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Mass *Aliyah* – A Thing of the Past?

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The question of mass *aliyah*, or *aliyah* in general (*aliyah* – literally 'ascending' – is the word Israelis use to denote immigration to Israel), is closely bound up with one of Israel's paramount demographic predicaments.¹ Because of the conditions in which Israel finds itself, great importance attaches to the rate of population growth and changes in population structure that occur due to that growth over time. These developments bear significant economic, social, and security implications. Some examples: the balance between different national-religious-ethnic population groups in Israel and the region; various aspects relating to economic planning and manpower management; and the development and exploitation of human resources. In the past, the scope of *aliyah* has profoundly affected these processes, and, at least

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¹ This article was prepared within the framework of the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Mr. Zvi Richter provided much assistance in processing the data. The reader is also directed to the following articles: S. DellaPergola, 'Aliyah, Yeridah, and Other Demographic Problems', in A. Hareven (ed.), *Is It Really Hard to Be an Israeli?* (Hebrew), Jerusalem (Van Leer Jerusalem Foundation) 1983, pp. 225–256; S. DellaPergola, 'On the Differential Frequency of Western Migration to Israel', in J. Frankel (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Bloomington (Indiana University Press), Vol. 1, 1984, pp. 292–315; S. DellaPergola, 'Aliyah and other Jewish Migrations: Toward an Integrated Perspective', in U.O. Schmelz and G. Nathan (eds.), *Studies in the Population of Israel in Honor of Roberto Bachi*, Jerusalem (Magnes Press, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) 1986 (*Scripta Hierosolymitana*, Vol XXX), pp. 172–209.

potentially, it could do so again in the future on a large scale. Although in recent years the relative weight of *aliyah* has declined with respect to other factors influencing demographic change, such as the balance of natural movement within the population (births and deaths) and *yeridah* (lit. 'descent', the Hebrew word used to denote emigration), *aliyah* continues to be a potentially sensitive and central factor in Israel's long-term strategic planning.

Aliyah refers to the movement of Jews from the diaspora to Israel. An analysis of the prospects for large-scale *aliyah*, combined with an appraisal of its characteristics, necessitates a thorough and ramified examination. Such an analysis should focus on:

(1) the basic characteristics and trends of diaspora Jewry, the reservoir of the potential *aliyah* in question;

(2) the major trends of *aliyah* in the past and present. A correct view of Jewish immigration to Israel should also take into account other migratory movements which have traditionally constituted an important factor for change in Jewish society;

(3) Jewish population distribution worldwide and country-to-country movement of Jews from the more general perspective of the political, economic and social status of the countries involved and their interconnections;

(4) Israel's place in that overall international context;

(5) the dominant processes unfolding within Israeli society in recent years, both in general terms, and with special regard to immigration and immigrant absorption.

Any survey of these diverse topics should maintain a proper balance between, on the one hand, a general, theoretical perspective of demographic processes, and their historical, social, and economic contexts, and, on the other hand, the manifestly unique aspects of certain elements of these processes in the Jewish and Israeli experience. To find the middle road between the general and the particular demands a considerable effort. Above all, one must refrain from adopting an emotional approach that weaves into its reasoning expressions of hopes and fears, or – worse – that lets its arguments be swayed by transparent political demagoguery. Unfortunately, attitudes such as these seem to color much of what appears in the media concerning subjects of cardinal importance for Israel and for the Jewish world as a whole.

Aliyah and Other Jewish Migrations: General Aspects

Aliyah is usually described in terms of 'waves': years of mounting growth in the inflow of immigrants, followed by years of ebb, in a constantly recurring cycle. In the period since the largest of these waves, of which the onset paralleled Israel's independence, they have tended to become ever weaker.

A more comprehensive historical perspective shows that *aliyah*

constituted approximately 3 per cent of all Jewish intercontinental migrations worldwide in the period from the 1880s to the First World War; about 30 per cent between 1919 and 1948; some 82 per cent in the peak years until 1951; and 50–70 per cent (i.e., still the major part of Jewish migration) until the second half of the 1970s. In the past decade, *aliyah* has evidently regressed to less than 50 per cent of total Jewish migration. (These estimates take into account *yeridah* – emigration from Israel – as a factor in international Jewish migration.)

The scale of Jewish migration, *aliyah* included, has tapered off in recent years. From the mid-1950s until the early 1980s – that is, following the period of most intensive *aliyah* – average annual Jewish migration worldwide is estimated at about 60,000 persons. The immediate past has seen a fall-off to 20,000–50,000 persons per year, of whom 10,000–20,000 immigrated to Israel. In some ways, the current situation resembles the 1920s, when Jewish migration was diffuse, and no urgent reason for mass migration presented itself. Then, as now, migration was multi-directional, and – following the imposition of severe restrictions on immigration to the United States – the Jewish population dispersed itself without a clearly dominant destination. Yet in the aftermath of the First World War, the scope of Jewish migration was greater than it is today; and of course Israel did not yet exist.

A breakdown of frequency of *aliyah* per 10,000 Jews by countries of origin shows that *aliyah* from the West has consistently been less frequent than from other broad areas of the Jewish dispersion, such as the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe – from those countries and in those years when Jews were enabled to leave. Today, when some 82 per cent of all diaspora Jews reside in the West, an examination of *aliyah* trends from those countries is a *sine qua non* for understanding possible future developments concerning *aliyah* in general.

