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Fearing "the End of Zionism": Israeli Emigration to the United States, 1970s-1990s*

On February 19, 1981, Shmuel Lahis, the general manager of the Jewish Agency for Israel (the organization coordinating immigration absorption in Israel) resigned at the culmination of a public scandal. Three years earlier, Lahis's very appointment as the general manager had sparked public protests due to the fact that in 1948, then-First Lieutenant Lahis stood trial for killing thirty-three unarmed civilians in the village of Hula (three kilometers north of Israel) during the final campaign of the first Arab-Israeli war.[1] Lahis had initially been convicted by a military court for killing fifteen people, and received a seven-year sentence. On appeal, the supreme military court commuted his punishment to one year, stating that in the context of the war "there is no wonder a great hatred of Arabs emerged."[2] Lahis was spared prison time, and spent a year

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1. On the protests against Lahis's appointment, see: Yosef Waxman, "Lahis received a pardon and there is nothing wrong with employing him as the general manager of the agency," *Ma'ariv*, February 27, 1978. Hebrew. All Hebrew translations by author. On the Hula massacre in the context of other massacres conducted during the 1948 war, see: Adam Raz, "Dir Yasin was not the only massacre. Exposé: the hidden protocols of 48,'" *Ha'aretz*, December 9, 2021, accessed on June 28, 2022, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-12-09/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/classified-docs-reveal-deir-yassin-massacre-wasnt-the-only-one-perpetrated-by-isra/0000017f-e496-d7b2-a77f-e79772340000, Hebrew. For the recollection of Yosef Shai-El, one of the soldiers serving under Lahis at the time, see: Yosef Shai-El, "The First Eighty Years of My Life," last accessed September 16, 2021, http://www.oocities.org/sepi_shayel/My_first_80_years.pdf, Hebrew; For the recollection of Dov Yirmiah, Lahis's commander who had arrested Lahis on November 1, 1948, see: "Hirbat Lahis," *HaOlam HaZe*, March 1, 1978, 27. For reportage from the time of the Lahis trial, see: "Officer Accused of Murdering Prisoners in the Supreme Court," *Ha-Tzofe*, January 10, 1949; For details of the affair in Lahis's obituary, see: Ofer Aderet, "'Exploded the House on the Prisoners': The Commander of the Hula Massacre Died," *Ha'aretz*, March 14, 2019, last accessed April 14, 2021, https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/obit/1.7022098, Hebrew. In addition, when Lahis took the role in 1978, veterans of the paramilitary organization Irgun accused Lahis of shooting one of their men while Lahis held him in custody in 1948. In response to the allegations Lahis suggested a warning shot from his gun might have ricocheted and hit the person in question. See: Yosef Waxman, "Confession of the Agency General Manager: 'I shot, probably by mistake, and injured an immigrant from Altalena,'" *Ma'ariv*, December 28, 1978, Hebrew.

2. Quoted in: Aderet, "'Exploded the House on the Prisoners.'"

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in an open military base instead. In 1955 he received a presidential pardon.[3] Lahis began working as a regional legal advisor for the Jewish Agency in 1961, moving up the ranks to the position of general manager in 1978. Arie Dulzin, the chairman of the Jewish Agency, rebuffed protests against Lahis's appointment by saying that as Lahis had been pardoned, and his "was not an act which carries a stigma," the appointment was conisdered unproblematic.[4] Lahis's military record did not keep him out of the job. Instead, Lahis would lose his job for an act Israeli officialdom could simply not pardon: authoring a report detailing the grievances of Israelis who chose to emigrate from Israel to the United States.

Just a few months earlier, Lahis had been doing so well—spending two weeks in the Waldorf Astoria hotel and carrying the burden of a critical Zionist mission: investigating what reasons could impel Israelis to emigrate to U.S. shores.[5] Lahis and his entourage of agency functionaries travelled between New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, holding informal meetings with Israelis residing in the United States. On his return to Israel in November, Lahis submitted the confidential report (running over 100 pages) to the hands of Deputy Prime Minister Simha Erlich. The study stirred bitter indignation among Israeli officials. The complaint against Lahis, repeated in politicians' speeches, committee meetings, and the pages of the daily press, was that, egregiously, he interviewed the emigrants, and showed interest in their reasons for leaving Israel. By treating the emigrants' words as relevant input, the head of the Prime Minister's office warned, Lahis "created and amplified a psychosis of 'Yerida.'"[6]

As much as Israeli functionaries willed a 'psychosis of Yerida' to be a figment of Lahis's invention, fears of Jewish emigration out of Israel troubled Zionists throughout the era of Zionist settlement. In his treatment of Jewish emigration from Israel after World War II, historian Ori Yehudai demonstrates that Jewish emigrants from Israel became "a sort of pariah group in the postwar Jewish world."[7] The very terminology Zionists used in their discussion of immigration fluctuations carried strict value judgements: "Aliyah" (ascension) referred to those who chose to immigrate to Israel and lived up to Zionist imperatives, while those who committed a "Yerida" (descension), or emigrated, were seen as failed Zionists.[8] Fears of "Yerida" have always been bound in Zionist discourse

3. "Hirbat Lahis"; "Officer Lahis Pardoned by President," *HaBoker*, May 19, 1950, Hebrew.

4. See: "No Stigma Attached," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 4 (1978): 143–45; quoted at 145.

5. Yaacov Haelyon, "'The Discovery of America' by the Jewish Agency General Manager who 'depicted' the state of emigration to the U.S.," *Ma'ariv*, January 2, 1981, Hebrew.

6. "Shmuelevich: The Lahis Report is Based on the Input of 'One Woman who Mentioned,'" *Ma'ariv*, January 1, 1981, Hebrew.

7. See Ori Yehudai, *Leaving Zion: Jewish Emigration from Palestine and Israel after World War II* (Cambridge, 2020), 180.

8. For an etymology of the term "Aliyah" in Zionist parlance, see: Gur Alroey, *Unpromising Land: Jewish Migration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA, 2014), 4–5.

with an existential security danger—a threat to the survival of the Zionist enterprise as a whole.

Israeli fears of Jewish emigration to the United States mapped onto fraught, yet rarely considered, Israeli understandings of U.S. temptations and threats. This article examines the transnational conversation surrounding Jewish Israeli emigration to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Israelis discursively mobilized the phenomenon of emigration to the United States in the service of various, sometimes contradictory, political and emotional imperatives. Israeli officials worked hard for many decades to sustain and grow the political and material support that U.S. Jewry provided to Israel—both through official lobbying organs such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and through other channels. And yet, the relationship between Israel and U.S. Jewry was riddled with tensions. The very idea of an Israeli choosing to join that same prosperous U.S. Jewish community with which Israel was so tightly linked was broadly construed as objectionable. As a general rule, the official Israeli position considered those Jews who actively chose the United States over Israel as traitors to Zionism. The disdain towards emigrants was couched not only in broad Zionist terms, but also in specific contempt towards a U.S. culture framed—in the context of the emigration discussion—as inferior. Israeli emigrants to the United States, according to popular depictions, preferred a shallow and materialistic diasporic existence over national fulfilment in Israel.[9]

The perception that emigration to the United States was a desertion of the Israeli homeland remained common in Israeli public discourse throughout that period and to this day. But, this article also shows that Israeli rejection of those who emigrated to the United States operated with clear exceptions and morphed through the 1980s and early 1990s. Those emigrants who made a fortune in the United States or helped Israeli goals through philanthropy or political lobbying efforts gained a uniquely positive social status: their emigration became branded as a national mission and a demonstration of the Israeli's ability to make it in the big leagues. By the early 1990s, Israelis came to see spending a period of time in the United States as a legitimate and sometimes necessary stepping-stone in the career of the Israeli leader—the mark of an accomplished individual, who knows the ways of the metropole.

