Berlin", in: *ynet*, November 21, 2013 (Hebrew).

45 A study that examined Israeli immigrants in Canada found that 14% (5000 men and women) of the Jews living in the city of Vancouver are immigrants from Israel. The study, which was based on in-depth interviews, found that most of the Israelis reported successfully integrating into the local job market and being less successful in becoming integrated into Canadian society. This affected their willingness to strengthen ties with the Jewish community in the city. The researcher found that their Israeli identity remained strong, while their feeling of guilt for leaving Israel, a feeling that in the past marked many immigrants from Israel, was disappearing. According to him, immigration from Israel is becoming more legitimate among the immigrant community. Brent David Harris, *Identity and Integration Among Israelis Migrants in Canada*, Master of Art, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2009.

46 "In 2002 a group was established in Los Angeles called the Council of Israeli Community (CIC). It was set up out of a sense of mission and solidarity with the State of Israel, which was embroiled in the midst of the second Intifada. This organization of volunteers organized rallies in support of Israel and a tribunal of reporters and responders in the various media, especially the digital media. At the same time an Israeli leadership organization was also set up in Los Angeles which ran a

these immigrants take it upon themselves to serve as goodwill ambassadors, to represent the country honorably and to defend its image against slanderers and detractors.

In effect, in recent years and without our having noticed it, a young urban Israeli colony has emerged, made up of people living abroad, or more precisely with 'one foot abroad'. This is known as the State of Tel Aviv. For the time being its residents are still here. For the time being.

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variety of activities supporting Israel. A wide range of Internet sites, newspapers and magazines in Hebrew are published in New York, Los Angeles and other locations. The Israeli government channel as well as two other Hebrew-speaking channels can be seen via satellite across the United States. The Israeli Independence Festival has been held in Los Angeles each year since 1990 and is attended by thousands of Israeli *yordim* and American Jews." Cf. *Wikipedia* entry on Yerida in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yerida> [last accessed: November 30, 2015].