A regime of free – or almost free – migration is the norm in the Western world. Still, striking disparities exist regarding the frequency of *aliyah* from different Western countries (Table 1). The period from 1953 to 1986 saw a minimal *aliyah* rate of 0.5 *olim* (new immigrants) per 10,000 Jews recorded for the United States (1953–1957), as compared with a maximum of 226.1 *olim* per 10,000 Jews from Turkey (1978–1982) and 122.5 per 10,000 from Uruguay (1983–1986). If we rank Western countries according to *aliyah* rates, considerable consistency is apparent over time, notwithstanding certain fluctuations. This finding points to the need to consider events outside Israel as an initial explanation for *aliyah* trends.

At the same time, the influence of incentives which are at work primarily in Israel are clearly reflected in the type of person who comes to Israel as opposed to other destinations, or who remain in their country of residence. The *olim* possess a more saliently Jew-

Table 1
Immigrants to Israel
From 20 Western Countries, 1973-1986
Absolute Numbers and Rates Per 10,000 Jews
In Country of Origin

Country	No. of <i>Olim</i>			<i>Olim</i> per 10,000 Jews			
	1973 1977	1978 1982	1983 1986	1973 1977	1978 1982	1983 1986	1973 1986
Canada	1,573	1,452	969	10.7	9.4	7.8	9.3
US	15,556	13,260	9,933	5.6	4.7	4.4	4.9
Australia	1,141	815	573	32.6	21.7	19.8	24.7
S. Africa	3,357	3,218	1,416	59.6	54.5	30.0	51.8
Argentina	9,100	6,687	3,732	68.7	55.3	40.6	54.9
Brazil	1,300	1,039	847	26.0	20.8	21.2	22.7
Chile	827	426	490	66.2	42.6	72.1	60.3
Mexico	605	478	532	34.6	27.3	38.0	33.3
Uruguay	1,849	930	1,323	105.6	74.7	122.5	100.9
Venezuela	253	100	139	31.6	11.1	17.4	20.0
Belgium	564	658	308	34.2	40.5	24.1	32.9
France	6,862	7,492	5,577	25.6	28.0	26.3	26.6
W. Germany	641	655	567	41.4	40.9	43.0	41.8
Britain	3,731	4,999	3,225	19.6	28.2	24.4	24.1
Italy	628	454	264	39.3	28.4	20.6	29.4
Netherlands	666	791	538	44.3	58.5	49.8	50.9
Spain	162	249	197	36.0	47.4	41.0	41.5
Sweden	260	259	193	34.7	34.5	32.2	33.8
Switzerland	459	434	287	45.9	43.4	37.8	42.4
Turkey	965	2,487	384	87.7	226.1	45.7	119.8

Sources: *Immigrants to Israel*: Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem; *Jewish Population in Countries of Origin*: U.O. Schmelz, and S. DellaPergola, 'World Jewish Population'; *American Jewish Year Book*, various issues, 1981-1988.

ish identity, are more active in Jewish organizations in their country of origin, and have greater prior knowledge of Hebrew. Their average age is lower than that of the overall Jewish population in the diaspora. In the past, family *aliyah* was predominant, but recent years have witnessed a considerable increase in individual *aliyah*. *Olim* generally have a high level of education; however, as compared with the socio-economic structure of diaspora Jewry, what is striking is an over-representation of lower strata, i.e., of those few who are still engaged in blue-collar jobs and manual labor. Also very striking among *olim* is a marked under-representation of persons engaged in commerce.

From all points of view, the processes of separation entailed in *aliyah* promote an intensification of the existing dissimilarity between the Jewish population in Israel and in the diaspora.

'Business as Usual'

Any attempt to analyze known *aliyah* trends in order to extrapolate conjectures and forecasts, must start with the premise that no

substantial change will occur in the existing trends. This basic presumption of 'business as usual' involves three principal dimensions: global, diaspora Jewry, and Israeli.

While acknowledging the importance of the new immigrant as an individual, we will not consider his/her character at the personal level, but in the aggregate of national and time frames. The analysis is largely based on a comparison among twenty Western countries with Jewish populations of at least 10,000.

Aliyah From a Global Perspective

The first dimension looks at *aliyah* in terms of the internal political, economic, and social context of countries where Jews live, and in terms of the interconnections between those countries. In the past, attempts have been made to develop theoretical models to determine the standing of nations in a single world alignment. For example, the 'World System' model assumes a certain degree of reciprocal exchanges, mutual influences, and dependency relations between countries.² A hierarchical order of countries follows from these starting points. The strongest and most established, among them the United States, are at the core of the World System; other countries are situated in peripheral circles at growing distances from the core. For our purposes, we will treat the World System theory as a useful analytical tool, while not accepting the slide into historical determinism or ideological involvement that sometimes crop up in the literature based on this concept. We have a vested interest in seeing how Israel is ranked, so that we can examine whether, and how, the waves of immigration to and emigration from Israel reflect the country's international standing.

Various socioeconomic indicators show that Israel bears a 'semi-peripheral' status: while not numbered among the central group of most highly developed and wealthiest industrial nations, Israel is also distant from the undeveloped countries of the Third World. Israel shares this intermediate position – between the end of the first quarter and the beginning of the second quarter – with several other countries around the world. Interesting examples are a few Eastern European countries and some Middle Eastern oil producers. What they all have in common is considerable natural or industrial resources, on the one hand, and erratic or inferior social and economic development as compared with the Western powers, on the other.