By examining these dynamics, this article advances three arguments that should inform our understanding of U.S.-Israeli relations. First, I show that the tradition of diaspora rejection shaped Jewish Israelis' judgement of Jewish Americans throughout the era of Israeli statehood, well beyond the 1950s. A recent Special Issue by *Israel Studies* focuses on the tensions between Israel and U.S. Jewry around the question of immigration, in relation to the Ben-Gurion-Blaustein accords in 1950. The 'understanding' authored by Israeli Prime

9. The emphasis on empty U.S. materialism echoes the socialist anti-emigration rhetoric in post-World War II Eastern Europe. See: Tara Zahra, *The Great Migration: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York, 2016), 222.

Minister David Ben Gurion together with Jacob Blaustein, the head of the American Jewish Committee, stated that U.S. Jews' first loyalty would always be to the United States, and that Israel does not make claims in the name of U.S. Jewry.[10] Recent studies, however, detail the willingness of Jewish American organizations to do the bidding of the Israeli government, shaping U.S. policies and opinions in the process.[11] While Israeli state officials recognized Jewish American organizations as an asset, they also understood the very prosperity and pull of U.S. Jewry as a threat.

Second, the focus on emigration allows us to recognize a dominant, yet little studied, strain of Israeli competitiveness with, and condescension towards, the United States. While U.S. politicians came to habitually boast of their country's unparalleled material and political assistance to Israel, Israelis have often struggled accepting Israel's dependence on U.S. support.[12] In an effort to alleviate the sense of inferiority and dependence, Israelis sometimes related the material wealth of U.S. Jewry to flaccidity and mental emptiness, juxtaposing it against an Israeli existence they defined within the terms of enduring national, and specifically military, commitments.[13] Indeed, Israeli authorities often depicted those emigrating out of Israel as shirking military duty, and not without reason - seeing as emigrants often complained about the demands of military service. Not all Israelis believed the self-comforting fantasy juxtaposing Israel as a space of righteous collective struggle posed against a United States of commodity-fueled superficiality, but the political utility of that fiction remained.

Third, this article shows that while diaspora rejection has remained dominant in Israeli discourse to this day, Israelis came to legitimize those emigrants who made material or political capital in the United States and invested that capital in Israeli interests. Israelis lent greater legitimacy to those emigrants out of a growing popular belief that these 'insiders' learned the American game and

10. See: Omri Ascher, "The Ben-Gurion-Blaustein 'Understanding' as a Historiographical Yardstick," *Israel Studies* 25, no. 3 (2020): 33–48. Also see: Zvi Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish Leadership and Israel, 1948–1957* (Syracuse, NY, 2005); Ariel L. Feldestein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism, and American Jewry 1948–1963* (New York, 2006).

11. See: Natan Aridan, *Advocating for Israel: Diplomats and Lobbyists from Truman to Nixon* (Lexington, MA, 2017); Doug Rossinow, "'The Edge of the Abyss': The Origins of the Israel Lobby, 1949–54," *Modern American History* 1, no. 1 (2018): 23–43; Walter Hixson, *Israel's Armor: The Israel Lobby and the First Generation of the Palestine Conflict* (Cambridge, 2019).

12. Of the normative statements of commitment to Israel in U.S. politics, see: Shaul Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind: The Cultural Politics of U.S.-Israeli Relations, 1958–88* (Cambridge, 2018), 333–4. Of the measures of U.S. support, see: Jeremy Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, February 18, 2022, last accessed March 22, 2022, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf. Zvi Sobel provides a rich discussion of the "deep sense of national inferiority regarding America" set around the topic of emigration from 1980s Israel. See: Zvi Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986), 193.

13. As historian Orna Sasson-Levy shows, Zionist culture traditionally accentuated masculine identities in the effort to construct a "new Jew," one defined above all else by commitment to military service. See: Orna Sasson-Levy, "Military, Masculinity, and Citizenship: Tensions and Contradictions in the Experience of Blue-Collar Soldiers," *Identities, Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10, no. 3 (2003): 319–45; quoted at 323.

would now be well-inclined to use their success to sponsor Israeli enterprises, or to use their know-how to dupe the Americans to further Israeli interests. Israeli emigrants in the United States often attempted to package their U.S. success story in precisely these terms to Hebrew-speaking audiences, performing their continued fealty to Israel.[14]

Emerging from these arguments, this article also seeks to join and advance two broader methodological interventions in the field of the United States in the world. The first is the move to incorporate the analytical tools and terminology of the history of emotions into the study of international relations. Employing William Reddy's analytical framework, this article treats Israel as an "emotional regime" and examines how the expected normative emotive expressions towards the phenomenon of emigration to the United States changed through time—moving from fear to opportunism. Reddy suggests that all emotional regimes require "individuals to express normative emotions and to avoid deviant emotions."[15] In the Israeli context, normative emotional expressions required rebuking those who emigrated. The article argues that we need to take the social function of emotive expressions seriously if we are to better understand the formation of national interests within international relations. In the context of U.S.-Israeli relations, the analysis of emotive expressions and emotional regimes also changes how we conceive of the relevant cast of characters in the relationship, and expands the tensions that define it. In this sense the article responds to Petra Goedde's call for historians to "incorporate cultural values, prejudices, and emotion into any study of international relations" in order to explain human interaction beyond "the international stage of high power politics."[16] Emotive expressions of emigration fears were not always sincere or sensible, but they affected the dynamics of U.S.-Israeli relations in ways we need to comprehend.[17]

Secondly, the article joins a powerful push from historians, primarily historians working with non-U.S. sources, who seek to cast the field of the United States in the world in ways that do not privilege interest in U.S. over non-U.S. history. My approach to this problem builds on Ussama Makdisi's urging that historians of U.S. foreign relations should "encourage a new sensibility that can engage in more than one historiographic conversation, and that can historicize

14. Interviewing Israeli emigrants to the United States in 1986, anthropologist Zvi Sobel identified a sense of change—defining it as "an increasingly digestible even somewhat fashionable move in the local constellation." See: Sobel, *Migrants*, 202.

15. See: William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 124–5.

16. See: Petra Goedde, "Power, Culture, and the Rise of Transnational History in the United States," *The International History Review* 40, no. 3 (2018): 592–608; quoted at 602.

17. Paul Kramer investigates similar linkage between emotive expressions, immigration, and power relations in his discussion of U.S. fears of the penetration of fifth columnists in the 1940s. See: Paul A. Kramer, "The Geopolitics of Mobility: Immigration Policy and American Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 2 (2018): 393–439, esp. 396.

non-American perspectives as deeply as it does American ones."[18] It is important to stress that this approach is not quixotic. This is not a retirement from the study of power or of causality, but rather a commitment to gaining a more accurate understanding of U.S.-Israeli relations.[19] Accordingly, multiple vantage points inform this treatment: Israelis who emigrated to the United States (many of whom became Americans), Jewish-American organizations that attempted to assist in their assimilation, the Israeli writers and cultural producers who commented, often bitterly, on emigration to the United States, U.S. officials who championed the freedom of movement of Soviet Jews, and Israeli officials who saw emigration as an existential threat. As immigration historian Donna R. Gabaccia has shown in the context of her discussion of immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrants "come face to face with the increasing power of nation-states during their wide-ranging migrations."[20] Multiplicity of actors, therefore, does not imply equal agency: the fears of Israeli state officials were particularly important, because they wielded significant power within this dynamic. It is to these fears we now turn.