Jewish migration in the past hundred years has tended to flow to

² I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, Vol. I: *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*; Vol. II: *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600–1750*, New York (Academic Press) 1974, 1980; D. Snyder and E.L. Kick, 'Structural Position in the World System and Economic Growth, 1955–1970: A Multiple-Network Analysis of Transnational Interactions', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84, No. 5, 1979, pp. 1096–1126.

the core countries of the World System. These countries are characterized by a higher level of economic development, higher income level, higher per capita industrial production, and greater investment of resources in R & D and higher education.

Israel, as mentioned, is ranked somewhere in the middle: it has advantages over many countries, but lags well behind others and has developed a certain dependence on them economically and perhaps in other areas as well. On the face of it, the world migration balances to and from Israel are consistent with Israel's place in the World System. Generally speaking, the balances are negative with respect to countries with a ranking superior to its own, and positive with respect to countries with a ranking inferior to its own.

The rate of *aliyah* per 10,000 Jews in the (Western) countries of origin bears a close and consistent relationship to a number of socioeconomic indicators in those countries. The strongest negative connection is with an index measuring the level of modernization and economic and industrial development: per capita energy consumption in a specific country. This is the best single predictor of the *aliyah* rate per 10,000 Jews in the country of origin: the higher a country's level of development and industrialization, the lower the *aliyah* rate from that country will be. Another variable, which also stands in inverse proportion to the rate of *aliyah*, although more moderately, is an index of the level of political freedom in the country of origin.

We also examined the correlation between *aliyah* rates and the 'Human Suffering Index'.³ This index is a composite of ten different social and economic indicators in each country, including the two already mentioned measures of energy consumption and political freedom. Its correlation with *aliyah* is less clearly defined, since it incorporates some aspects which are not necessarily relevant to Jews – even those residing in less developed countries – such as adult literacy, infant mortality rates, per capita calorie consumption, and access to drinking water. These indicators, while interesting at the aggregate level of a society, are much less relevant to the Jewish population, which has its own unique traits and is concentrated in middle to high socioeconomic, urban strata. The Jewish population seems to be less sensitive to situations of extreme inequality within a given society. Nevertheless, it is to be expected that acute changes in the general socioeconomic equilibrium of a country will affect the standing of the local Jewish community.

Another important aspect of *aliyah* rates from Western countries is their relation to annual fluctuations in the number of *olim* from 1973–1986. A multivariate analysis of the time series for the twenty Western countries examined here shows that they can

³ *The International Human Suffering Index*, Washington (Population Crisis Committee) 1987.

be divided into several groups. The first is the North American complex – the US and Canada – along with two other countries, Australia and Italy. Changes over time in *aliyah* rates from these countries have been quite similar over the years. Here, too, it seems plausible that the close connection between these countries and their place at the core of the World System is reflected.

A second group includes most of the countries of Western Europe, with one or two exceptions that are indicated below. A third group consists of the Latin American states. Each of these regional groups displays quite homogeneous patterns of change – albeit different from one another – with respect to annual *aliyah* rates. There are several other countries with singular patterns. The first of these is South Africa, where unique factors have affected *aliyah* trends. Two others are Sweden and Switzerland, which behave like two small powers, and are marked by a large measure of independence with respect to *aliyah* over time. Possibly, this fact reflects the autonomous international political status and disproportionate economic clout of these two countries.

One quite distinct finding emerges from this preliminary and highly simplified analysis: there is a rational and consistent array of general socioeconomic factors that affects the volume and rates of *aliyah* from the West. Fundamentally, in countries where local conditions are more attractive, the retention factor affects Jewish groups, inducing them to stay where they are. As a result, *aliyah* frequency from these countries tends to be low. Yet even in Western countries, negative economic, social, political, and even military factors are at work, sometimes very forcefully. These negative factors usually operate in the short term, and are clearly distinguishable in the changing annual profile of *aliyah* rates in each of the twenty countries examined.

Aliyah From the Perspective of Diaspora Jewry

In contrast to the situation that prevailed throughout most of modern Jewish history, the majority of Jews today reside in countries where the regimes are free and relatively open, in terms of human rights, social relations, mobility, information flow, and exchange of opinions. Together with these elements goes a comparatively high living standard, at least in the population strata to which most Jews belong. Corrected population estimates for recent years regarding the number of Jews in the world put the total number of Jews in the diaspora at approximately 9.4 million, in addition to the over 3.6 million Jews in Israel.⁴

One of the dominant developments in the contemporary diaspora is a growing convergence between different communities which were once marked by profound and fascinating differ-

⁴ U.O. Schmelz and S. DellaPergola, 'World Jewish Population, 1986', *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 88, New York and Philadelphia (The American Jewish Committee and The Jewish Publication Society) 1988, pp. 412–427.

ences in cultural and social structure. In the diaspora today, a number of parallel basic processes are discernible in both the socioeconomic and the demographic sphere: near total urbanization, large-scale movement to the suburbs of the great cities, the mass acquisition of higher education by the younger generation, and professional specialization in distinct areas of the white-collar sector.

Demographically, the erosion of the family, formerly a central and vital cell in Jewish society, is growing ever more acute. The process is reflected in less frequent and later marriage, more divorce, low fertility, and an accelerated increase in mixed marriages. Usually, less than half the offspring of mixed marriages are affiliated with the Jewish community. Compounding all these developments is the rapid aging of the Jewish population.

Some of these tendencies are peculiar to the Jewish population, but to a large extent they are a mirror image of general processes underway in Western countries containing sizable Jewish populations. One key implication of these processes is that – putting aside the effect of international migrations – the growth of the general population in more developed countries is rapidly approaching zero. Most of the Jewish communities in these countries already show an accelerated process of population decrease and a decline in the proportion of Jews in the total population.

From the qualitative standpoint – the nature of the changes in Jewish identity and Jewish content in the diaspora – we have already noted the ever deepening assimilation tendencies. Yet reverse tendencies of Jewish cultural resilience are also visible. These polar attitudes bear the stamp of a lively debate that has intensified in recent years, in the US particularly, concerning the true thrust of diaspora Jewry.

A basic facet of this debate concerns the renewed attempt to develop a local rather than universalist orientation regarding the content of Jewishness in contemporary Western societies. This is an attempt to find a local diaspora alternative to part of the range of cultural and spiritual options that Israel has to offer. Although in itself this striving for Jewish cultural autonomy is a positive development, its effect, even if indirectly, is to shunt Israel aside as a factor which is no longer so vital either for the self-fulfillment of the Jew, or for the possibility of organizing a rich and meaningful collective Jewish life.⁵

⁵ For a concise and sharp expression of this approach, see J. Neusner, 'America, Not Israel, Jews' Promised Land', *Jewish Week*, Vol. 199, No. 51, 1987. An extended development of this thesis in the historical context of American Jewry can be found in C.E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*, New York (Summit Books) 1985. See also C. Goldscheider and A. Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews*, Chicago and London (University of Chicago Press) 1984. For a critique of the demographic assumptions see: U.O. Schmelz and S. DellaPergola, *Basic Trends in American Jewish Demography*, New York (The American Jewish Committee) 1988.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that Israel continues to be not only a highly significant factor in the consciousness of diaspora Jewry, but also an interesting and intriguing factor, perhaps the principal factor able to spur the mobilization of large Jewish groups in time of need.

As for the prospects of *aliyah* from the West, it is difficult to estimate the true impact the various positions mentioned wield within the Jewish public. However, some interesting clues can be found in a survey of potential tourism to Israel conducted in the early 1980s, among a representative sample of American Jewry.⁶ At that time, some 30 per cent of those polled had already visited Israel, as compared with about 17 per cent a decade earlier. These figures reflect the major growth in tourism ties in recent years. In addition, in the 1980s about 46 per cent expressed their readiness to visit Israel at some time in the future, while 24 per cent said they had no interest in ever visiting Israel. These percentages may hint to the balance of forces between a central core of active and identified Jews, and a large 'silent majority' of supporting and identified Jews who are not very active personally, and fringe groups with only a tenuous affinity with Jewish and Israeli contents. We might ascribe a good deal of importance to these trends, on the assumption that the dominant factor, where the thrust for *aliyah* is concerned, is the intensity of Jewish identity within a given community. Of course, this assumption requires verification.

In the absence of direct and systematic data on the components of Jewish identity throughout the diaspora, the assumption may nevertheless be examined indirectly. It turns out, in the first place, that a significantly negative connection exists between the rate of *aliyah* per 10,000 Jews and the size of the Jewish population in each country. *Aliyah* rates are also low from countries in which the Jewish population has increased through immigration, and higher in countries where the Jewish population is decreasing for reasons other than *aliyah*. The development of an alternative Jewish life style to that being offered by Israel, and the formation of the critical mass required for organization along these lines, thus seem to constitute a serious check on considerations of *aliyah*. This conclusion can also be formulated from a different angle: incoming Jewish migration to a given country interferes with outgoing Jewish migration, *aliyah* included.

A positive, though feeble, connection exists between frequency of Jewish education in a given country and *aliyah* rates. For the most part, the connection finds expression with regard to the children who have attended Jewish day-schools. In contrast, there is virtually no statistical connection between *aliyah* rates and the

⁶ R. Bar-On, R. Barash, M. Ficker, 'Jewish Tourism from the United States and its Potential for Israel' (Hebrew), Jerusalem (State of Israel, Ministry of Tourism) 1981 (mimeo).

number of pupils attending afternoon or once-a-week Hebrew classes. Naturally, any attempt to assess the influence of Jewish education cannot disregard the broader social context within which it functions. Jewish day schools are more common in countries where the Jewish population is less willing to place its trust in the public educational system. In such locales, the Jewish schools fulfill a role of high-level private schools. This state of affairs is generally typical of the relatively less developed Western countries. It can be inferred, then, that part of the positive impact on *aliyah* frequency which is usually attributed to Jewish education, actually derives from negative general socioeconomic factors such as we described above.

As expected, the frequency of mixed marriages, which varies in each country, but has increased rapidly everywhere, bears a negative – though weak – relation to frequency of *aliyah*.

Summing up, from the perspective of the basic sociodemographic processes in the diaspora, it is difficult to see a reason for increased *aliyah* in the near future. On the contrary: the two conflicting processes – an intensified interest in things Jewish at the local level on the one hand, and the growth of assimilation on the other hand – tend, each in its own way, to adversely affect the prospect for a rise in the number of Western *olim*, as compared with the low Western *aliyah* level of the past.