AMERICAN SHADOWS

Foreboding that U.S. temptations might lure Jews away from life in Israel had been part of Zionist concerns long before the 1970s, and not without reason. As immigration scholar Yinon Cohen shows, through Israel's early decades and to the twenty-first century, the United States remained "the destination country for at least half of Israeli emigrants."[21] A century earlier, the overwhelming number of Jews who left Eastern Europe looking for a safer life already chose to migrate to the United States, rather than to Palestine. Whereas over one million Jews arrived at the United States between 1905–14, Jewish migrants to Palestine over the same period numbered circa 35,000.[22] Even when a dramatic

18. Ussama Makdisi, "The privilege of acting upon others: the middle eastern exception to anti-exceptionalist histories of the US and the world," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, eds. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 2016), 203–216; quoted at 210–11. Also see Goedde, "Power, Culture, and the Rise of Transnational History," 602. Historian Donna R. Gabaccia pioneers the "multidirectional" approach to migration history. See: Donna Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1115–34; quoted at 1116.

19. For a recent discussion of causality and transnational history in the context of U.S. foreign relations, see: Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, "Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (2020): 38–55.

20. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?," 1116.

21. See: Yinon Cohen, "Migration Patterns to and from Israel," *Contemporary Jewry* 29, no. 2 (2009): 115–125; quoted at 119.

22. Frank Wolff, "Global Walls and Global Movement: New Destinations in Jewish Migration, 1918–1939," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 44, no. 2–3 (2014): 187–204; quoted at 190; Alroey, *Unpromising Land*, 106; Tobias Brinkmann, "Points of Passage: Reexamining Jewish Migrations from Eastern Europe after 1880," in *Points of Passage: Jewish Transmigrants*

increase in Jewish migration to Palestine occurred, from 1925 onwards, it was caused, as historian Gur Alroey shows, because "American immigration quotas came into effect" and not because of spontaneous Zionist devotion.[23] The calculus of immigration was not abstract, but related, in the minds of the Zionist leadership, to their assessment of the very possibility of establishing a Jewish-majority sovereignty in Palestine.[24]

While the official Zionist position on demography changed through time, long before statehood, executive members of the Jewish Agency considered the fact that Arab Palestinians made up the majority population a difficulty on the path to the formation of a parliamentary democracy with a Jewish majority.[25] The expulsion and flight of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their land during the 1947–9 War and the structures put in place to prevent their return, coupled with the mass Jewish immigration into Israel after 1948, turned the demographic balance on its head, creating a Jewish majority.[26] Israeli officials have enacted a variety of policies and laws to diminish the numbers of Palestinians, which they considered to be a demographic threat, and to keep Palestinian refugees from reclaiming their homes.[27] Demographic concerns have retained their centrality in Zionist discourse through the era of Israeli statehood, well beyond the circles of the radical right.[28] The relevance of immigration politics to this broader demographic calculation exacerbated, from a Zionist perspective, the fear of losing Jews. It is impossible to understand the emotional charge Israelis invested in the discussion around "Yerida" without

from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain 1880–1914, ed. Brinkmann (New York, 2013), 18.

23. Alroey, *Unpromising Land*, 17.

24. See: Anat Leibler, "Counting People: The Co-Production of Ethnicity and Jewish Majority in Israel-Palestine," in *Taking Stock: Cultures of Enumeration in Contemporary Jewish Life*, eds. Deborah Dash-Moore and Michal Kravel-Tovi, (Binghamton, NY, 2016), 114–40; Endika Rodrigues Martin, "Settler Colonial Demographics: Zionist Land Purchases and Immigration During the British Mandate in Palestine," *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 4 (2019): 486–509; Aviva Halamish, "Zionist Immigration Policy Put to the Test: Historical Analysis of Israel's Immigration Policy, 1948–51," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 119–34.

25. Nimrod Lin, "The Arithmetic of Rights: Zionist Intellectuals Imagining the Arab Minority May-July 1938," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 6 (2018): 948–64; esp. 948–955.

26. Indeed, the Zionist displacement of Palestinians pushed many Palestinians to seek refuge in the United States. See: Louise Cainkar, "Palestinian Women in American Society: The Interaction of Social Class, Culture and Politics," in *The development of Arab-American identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor, MI, 1994), 85–105; Tom Brocket, "From 'in-betweenness' to 'positioned belongings': second-generation Palestinian-Americans negotiate the tensions of assimilation and transnationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, no. 16 (2020): 134–54; Faidah abu-Ghazahle, *Ethnic Identity of Palestinian Immigrants in the United States: The Role of Material Cultural Artifacts* (El Paso, TX, 2010); Loren D. Lybarger, *Palestinian Chicago: Identity in Exile* (Berkeley, CA, 2020).

27. See: Nadim M. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Settler-colonial citizenship: conceptualizing the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens," *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, no. 3 (2015): 205–225; esp. 210–11.

28. Ian S. Lustick, "What Counts is the Counting: Statistical Manipulation as a Solution to Israel's 'Demographic Problem'," *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (2013): 185–205; esp. 185.

realizing its relevance to core Israeli perceptions of national security and of governance that are bound to a numerical comparison of Jews and Arabs in the territory under Israeli sovereignty. Jewish emigration, in that calculus, subtracted from the Jewish column, and threatened the precarious numerical majority of Jews in Israel.

The United States was the most popular destination for Israeli emigrants in the first two decades of the state's existence. 57,675 Israelis emigrated to U.S. shores at that time, amounting to more than thirty percent of total emigration. Because of U.S. immigration quotas, which discriminated according to country of origin, demand for visas far outstripped supply. In 1955, for example, only about four percent of Israeli applicants for immigration visas to the United States managed to obtain one. Some Israelis were so keen to move to the United States that a cottage industry developed in the 1950s matchmaking Israelis with U.S. partners for immigration purposes.[29]

Israeli elites, meanwhile, framed the prosperous U.S. Jewry as hypocrites for not making the move in the other direction—from the United States to Israel. Even while the philanthropy of U.S. Jewry helped fund the young state and sponsor the settlement of its immigrants, many Israelis resented that U.S. Jews fashioned themselves good Zionists without migrating to Israel. Poet and columnist Nathan Alterman famously scorned U.S. Jews in his 1950 poem "The New Pumbedita":

It's just strange that their thinking

in only one direction

is moving:

They strive to advocate

Why they shouldn't

immigrate.[30]

The poem disapproved of those who professed staunch Zionist commitments from a safe distance, without tying their fates to the Zionist experiment. Pumbedita refers to a Babylonian city where Jewish life prospered during the period of Babylonian captivity in the sixth century before common era. The neologism 'New Pumbedita' aimed to brand New York, and the United States by extension, as the modern site of voluntary Jewish exile. The poem joined a broader cultural tendency in 1950s and 1960s Israel: an appetite to overcome

29. Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 181–205.