Aliyah From the Israeli Viewpoint

As mentioned, Israel's place in the World System can be defined as 'semi-peripheral'. To evaluate the forces of attraction and repulsion at work in Israeli society which are likely to affect the levels of *aliyah*, we need to examine the changing characteristics of that society. One often hears it said in Israel that various negative aspects of Israeli society discourage *aliyah*. If the quality of life in Israel were greatly enhanced, the proponents of this view argue, *aliyah*, too, including Western *aliyah*, would increase correspondingly.

To examine the validity of this hypothesis, we looked at changes that occurred over a period of fifteen years in Israel for a fairly large number of social indicators. Our aim was to determine whether a correlation existed between these changes and the fluctuations in the number of Western *olim* overall and from each country individually.⁷

⁷ The connection was examined between the annual *aliyah* rates per 10,000 Jews in the countries of origin, and each of the following Israeli indicators: total *olim*; number of tourists to Israel; number of departing inhabitants who had not returned within four years; percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index; percentage of unemployed; number of working hours lost due to strikes; percentage of change in real wages; Index of Housing Density; number of starts of new housing constructions; number of new automobiles; number of road accidents; number of new industrial patents; percentage of change in Industrial Production Index; percentage of pupils in the religious

Contradictions and divergences of direction were apparent in several of the indicators we considered. Although great caution must be exercised against trivializing the analysis, these differences in part seem to reflect changes in government. Thus, the years of Labor rule are associated more with indicators relating to the development of the collective infrastructure, whereas the years of Likud rule point more towards concern for individual wellbeing.

As expected, there is a close connection between the number of *olim* and the number of starts of new housing constructions. But if this finding comes as no surprise, other relationships could be far less anticipated. On the face of it, if Israeli factors were a dominant factor in the levels and fluctuations of Western *aliyah*, one would expect changes in Israeli society to be paralleled by consistent shifts in the number of *olim* in all the countries of origin. This synchronic change would constitute the diaspora's reaction to the changes in Israeli society.

This, however, is not the case. Each diaspora community reacts to changes in Israel differently, or not at all. In the overwhelming majority of cases, no significant connection exists between developments in Israel and the number of *olim*. This finding is valid for data comparisons referring to the same year, but equally if it is assumed that there will be a year's lag in the *aliyah* reaction to Israeli circumstances. In some instances, the indication of a specific connection is actually reversed, depending on whether the data determining it are measured in the same year or with a time differential. In other cases, relationships are found which are statistically significant but which lack any theoretical justification. For example, why is there a negative correlation between an index of housing quality in Israel and the number of *olim* – lagged over one year – from several Western countries?

Nonetheless, Western *aliyah* does seem to react consistently to particular events and tendencies in Israel: wars, for example, or security casualties. If we look at the number of *olim* one year after such events, a positive correlation is found with *aliyah* levels. This connection can be seen as the response of those diaspora Jews who possess a more intense Jewish identity and feel a greater sense of solidarity with Israel in the wake of serious security conditions. Yet it is also noteworthy that an absence of wars and a falloff in the number of security casualties did not augment the volume of *aliyah*. Manifestly, the connection between nega-

education system; number of convictions in criminal trials for serious offenses; Israel Government party composition (dummy variables for: Labor, Likud). Source for all of the above: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various volumes. In addition: wars in Israel (dummy variable); number of casualties caused by terrorist actions in Israeli territory, along the borders, in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Source: N. Avigdor, Y. Ravid, *Population, Wars and Losses – Statistical Background* (draft), Haifa (State of Israel, Weapons Development Authority, Center for Military Studies) 1986.

tive security conditions and short-term increases in *aliyah* conflicts with conventional expectations; hence it seems reasonable to look for the cause of such *aliyah* outside Israel, in the evolving Jewish identity in the diaspora.

Unemployment levels in Israel also bear a positive connection with *aliyah* rates, if we let a year's lag between the emergence of the problem in Israel and the response of *aliyah*. This seemingly illogical finding does, apparently, admit of an explanation. As already noted Western countries are interlocked in a complex economic and political system. Israel, too, is linked to this system economically and is affected by changes within it. It is possible that the negative economic processes in Israel, including unemployment, are an expression of similar processes occurring, perhaps in more acute form, in the countries of origin of Western *olim*. Thus, conditions in Israel, even if not optimal, may still be preferable to those prevailing in many Western countries. In Israel, several protective devices function with respect to the individual's economic situation, and this may have led to surprising, albeit modest, increases in the number of *olim* at times of economic recession. Once again, the underlying reason for the process is to be found outside Israel.

Strikes in Israel, and the attendant loss of working hours, bear on the other hand a negative connection with *aliyah* rates, again looking at the *aliyah* statistics one year later.

These analyses seek to unearth a possible link between yearly changes in Israeli society and the rate of *aliyah* from the West. The link emerging so far is very weak. In addition, we should also ask whether any connection exists between the strength and promptness of reaction of Jews in a given country to events in Israel, and the frequency of *aliyah* from that country. The conclusion that follows from the processing of many relevant data is that, apparently, better syntonization of a given Jewish community regarding events in Israel, does not translate into greater proclivity for immigrating to Israel. One is thus forced to conclude that the hypothesis concerning a significant connection between the quality of life in Israel and frequency of *aliyah* is unfounded, at least on the face of the present empirical evidence.