30. Nathan Alterman, "The New Pumbedita," originally published in his column in the largest Israeli daily *Davar* in 1950, translated to English by Lisa Katz and published in *Israel Studies* 25, no. 3 (2020): 6–7; quoted at 7.

the American temptation, and to prove the superiority of the Zionists over their Jewish American brethren.[31]

The Israeli triumph in the June War of 1967 marked the finest hour for many Israelis who, for the first time in their country's existence, felt their country becoming the envy of U.S. eyes. Israelis compared the apparent ease of their own victory to the U.S. struggle in the Vietnam War.[32] Israelis also saw greater success in attracting immigrants at the time. U.S. immigration to Israel rose 500 per cent in the years following the 1967 War: just over 40,000 U.S. immigrants arrived in Israel between 1967 and 1973.[33]

Israeli national pride was at such a peak that even the headliners of Israel's counterculture scene romanticized the national home. Between 1970–72, Yonatan Geffen, a bohemian young poet who happened to be the nephew of Israel's security minister Moshe Dayan, spent his time between London and Cambridge, moving among Israeli artists. During a night of jamming with fellow Israeli musicians in a London apartment, Geffen wrote a song called "Yonatan Come Home" ["Yonatan Sa Habaita"].[34] The popular song, recorded by singer Oshik Levy and released in Israel once Geffen returned in early 1973, preached to Israeli listeners that Israel was still the only place where an Israeli could find a true home. The first stanza of the song reads:

Big City with No Soldiers, and It's Impossible to Sleep

Bells Ring on Sunday Morning

A Cold Moon and Towers, and a Real Winter

I Feel Just Great—but It's not my Home.[35]

The song's music, rhythm, and lyrics portrayed foreign capitals as pretty, yet empty, shells: "the people are healthy, but the sun here is ill." The city is never named, and seems interchangeable, as the lyrics recite a cycle of European capitals—"maybe we'll go to Amsterdam, to Rome, or Paris." The line also connotes the motif of the wandering Jew aimlessly drifting through the diaspora. By contrast, the message repeated in the chorus sings in a definite imperative: "Yonatan, Go Home. Take a Train, take a plane. Bring a Gift for your Son. Go to the Land of Israel." The song implored Israelis to recognize a stay abroad

31. Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind*, 58–73.

32. Ibid., 160–76.

33. The Israeli press recorded these numbers as provided by Israeli immigration officials. See: Ben J. Frank, "Aliyah from America—As an Actual Resort," *Davar*, April 9, 1974; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2019), 316; Howard Morely Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York, 2007), ch. XXIII.

34. Noam Rapaport, *Israeli Rock: 1967–1973* [Rock Israeli] (Tel Aviv, 2018), 252. Hebrew.

35. Yonatan Geffen, "Yonatan Sa Habita," 1970, sang and released by Oshik Levy, 1973, Hebrew.

[defined in Hebrew as "out of the country"] as ever only temporary, suggesting that real life could only proceed back in Israel.[36]

The shock of the October War of 1973 (defined by many Israeli writers as "the failure"), turned latent Israeli concern with emigration to explicit fear. Whereas previously a sense of boastful pride defined 'Sabra' culture ('Sabra' is the colloquial term defining a Jew who was born in Israel or pre-state Palestine), following the war even comfortable, Ashkenazi (originating from Europe), middle class Israelis increasingly criticized their state's leadership. Demobilised soldiers gathered to demonstrate against Security Minister Moshe Dayan.[37] Both Chief of Staff David Elazar and Prime Minister Golda Meir resigned in April 1974. U.S. immigration to Israel, which amounted to 9,100 people in 1970, dropped sharply to 3,500 people by 1974.[38] Emigration out of Israel, to the United States in particular, increased. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in November 1974 that 30,000 Israelis who held U.S. passports considered emigrating to the United States.[39]

Israeli officials in the late 1970s found it difficult to determine precise numbers of Israeli emigrants to the United States.[40] Reports had the number of Israeli passport holders living abroad in the late 1970s at somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000.[41] A 1986 article in the *New York Times* recalled the story of an Israeli woman who "went to New York for one year—15 years ago."[42] The distinction between short-term and long-term emigrants was opaque in many measures, often unknown to the emigrants themselves at the moment of departure.

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36. The song belongs within a longer tradition of Israeli songs on the theme of emigration, stretching into the twenty-first century. See: Jasmin Habib and Amir Locker-Biletzki, "Hama venehederet (Hot and Wonderful): Home, Belonging, and the Image of the Yored in Israeli Pop Music," *Shofar* 36, no. 1 (2018): 1–28.

37. On Israeli unrest following the war, see Jacob Eriksson, "Israel and the October War," in *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Diplomacy, Legacy*, ed. Asaf Sinevir (Oxford, 2013), 29–47.

38. See: Uzi Rebhun and Lilach Lev-Ari, *American Israelis: Migration, Transnationalism, and Diasporic Identity* (Leiden, 2010), 16; Terence Smith, "Immigration to Israel Declines Sharply as Result of October War in the Middle East," *New York Times*, August 15, 1974.

39. See: William J. Drummond, "Israel's Mood: The Many Hardships Take Their Toll," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1974; "Sapir to the United States of America," *Davar*, February 19, 1975; Frank, "Alyiah from America."

40. Baruch Levi (Prime Minister's Advisor on Welfare) to Eli Mizrahi (Head of Prime Minister's Office), "The Memo of Mr. Asher Hasin to the Minister Gideon Hauser," March 26, 1976, "Yerida"—the Office of the Prime Minister's Adviser on Welfare, 1976, GL-13891/8, Israeli State Archives, Jerusalem, Israel, Hebrew. Part of the difficulty determining the number is that Israelis who left Israel often did so unofficially (at least at the start), and incrementally. See: Natan Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners: The Case of Israeli Immigrants in the Chicago Area," *International Sociology* 9, no. 4 (1994): 431–445.

41. In 1981 the Israeli National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) stated that in the period 1948–1979 the number of emigrants was 342,100. For the numbers as counted by the NBS, see: "Shmuelevich: The Lahis Report." For other assessments, see: Jonathan Broder, "Exodus 77: Jews are Leaving Israel," *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1977.

42. Thomas Friedman, "America in the Mind of Israel," *New York Times*, May 25, 1986.

The Israeli arguments around the crisis of "Yerida" to the United States after 1973 were made in explicitly emotive terms. The most memorable example of this was an off-the-cuff 1976 comment by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in which he famously defined emigrants as "the scum of all the weaklings."[43] Employing an emotive register, many Israeli speakers expressed their disgust, disappointment, and contempt towards the emigrants. Such emotive utterances performed political acts: they signaled the speaker's normative commitment to Zionism, and aimed to strictly censor talk that legitimized emigration as deviant within the Israeli emotional regime.[44] Israeli officials regularly resorted to that emotive toolbox, making value judgements about the assumed weakness of those who emigrated. The strictness of the Israeli emotive regime around the topic of emigration is best evidenced by the importance the Israeli government dedicated to the matter.

"THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL WOULD FALL"

While emigration has been a long-term concern for Israeli authorities, the choice of Israeli emigrants to move to the United States in the 1970s particularly irked Israeli leaders partially because of the particular diplomatic dynamics of the post-October War period. Considering Israel's privileged position with respect to U.S. power (no country received more U.S. financial and military support in the late twentieth century), Israeli bitterness towards the United States as a legitimate destination for Israeli emigrants might seem puzzling. And yet, Israeli suspicions regarding U.S. diplomatic designs in the mid-1970s grew even as U.S. support packages to Israel soared to new heights. Israeli commentators saw emergent U.S. criticisms of Israeli militarism and the occupation of territories in the 1967 War as hypocritical, considering the long history of U.S. military expansion and settler colonialism.[45] U.S. President Gerald Ford's 1975 statement of a "revaluation" of U.S. policies in the Middle East, which explicitly mentioned Israel, contributed to the Israeli indignation. Both Israeli and Jewish-American sympathizers suspected that U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger might be selling Israel out.[46] In practice the U.S. pressure on Israel was more performative than substantive. Congress appropriated $2.2 billion for Israel (most of it in grant military aid) in December 1973. In 1981, U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig testified to Congress that "a central aspect of US policy since the October 1973 war has been to ensure that Israel maintains

43. "Rabin: A Change in American Position Regarding Palestinian Issue is Predicted," *Davar*, May 6, 1976, Hebrew.

44. On the politics of emotive discourse, see: Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 124–5.

45. Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind*, 251–2.

46. "Demonstrators in New York: Kissinger is a Traitor," *Ma'ariv*, October 20, 1976, Hebrew. For analysis of the U.S. approach to postwar diplomacy, see: Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), 145–82; Asaf Siniver, "US Foreign Policy and the Kissinger Strategem," in *The Yom Kippur War*, ed. Siniver, 85–100.

a qualitative military edge."[47] On the diplomatic front, the United States vehemently rejected United Nations Resolution 3379 in 1975, which asserted that Zionism was a form of racism. The embattled Israeli leadership, however, remained suspicious of U.S. diplomatic activism in the Middle East throughout the mid-1970s.

To be sure, the growing influence that Jewish American organizations and lobbyists came to have on U.S. policymaking strengthened Israel's leverage in the Capitol's corridors of power. But the irrefutable fact that Jews could prosper in the United States also weakened arguments for Israel's singular importance as a national home for the Jews. This dynamic came to a head in the mid-1970s around the 'refuseniks' crisis. Refuseniks were Soviet Jews who wanted to preserve their cultural identity or to leave the Soviet Union, and were persecuted and imprisoned by Soviet authorities. In 1971 U.S. President Richard Nixon's administration decided to lift entry quotas on Soviet Jews, in case more of them would be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. The U.S. conversation about the refuseniks was anchored partially within an effort to prove the moral superiority of the United States over its Cold War rival.[48] From the Israeli perspective, the concerns were different. Many refuseniks, who came to Israel or waited in transit in Rome and Vienna, tried to go to the United States instead. The Jewish Agency identified this development as a threat that could lead to "a large scale emigration from Israel."[49] This Israeli fear increased following the October War, as immigration to Israel plummeted by thirty-three percent in the first six months of 1974.[50]

In June 1974, just days after entering office, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin hosted a confidential conference in his office in Jerusalem with the heads of the Jewish Agency, HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and the American Joint Distribution Committee (the 'Joint'), and immigration absorption heads in Israel. The purpose of the meeting was to impress on U.S. organizations (HIAS and the Joint) the necessity of withholding U.S. assistance from anyone seeking to leave Israel to settle in the United States.[51] Rabin warned the heads of HIAS and the Joint that for Israel to equate a "Yored" choosing to leave Israel with a refugee in need of assistance from U.S. NGOs, would

47. See: Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," 5, 14.

48. Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 111–3. For a comprehensive study of the refuseniks, see: Gal Beckerman, *When They come for US, We'll be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry* (Boston, MA, 2012).

49. Confidential memorandum from Gaynor I. Jacobson, director of HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), to HIAS Administrative Committee, October 3, 1973, Box 508, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) Collection, I-363, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History (hereafter CJH), New York City, NY.

50. Smith, "Immigration to Israel Declines Sharply."

51. Israeli pressure on the Joint and on HIAS not to engage activities related to emigration from Israel dates back to the 1950s. See: Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 190.

amount to "the end of Zionism."[52] Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Alon added that "the government of Israel would fall" on a vote of no confidence in the Knesset if they gave the slightest hint of legitimizing emigration.[53]

HIAS reluctantly promised to withdraw support from 'Noshrim' ['Dropouts'] (a neologism designating those emigrants who arrived at Israel but then decided to leave it). But the dilemma remained alive through the late 1970s, because senior HIAS officials saw it as their duty to assure "freedom of choice" for Soviet emigres.[54] Some Soviet Jews who were already in Israel wrote letters to their relatives in the Soviet Union, advising them not to come to Israel.[55] Thousands of Jews who left the Soviet Union and refused to continue to Israel were stuck in Italy, Austria, and Belgium, without access to assistance from Jewish American welfare agencies.[56] Émigrés stuck in Belgium awaiting visas for the United States told the British *Observer* that they had initially given Israel a try "in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, when the entire economy was dislocated" and found no suitable position or comfortable place to live, before deciding to leave for the United States.[57]

In some cases, U.S. authorities helped Noshrim due to the perception that they were held in Israel against their will—as illustrated by the story of Mr. Joseph Kushnir. Kushnir arrived in Israel (probably from the Soviet Union) in July 1973 and was joined by his wife in December. On April 2, 1974, Kushnir applied for a laissez-passer to Belgium, probably with the hope of later joining his sister in Brooklyn, NY. Kushnir was refused and was forced into military service instead. Kushnir spent the next two years in the Israeli military. Eight days after his discharge on April 19, 1976, Kushnir and his family boarded a flight to Italy. An officer for Immigration and Naturalization Services at the U.S. Department of Justice assured Kushnir's sister that "since your brother was forced into the Israeli army and voluntarily remained in Israel for only eight months," he would provide him with a conditional entry application to the

52. Summary of HIAS Administrative Committee Meeting, July 17, 1974, Box 508, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

53. Record of Meeting, June 1974, Box 508, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH. Interestingly, when Menachem Begin became Prime Minister in May 1977, he adopted a more relaxed line on the question of those who failed to settle in Israel and sought to leave. See: Fred A. Lazin, "'Freedom of Choice': Israeli Efforts to Prevent Soviet Jewish Emigres to Resettle in the United States," *Review of Policy Research* 23, no. 2 (2006): 387–411; esp. 398.

54. On HIAS policies in the late 1970s, and the endorsement of "freedom of choice" by HIAS President Carl Glick, see: Lazin, "'Freedom of Choice,'" 396–7.

55. Edith Rogovin Frankel, *Old Lives and New: Soviet Immigrants in Israel and America* (Lanham, MD, 2012), 75.

56. HIAS statistics found 3091 "USSR Yordim" (a term referring to Soviet Jews who refused to settle in Israel or tried to settle there and then left) received assistance from non-Jewish voluntary agencies just between January and September 1974. See: Gaynor I. Jacobson (HIAS director) to Pinhas Sapir (Chairman of the Jewish Agency), October 7, 1974, Box 689, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

57. Chaim Bermant, "When the Running had to Stop," *The Observer*, December 15, 1974, Box 508, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

United States.[58] The document detailing Kushnir's story is available within HIAS records, probably because of the unique intervention of the Justice Department. But the crisis was broader. "One Russian Jew in Rome" a HIAS report told, "has written he will set fire to himself in a public square" should he be denied a visa to the United States.[59]

The question of the destination of Soviet Jewish emigres continued to press on Israeli relations with the Jewish American leadership. Examining these tensions between the 1960s to the 1990s, political scientist Fred Lazin concludes that American Jewish leaders reluctantly accepted the "restriction of entry of Soviet Jews to the United States and of directing the overwhelming majority to Israel."[60] Many Jewish Americans resented the fact that the Israeli leadership sought to restrict freedom of choice for the Soviet emigres.