Of course, this does not exempt us from continuing to search out the deeper reasons for the paucity of Western *aliyah*. According to one major hypothesis, the reason lies in the incompatibility between the socioeconomic structure of the Jewish minorities in the developed countries, and the socioeconomic structure of Israel as a society possessing a Jewish majority. In the leading countries, about 80 per cent of the Jewish work force is employed in white-collar jobs, a growing share of these in management and the free professions. The commercial sector remains important in the diaspora, although it is palpably receding. Large numbers of *olim* who are employed in the sectors mentioned above are not

easily absorbed into a national economy with needs in diverse areas, such as industrial manufacturing, agriculture, security, services, and others – professions in which the majority of diaspora Jews have no intention to engage. Their professional training and aspirations are different, and in the light of their present social status, retraining would be perceived as a serious decline in status. That the employment structure of *olim* during the Mandate period and the state's first years underwent tremendous changes is well known. However, in today's social conditions, it is difficult to believe that many would be prepared to pay the price entailed by a change of occupation – a price that conditions of mass or forced *aliyah* demanded.

An additional problem from the Israeli viewpoint concerns the connection between the absorption of previous immigrants and the scope of current *aliyah*. The seniority of former *olim* can act as a mediating factor in the absorption of new *olim*. It stands to reason that a large group of veteran *olim* of a common origin can play a useful role in helping more recent immigrants overcome the difficulties they inevitably encounter. Seniority usually goes hand-in-hand with adaptation to a place, and sometimes satisfaction as well. In contrast, the more recent the *aliyah* from a given country, and the higher the percentage of new arrivals from that country, the greater will be the psycho-social instability experienced by that group. The consequent dissatisfaction will ultimately generate negative feedback for those still in the country of origin and pondering *aliyah*.

This hypothesis is statistically validated. The less the seniority in Israel attaching to *olim* from a given country, the lower the *aliyah* rate from that country. This finding also illuminates *aliyah* trends from the Soviet Union (which, of course, forbids or severely regulates free migration). It is possible that, where declining Soviet *aliyah* propensities are concerned, one factor among many was a large group of *olim* whose negative message to other potential *olim* deterred them from immigrating to Israel.

Finally, the geographical distance of the immigrant's country of origin from Israel only exerts a marginal influence on *aliyah* frequency.

To conclude these remarks on the Israeli perspective of *aliyah*, another question should be asked: are the contents and symbols of an immigration-absorbing country that desires new *olim* still at work in today's Israeli society? An analysis of the scale of priorities in the Israeli public arena, namely mass communication media, national education and the political system, will most likely produce a negative reply. Israeli society has moved a long way since the days when it was ready to subsidize *olim* at any price, just so long as they came. Obviously, the change of atmosphere in Israel regarding readiness to receive new *olim* wields a certain influence on the prospect of receiving them in practice.

The Comprehensive Picture: A Multi-Variate Analysis

We will conclude this discussion – which took as its starting point that the basic determinants underlying *aliyah* tendencies remain unchanged – with a multi-variate analysis of the *aliyah* rates from twenty Western countries from 1973–1986, and more particularly 1983–1986. The results of the regression analyses are summed up in Table 2. Statistically, about 60–70 per cent of the variance in *aliyah* rates from the West can be explained in terms of four variables: per capita energy consumption in the countries of origin, rate of Jewish population growth in the countries of origin, number of years in Israel of previous *olim* from the given country, and reaction to wars involving Israel. The possibility of accounting for such a high percentage of explained variance confirms the findings of a similar analysis regarding Western *aliyah* undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ Table 2 also sets forth separately the results of regression analyses for each of the four types of explanatory variables: the majority society abroad, the makeup of the Jewish community abroad, previous immigrant absorption, and the characteristics of Israeli society. Again, factors abroad resonate more powerfully than factors in Israel in accounting for the variation of *aliyah* rates. At the same time, the explanation that combines the various perspectives of analysis discussed here, is considerably more potent than an explanation based on variables of one type alone.

Besides the greater or lesser effectiveness of a given model for describing *aliyah* trends, the principal conclusion of the analysis is that Western *aliyah* characteristics admit of systematic conceptualization, rational explanation, and hence, perhaps, predictability too.

The Catastrophe Scenario

It is neither pleasant nor popular to predict catastrophic developments that could affect immigration to Israel. Yet this is a topic that should be addressed, however briefly, in a discussion at the strategic level, even if the situations described now appear remote indeed. Historically, it should not be forgotten that the bulk of *aliyah* has always occurred in conditions of acute distress, both as regards the situation of the Jews in the diaspora, and as regards the security, economic and social conditions in Israel. Today, with the majority of the Jews having left, the communities facing a danger of concrete distress in the short term, including the remaining communities in the Arab states, are few and small.

Theoretically, a mass exodus of Jews could be triggered by the destruction of the current balance between the majority society and its institutional leadership, and the Jewish minority. This

⁸ See Note 1, above.