The fears among the Rabin government that their coalition would collapse if they appeared to legitimize emigration in any way were not baseless. The pages of the Israeli press were packed with vilification of the 'Yordim'—those who chose to leave Israel. The title of a 1975 column in the newspaper *Ma'ariv* exclaimed defiantly that "our strength grows with each further emigrant" leaving the country. Its author, Tamar Avidar, called on "whoever does not want and is not ready to be a partner to what is created here, for good or for bad—let him pack his family and his belongings and go search for his luck across the sea."[61] The piece alluded to some military and economic difficulties related to life in Israel ("serving in the army, going to reserve duty and to wars, working three shifts to make end's meet"), and conceded that "this moment" was a difficult one.[62] "History teaches us," the piece pontificated, "that always during the hard years there was a serious withdrawal of residents here. Those who stay are the stronger, the more stable, the braver, those who could withstand the temptation of a life more comfortable (maybe) and emptier (certainly)."[63] Such commentary branded Israeli difficulties as the foundations of a life of substance, compared to a U.S. alternative tagged as vacuous.

Part of what irked observers of post-October War emigration was that unlike the trends that defined previous emigration waves, 1970s emigrants were often Israelis of relatively comfortable middle-class backgrounds, including kibbutz members and veterans of prestigious military units. A study conducted by the

58. D. E. Powell, Acting Assistant Commissioner of Inspections, Immigration and Naturalization Services at the United States Department of Justice, to Rita Kushnir of 3619 Bedford Avenue, July 22, 1977, Box 689, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

59. Bermant, "When the Running had to Stop." The case of a Soviet immigrant to Israel who took his own life by jumping out of the hostel where Israeli authorities put him made it to the pages of the *New York Times* in 1980: "Israeli Immigrants Seize Hostels to Protest Conditions," *New York Times*, August 26, 1980.

60. Lazin, "Freedom of Choice," 402.

61. Tamar Avidar, "From Emigrant to Emigrant—Our Power Grows," *Ma'ariv*, January 16, 1975, Hebrew.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

Kibbutz movement in 1985 found that about 1,100 Kibbutz-born people (about six percent of total Kibbutz-born) were at that point in time at least three years abroad—most of them in North America.[64] Disenchanted with Israeli life following the war, thousands of Israelis chose to leave, and the largest share of emigrants made their way to American shores. Many Israeli commentators agreed with Rabin's sharp words, seeing emigrants as "unrooted and weak of character."[65] Those who moved to the United States were suspected of excessive materialism, leaving home for "laundry machines and stereo."[66] A writer in the daily *Ma'ariv* opined that emigration was "a matter of pride," and that the emigrant's "lack of self-respect" is something "not even money" could compensate for.[67] Others complained that emigrants who moved to the United States did so for "their egotistical enjoyment."[68] Seeking to prove they were tough on emigrants, politicians proposed a range of harsh measures in the mid-1970s, ranging from taking passports away from emigrants (to stop them from leaving), through socially boycotting them.[69]

Obsession with the specter of emigration was palpable in government-run television and radio, with a coordinated blitz of broadcasting on five consecutive nights on the topic in December 1983.[70] Reports in the daily press repeatedly defined emigrants as weak, cowardly, and unfaithful. A 1974 column in the daily *Davar* pitied the emigrant's children—"if you have any"—but held the hope that "one day they would kick you and come back to the land [Israel]."[71] The bitterness against the emigrants could be encapsulated with the term historically used to define them: "deserters."[72] This reference followed a traditional Zionist formula, which bound Israeli citizenship with military duty. Emigrating was construed not only as a misguided choice, but also as a betrayal against the entire Zionist enterprise.[73] By extension, delegitimizing emigrants became a way to strengthen pride and resolve among those who continued to live in Israel.

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64. See: Yinon Cohen, "Socioeconomic Dualism: The Case of Israeli Born Immigrants in the United States," *The International Migration Review* 23, no. 2 (1989): 267–88; esp. 285; David Mittelberg and Zvi Sobel, "Commitment, Ethnicity and Class as Factors in Emigration of Kibbutz and Non-Kibbutz Populations from Israel," *The International Migration Review* 24, no. 2 (1990): 768–782; esp. 771.

65. A. Sdomi, "Deserters and Cowards," *Davar*, May 25, 1976, Hebrew.

66. Teddy Preus, "David Levy is Coming Back Home," *Davar*, January 26, 1978, Hebrew.

67. Karmela Lahish, "August on the Beach," *Ma'ariv*, August 12, 1975, Hebrew.

68. N. Fabian, "Here they complain, There they surrender," *Davar*, January 5, 1976, Hebrew.

69. Broder, "Exodus"; Nahum Barnea, "'Kan Israel' is Merely a Radio Station," *Davar*, May 25, 1975, Hebrew.

70. Sobel, *Migrants*, 1.

71. Azaria Alon, "Letter to an Emigrant," *Davar*, March 22, 1974, Hebrew. Such messaging echoed the Israeli press's aggressively negative treatment of emigrants going back to the 1950s. See Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 161–3.

72. Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 171.

73. Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling conceptualized Israel as "a drafted nation." See: Baruch Kimmerling, "Militarism in Israeli Society," *Theory and Criticism* 4 (1993): 123–140; quoted at 123, Hebrew.

Even intra-organizational correspondence within HIAS was characterized by Israeli bitterness against their U.S. colleagues. Haim Halachmi, head of the Israeli HIAS office, condescendingly explained to his U.S. colleague Miriam Cantor, of the HIAS offices in New York, that "I am sorry to disappoint you, but in our opinion and in the opinion of our close 'friends', it is not desirable that releases appear in the local press 'on the role of HIAS in resettling Russian Jews.'"[74] Halachmi pulled Israeli rank on Cantor, signing his letter with "we trust that you will understand the reasons behind this attitude in Israel—and you would certainly do, should you have lived in this country for a while."[75] Such emotive expression worked as a manipulative lever—shaming the American Jew, who never immigrated to Israel, to follow Israeli dictates.

In 1976, reports in the press stated that sixty percent of Soviet Jews who managed to obtain an exit visa to go to Israel opted for the United States instead.[76] Some Jewish American publications such as *The Hebrew Watchman* of Memphis, Tennessee, noted that it would be "inappropriate" for Soviet Jews to move to the United States where they risked "the erosion" of their Jewishness. Instead, the *Watchman* insisted that Soviet Jews needed to "appreciate the historic imperative" of moving to Israel.[77] Such perceptions echoed expectations by some Jewish Americans two decades earlier, who saw those Israelis who wanted to emigrate to the United States as failing the Zionist imperative.[78] Interestingly, *the Watchman* did not oppose continued Jewish-American existence for its readership. The newspaper *Heritage* of Los Angeles, meanwhile, adopted the opposite line—insisting that Soviet Jews fought hard for their freedom, and should be allowed to choose where to live their lives.[79] This argument played out on the pages of the national press too. The *Chicago Tribune* published an article explaining the difficulties some Israeli emigrants experienced when Jewish Americans criticized them for leaving Israel. One emigrant, Saadia Moryosef, was tired of the accusations, lamenting: "some take the American way, and some take the Zionist way. Who is to judge?"[80]

Functionaries in Israel's immigration apparatus had no compunction casting themselves in that role. Especially surrounding the question of Soviet Jewry, they adjudged that Israel was the only legitimate, moral, and safe solution for the Jewish émigré. Trying to explain why many of the more affluent, urban, and well-educated Soviet Jews opted for the United States rather than Israel, Yehuda Dominitz, the deputy chief of the Jewish Agency's Immigration

74. Haim Halachmi to Miriam Cantor, January 21, 1975, Box 689, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

75. Ibid.

76. "Soviet Jews' Flow to U.S. Worrying Israeli Government," *The New York Times*, September 26, 1976.

77. "Soul Searching on Soviet Drop-Outs," *Memphis Watchman*, Box 508, HIAS Collection, I-363, CJH.

78. Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 194.

79. Si Frumkin, "Freedom Must Mean Freedom to Choose!," *Heritage*, September 3, 1976.

80. "U.S. Jews Criticize Immigrants," *Chicago Tribune*, November 25, 1976.

Department, accused urban Soviet Jews of having "lost touch with Jewish culture and traditions."[81]

But even as most Israeli commentators rebuked both 'Yordim' and 'Noshrim' in the harshest tones, Israeli satirists identified a deep irony in Israel's attitude to emigration to the United States. A 1975 skit by 'Nikui Rosh' ["Head Cleaning"], a satirical revue on Israeli television, attacked the hypocrisy defining Israel's regard to emigrants. The scene opened with a woman reciting "You packed your bags, said goodbye to the homeland, You intend to leave, or simply 'Laredet' [commit "Yerida"]. Your status then is that of a deserter, runaway, and traitor. You're not one of us. You're a sub-human, a 'Yored' [one committing Yerida]."[82] The music breaks to a hot jazz tempo, with the chorus revealing four angry men singing/shouting at the camera: "A traitor, a whore, abandoned the state, chasing money like all the scum, leaving and screwing around to get rich." The second stanza reveals a shot of the Statue of Liberty, coming back to a soothing tune: "but if you made some money, and you're really getting rich over there, you made it big abroad Habibi, well that's another thing entirely. You are an example to us all, you are our man abroad. No—certainly not a 'Yored', you are a wonderful Zionist." Breaking to the same hot jazz tempo of the chorus, we see the four previously angry men, but now nicely combed and puppy-eyed, serenading the viewer sweetly: "He is special, he started with us, it's really impressive, just a guy from Israel, surpassing the gentiles, well you can see he's a genius."[83] The skit called out a phenomenon Israeli officials at the time still refused to admit outright: In certain circumstances, Israelis in the United States were not only a threat and a disgrace, but also a potential resource.

"I AM AWARE THAT IN ISRAEL THEY ARE ANGRY"

Disdain towards those Israelis choosing (so the cliché went) dollars over homeland remained central to Israel's political affairs into the late 1970s. As it turned out, Rabin had been correct to fear that fables of Israelis living large in the United States would spell the end of his tenure, but not in the ways he had expected. In April 1977, the Israeli press exposed that Rabin and his wife illegally kept a dollar account in the United States with profits from lectures he had given while serving as ambassador to the United States in the late 1960s.[84] The violation was deemed severe enough that Rabin decided to resign, leaving his rival within the Labor Party, Shimon Peres, to lead the ticket. The right-wing Likud party won the elections—displacing the Labor Party for the first

81. David Kirivine, "Soviet Jews Disillusioned by Life in the U.S.," *Jerusalem Post*, July 4, 1975.

82. "Ha Yored" skit, by Nikui Rosh, 1975, YouTube Video, 3:06, last accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpmMchuQ5dk.

83. Ibid.

84. Yosef Priel, "The Supervisor on Foreign Currency: I Will Handle Leah Rabin as I Would Any Other Citizen," *Davar*, March 16, 1977, Hebrew.

time since Israel's establishment. Rabin's bank account was not the main reason for Labor's loss, but it did prevent him from seeking re-election.

In his work on changing social attitudes towards emigration in Israeli society, Nir Cohen defines 1977 as the transition between a period of 'overt rejection' of emigrants to one of 'cautious rapprochement' stretching into the early 1990s. Cohen ties this development to "trends of social and cultural atomization in Israeli society and the growing criticism towards the political and military apparatus."[85] While this argument is largely borne-out by an examination of the details within the emigration report Lahis compiled for the Jewish Agency in 1981, it is also worth remembering that at the time Lahis's report was considered by state leaders so unpalatable that Lahis lost his job. The trend emerging in the early 1980s indeed legitimized the exceptionally prosperous and politically loyal emigrant. But Israeli condescension over those who chose to leave without coming back did not disappear.

Lahis anchored his 1981 report firmly in the mainstream of diaspora rejection. Lahis quoted Israeli poet and Holocaust survivor Aba Kovner: "the growth of the Yerida [outward immigration] compared to the low in Alia [incoming immigration], creates an existential problem at the national level. A Zionist Jew who believes Israel promises the fulfilment of full Jewish life and the future of the **Israeli people** cannot help but be disturbed of a forthcoming **national disaster.**"[86] Lahis also quoted Bohemian writer Amos Kenan who lamented the departure of a hypothetical emigrant friend: "You should have stayed with us until we all see the light at the end of the tunnel."[87]

Prefacing findings from his interviews with emigrants in New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, Lahis was keen to clarify his disapproval of their "will for self-fulfilment... in the world and here, of permissiveness and hedonism," which also led to the "shedding of **commitment** and any sense of personal responsibility."[88] Most of those emigrants interviewed and edited into the report were eager to play up the pragmatic economic considerations that led them to leave Israel. But other reasons for their move came up as well: Amiram Klein, a lawyer residing in Los Angeles, reported that "lately, four months ago, I started receiving here guys who escaped Israel so they would not be drafted to the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces]. They are basically AWOL. They are illegally

85. Nir Cohen, "From overt rejection to enthusiastic embracement: changing state discourses on Israeli emigration," *Geo Journal* 68, no. 2/3 (2007): 267–78; quoted at 272. Rebhun and Lev-Ari argue similarly around a slightly later timeline. See: Rebhun and Lev-Ari, *American Israelis*, 17.

86. Shmuel Lahis, "Israelis in the U.S.—A Report," p. 4, Deputy Minister Simha Ehrlich, Yerida and Yordim to USA, G-9977/13 (hereafter "Lahis Report"), Israeli State Archives, Jerusalem, Israel, Hebrew. Emphasis in original.

87. Amos Keinan, "Letter to an Immigrant," in "Lahis Report." See similarly: Rut Bondi, "Landmarks," *Davar*, July 3, 1981, Hebrew. Emphasis in original.

88. "Lahis Report," 4. Emphasis in original.

here, but the court here would give them the status of refugee since if they come back to Israel they would be jailed."[89]

The shadow of military service hung over many of the interviews. First, the Agency introduced all emigrants through their military background, designating otherwise anonymous interviewees as "a tank member" or "a veteran of Haruv squad."[90] Some participants highlighted their military background to increase their status ("I helped establish the tank divisions" or "I was a lieutenant colonel when I was discharged").[91] Professing commitment to military service became an important touchstone for many interviewees. One participant in a focus group stated that "it is shameful and disgraceful for us as Israelis that we arrived at a situation, where parents don't want their children to go to serve in the IDF." Others, such as Dr. Eli Marmur of Los Angeles, asserted "service in the IDF is the direction, the way to instil in our children the fact they are Israelis."[92] One academic in New York, meanwhile, thought that demobilization and service benefits were a problem: "It is necessary to help a soldier at the end of the service just as it was when he was drafted," the speaker said. "Then they gave him uniform, a gun, etc. It is important to do the same with the end of military service, not to let the soldier be ejected out of the military system to face civilian life with nothing."[93] Those emigrants who wilfully showed up for a meeting with the general manager of the Jewish Agency were a self-selecting group, eager to impress with their sentimental attachment to Israel. At the same time, many respondents also counted repeated military reserve call-ups as one of the things they were liberated from by living abroad.