Table 2
Summary of Principal Variables
Explaining Variance in Aliyah Rates Per 10,000 Jews
In 20 Western Countries, 1973-1986
Standardized Regression Coefficients (Beta) and
Determination Coefficients (R²)

Explanatory Variables	Plane of Analysis				
	Majority Society Abroad	Jewish Commun. Abroad	Past Immigr. Absorp.	Israeli Society	Comprehensive Model
1983-1986					
Per capita energy consump.	-.611**				-.335
Political freedom index in country of origin	-.083				
% Jewish pop. growth abroad		-.584*			-.323
% children in J. day schools		.177			
% non-veteran olim (1973 and after)			-.601**		-.098
Distance of country of origin from Israel			.450		
Reaction to war in Israel (one year later)***				.555**	.372**
Reaction to % unemployed in Israel***				.025	
R ²	.327	.345	.239	.314	.611
1973-1986					
Per capita energy consump.	-.529**				-.342**
Political freedom index in country of origin	-.180				
% Jewish pop. growth abroad		-.645*			-.369**
% children in J. day schools		.059			
% non-veteran olim (1973 and after)			-.575**		-.254
Distance of country of origin from Israel			.136		
Reaction to war in Israel (one year later)***				.580*	.346**
Reaction to % unemployed in Israel***				-.228	
R ²	.412	.410	.255	.387	.775

* Significant at .01 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** This variable was constructed on the basis of separate bi-variate analyses of the relationships between annual changes in Israeli society and changes in each country's *aliyah* rates. It expresses the promptness of response of *aliyah* fluctuations from a given country over time to events in Israel. In the regression data presented here, the connection has been examined between this response and the strength of *aliyah* regarding each of the countries investigated.

Sources: *Majority society*: United Nations, *Energy Statistics Yearbook 1984*; Freedom House, *Freedom at Issue*, January-February, 1987; *The International Human Suffering Index*, Population Crisis Committee, Washington, 1987.

Jewish communities abroad: *Jewish population estimates*, Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (see note to Table 1); *First Census of Jewish Schools in the Diaspora, 1981/2-1982/3*.

Past absorption: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), *Population & Housing Census, 1983*.

Israeli society: dummy variable (wars); CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various issues.

breakdown could develop as a result of major military, political or economic crises. Were such major crises to be fomented in the West, and particularly in the leading countries, their grave ramifications would relegate the question of *aliyah* to a secondary place as compared with more immediate and widespread concerns for survival. A catastrophic development which affects the Jewish community, on the other hand, would require dramatic changes in the currently predominant societal patterns. It should be noted, though, that the denial of the Holocaust is a worrisome phenomenon in many countries, and in certain conditions could grow into a violent, widespread and danger-fraught factor.

Several interesting lessons can be drawn from a comparative analysis of mass migrations of Jews since the Second World War (Table 3). Similar lines of development characterize Jewish emigration from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and the Soviet Union, notwithstanding that the numbers varied in each of these countries – ranging from the exodus of a highly select minority, to the total departure of whole Jewish populations. At all events, the first to leave were those harboring the strongest inclination to go to Israel. The second stage saw the departure of the largest number of emigrants, with a concomitant falloff in the proportion of those going to Israel. Those who left last, sometimes under the worst conditions, included population strata that were more solidly established economically, and more assimilated from the point of view of Jewish identity. By this stage, there was little inclination for *aliyah*. In each of the cases cited, immigration to Israel gradually gave way to a growing tendency to seek out alternative destinations in the West. Similar patterns ensued in recent years, albeit on a smaller scale, when Jews left Iran or even Western countries, such as South Africa and Argentina, in which evolving circumstances generated emigration.

Today, the two principal and most significant Jewish population reservoirs in a discussion of *aliyah* prospects are the United States and the Soviet Union. An analysis of domestic and international political conditions likely to foment a dramatic change in Soviet emigration policies is beyond the scope of this article. It is noteworthy, however, that Soviet Jewry and Western Jewry share a large number of basic socio-demographic characteristics mentioned above.⁹ Therefore, there is no reason to believe that future emigration, if any, will proceed along lines very different from those detailed in our previous discussion. Circles that have devoted themselves to the cause of Soviet Jewry often estimate the current *aliyah* potential from that country at some 400,000 persons. This figure represents about 25 per cent of the total number of Jews in the Soviet Union, according to the latest population

⁹ See M. Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War: Population and Social Structure*, Westport (Greenwood Press) 1987 (*Studies in Population and Urban Demography*, No.5.)

Table 3

*Selected Examples of Mass Jewish Migration, 1948–1985
Period, No. of Migrants, % Olim to Israel of Total Migrants**

	Stage	Country of Origin			
		Egypt	Morocco, Tunisia	Algeria	USSR
Years	Total	1948–66	1950–79	1950–79	1968–86
	I	1948–55	1950–59	1950–59	1968–75
	II	1956–59	1960–69	1960–69	1976–80
	III	1960–66	1970–79	1970–79	1981–85
No. of migrants	Total	63,000	393,000	137,000	267,000
	I	23,000	176,000	38,000	118,000
	II	34,000	192,000	98,000	133,000
	III	6,000	25,000	1,000	16,000
Average annual migrants	Total	3,300	13,100	4,550	14,050
	I	2,900	17,600	3,800	14,750
	II	8,500	19,200	9,800	26,600
	III	850	2,500	100	3,200
% to Israel of total migrants	Total	48	72	8	61
	I	61	77	11	91
	II	44	72	7	40
	III	25	40	0	26

* Crude estimates.

Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; S. DellaPergola, 'Jewish Population in the 19th and 20th Centuries', in J. M. Landau (ed.), *The Jews in Ottoman Egypt (1517–1914)* (Hebrew), Misgav Yerushalaim, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 27–62; D. Bensimon, S. DellaPergola, *La population juive de France: socio-démographie et identité*, Jerusalem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984; D. Prital (ed.), *The Jews of the Soviet Union* (Hebrew), The Public Council for Soviet Jewry, Vol. 10, 1987, p. 315.

estimates. Furthermore, the institutional systems competing with the Zionist movement in aiding and directing Jewish emigrants from countries of distress are today operating more vigorously than they did years ago. The logical conclusion is that in the event of large-scale Jewish emigration from the USSR, only a fraction will turn to Israel, as, indeed, the experience of the past few years has already shown.

Even less is there place to discuss the possibility of mass *aliyah* under conditions of distress from the United States. The factors liable to destabilize American society seem very distant and extremely fanciful. Such speculations are perhaps warranted by recent developments in one realm alone – the American economy. We refer to a troubling hypothesis, which has recently gained currency among some researchers and in the media, regarding long-term economic cycles in the United States. The economist Kondratyeff developed a theory of economic cycles of 50–60 years. Exponents of this approach maintain that some of the developments at the end of the 1980s in the international financial

system, and in the United States in particular, are highly reminiscent of the late 1920s. According to this mechanical prediction, a major financial crisis, originating in the United States, could plunge the entire West into a prolonged economic depression.¹⁰

This is not the place to analyze the validity of such conjecture. What is of interest to us is the special place held by Jews in the American economic system. The fact is that they occupy a central, prominent place that is very exposed to public opinion. A serious and prolonged crisis afflicting the stock market, monetary system, production capacity and standard of living of the United States could place Jews at the center of hostile, perhaps even violent attention. In consequence, the excellent and stable situation currently enjoyed by American Jewry could be undermined.

It should be borne in mind that in the event of an economic crisis in the United States and the Western world, Israel's position will not be an easy one. Israel will suffer due to the economic interlockings of which it partakes, and because contributions, investments and economic aid from the West will dry up. These conditions will clearly impinge upon Israel's ability to serve as a shelter for new immigrants.

Summary and Conclusions

It emerges that the question of whether mass *aliyah* is a thing of the past can be answered, at least in part, with reference to the considerable information that has accumulated about characteristics of *aliyah* and other Jewish migrations in recent years. The primary message to the Israeli public is that *aliyah* is not an esoteric phenomenon but an outcome of the action of definable factors operating with a certain regularity in three spheres: the World System, diaspora Jewry, and Israeli society. Presumably, most of the factors discussed here will continue to operate, as will the moderate *aliyah* trends of recent years.

As regards the factors that explain current trends, the most significant of them evidently relate to the World System and its stratification in the realms of political power, economic development, and individual liberties. From the point of view of Jewish-Israeli values, this conclusion is likely to look disappointing. However, a realistic perception of Israel's place in the World System in an era of attenuated ideology, could deepen our understanding of past migration movements and enable a proper deployment for those of the future. Any changes in the World System will also affect Israel, whether directly or indirectly, as well as impinge upon the standing of diaspora Jewry, and hence also of *aliyah* trends.

¹⁰ The lecture on which this article is based was delivered in May 1987. In October 1987 the stock exchanges in New York and other Western countries suffered unprecedented declines.

From a Jewish standpoint, the competition already noted between tendencies of entrenchment in local Jewish diaspora life, and growing assimilation, relegates *aliyah* to the status of a distant goal possessing very low priority for the overwhelming majority of Jews. After the Israeli option was redefined following the Six-Day War along lines more compatible with the needs and tastes of Western Jewry, the meager *aliyah* from the West may reasonably be interpreted as amounting to refusal.

From an Israeli viewpoint, the effect of changes in Israeli society on *aliyah* prospects is less than is generally thought. An obstacle that, in the present conditions, is virtually insurmountable, is the disjunction between the economic structure of the majority of diaspora Jewry – characteristic of a minority society – and the economic structure of the majority Jewish society in the State of Israel. Nonetheless, it is still possible to improve the absorption of *olim*, many of whom, especially from the West, leave Israel within a few years.

All the signs are that voluntary large-scale *aliyah* is not on the cards in the near future, although neither is there any reason to believe that the modest number of *olim* in recent years will undergo a sizable reduction. Mass *aliyah* under conditions of distress appears even less likely, and even if mass *aliyah* does develop, the circumstances of its generation would be so severe as to make it undesirable, given its highly negative implications in the human sphere and the extremely high price it will entail.

Nevertheless, Israel is not exempt from promoting *aliyah* on various planes. Above and beyond everything else, cultivation of the Jewish identity in the diaspora will contribute to the sheer survival of the Jews there; secondly, it will increase *aliyah* rather than alternative migrations if impelling political-economic conditions do arise. Cultivation of the Jewish identity in Israel could also aid *aliyah*, as it will lead to an improved absorption of *olim*, and, equally important, to a decline in emigration, which is one of the factors interfering with the development of *aliyah*.

In terms of forecasts concerning the Jewish population in Israel and their effect on strategic planning, *aliyah* today would not appear to constitute a source of growth on which to pin great hopes. Any effort to bring about an increase in the Jewish population, or at least to maintain current demographic balances, will have to rely on other sources of growth. It is possible that a systematic approach to the cultivation of family, marriage, and natality will be at the center of Israel's demographic policy in the years ahead.