Israel officials discussed emigrants' households as soldiers lost. The New York consulate reported that it had written "17,000 households, many of them reserve soldiers, so they could donate to the building of an IDF education facility." To their disappointment, "only 40 positive answers came back, the rest of them never replied."[94] The donations were not only about raising funds, but about maintaining a sense of commitment between the immigrants and the Israeli military. The security attaché in New York explained: "we are talking about an Israeli population who we would expect and want to draft to Israel in hour of need."[95]

Haim Efrati, an emigrant defined in the report as "the Playboy from Israel (I came for some air)" depicted life in Israel as "a lifetime of conscription and in

89. Amiram Klein, lawyer, Los Angeles, 27.10.80, in "Lahis Report," 24.
90. "Lahis Report," 37; "About Emigration and Emigrants in the U.S.," in "Lahis Report," 20.
91. "Lahis Report," 22.
92. "Lahis Report," 28.
93. "Lahis Report," 53.
94. "Lahis Report," 9.
95. Meeting with Paul Keidar and the consuls, New York, 30.10.80, in "Lahis Report," 41.

my opinion you should only be allowed to conscript for some of one's life."[96] Another emigrant argued that it was an injury he sustained during the October War that "pushed" him out of the country. Shalom Karni, who told many stories about his service in the pre-state paramilitary organization Palmach and later as an officer in the IDF, explained he arrived for "peace and comfort" in the United States but always felt a "traitor" towards those he left behind. Karni recounted that during a recent visit to Israel, a senior military officer told him: "'I have nothing to offer my son in Israel, I have no money to buy him a flat, and if he boards a plane and gets there [U.S.], I can't stop him.' So if an Aluf [Major General] says that about his son, where have we arrived?"[97] The notion that emigration to the U.S. was the path of the dejected veteran was echoed in Arik Lavi's popular 1982 song "The Yellow Cab"—singing of the emigrant who "got injured in Kippur War" and then chose to drive a taxi and eat strawberry ice cream in New York City.[98]

While Lahis framed emigrants as tragic figures, the report provided detailed reasons that made Israelis decide to leave for the United States ranging from Israeli bureaucracy or corruption, to people pushing on the bus, or spitting in the street. Some emigrants saw themselves as the fortunate escapees, and pitied other Israelis who were unable to leave the state. One woman recalled that last time they visited Israel their friends asked them "how can we get to the United States."[99]

Some political figures found it useful to embrace the emigrants. In 1977, retired general and politician Ariel Sharon toured the United States and met dozens of Israeli veterans who served in the October War before leaving the country. Responding to Rabin's insult of the emigrants, Sharon stated "not one of them is a weakling," telling reporters that Israel could not afford to lose such people.[100] Newspapers reported that part of Sharon's claim might have been based on the fact that his recently-bought ranch was funded partially by a loan from a wealthy emigrant.[101] The Israeli Black Panther movement, which had long criticized Israel's social inequities in ways that embarrassed establishment politicians, framed the emigration crisis as a symbol of a broader problem.[102] In the parliamentary debate that followed the publication of the Lahis Report,

96. "The playboy from Israel," 28.10.80, in "Lahis Report," 32. Emphasis in original. Weariness of the pressures Israeli expectations for social conformity put on the individual were an element already pushing Israeli emigrants to the United States in the 1950s. See: Yehudai, *Leaving Zion*, 203. On military reserve duty compelling some Israelis to emigrate, see: Lilach Lev Ari, *American Dream—For Men Only? Gender, Immigration, and the Assimilation of Israelis in the United States* (El Paso, TX, 2008), 161.

97. "Lahis Report," 23.

98. Arik Lavi, "The Yellow Cab," track from *Just Before Morning*, 1982.

99. "Lahis Report," 17.

100. "Sharon: The Biggest Problem is Yerida," *Davar*, March 16, 1977, Hebrew.

101. "A Lion Emigrated, Who Wouldn't Roar," *Davar*, December 3, 1981, Hebrew.

102. On the Israeli Black Panthers, see: Oz Frankel, "What's in a Name? The Black Panthers in Israel," *The Sixties: Journal of History, Politics, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2008): 9–26.

Black Panther Sa'adia Marciano, Knesset member for the Sheli party, summed up that "It's shitty here and I don't care if people emigrate, if the situation here is shitty."[103] Most Knesset members rejected the line of legitimizing emigration, recommending a range of sanctions to punish and sever ties with emigrants. Parallel to this indignation, however, the early 1980s also saw a more pronounced skepticism regarding the moral superiority of staying in Israel, as well as greater legitimacy towards the model emigrant.

Hanoch Levin's 1982 play *The Patriot* attacked the emotional blackmail through which the Israeli establishment sought to keep Israelis from leaving. After weeks of sleeping outside the U.S. consulate, the fictional protagonist, a man called Eshet, finally gets his turn to plead with the U.S. consul to grant him a visa. The stern consul is unmoved: "We do not need traders and peddlers. We need people for dirty work." Keen to satisfy, Eshet replies quickly "I know and love dirty work, I will clean toilets in Los Angeles."[104] The consul expresses concerns that Eshet's wife and child would become a burden on the economy. Eshet quickly assures the consul his wife loves to wash floors and his son would be interested in becoming a chamber maid. Eshet's mother remains the final sticking point. Eshet insists he would never want to bring his mother with him to the United States. The consul does not believe him, and Eshet clarifies he would be happy to prove it in "whichever way that would satisfy America." The consul quickly replies: "America wants to see you spit at your mother's face." Slightly taken aback, Eshet queries "is this the usual procedure?" and the consul reassures him "of course. America does not condone abuse." The mother shows up and learns of Eshet's designs on moving to the United States, leaving her behind. She begins to sob. Cowed by her tears, Eshet informs the consul he cannot spit at his mother's face, to which the consul replies "we cannot give you a visa to America." Hearing this, Eshet explodes:

> You were right, mother, we will not leave you. We are staying here, with you. Together we will burn and suffocate and warm your old bones. Are you happy mommy? Your children and your grandchildren will stay here with you. If we rot, then we shall rot here, to the end of time. Don't cry old woman! Spare us the tears for harder days, cry for me when I die in the next war! Cry for your grandchild when he dies in the war after that! Then you will cry in comfort! You wanted grandchildren at your feet, and we will give you children beneath your feet. Ok, mommy? Happy, mommy? So you will cry for us mommy? And when will you join us in the hole? Together, with us, in the hole, all of us!

103. Yosef Waxman, "Ehrlich: The Panic over Half a Million Yordim Has No Basis," *Davar*, December 30, 1980, Hebrew.

104. Hanoch Levin, *The Patriot* (1982), Hebrew, as available at: https://www.hanochlevin.com/works/859, last accessed on July 22, 2022.

Figure 1: Actor Ezra Dagan in The Patriot. Photograph by Yáacov Agor, Published with the courtesy of the Israeli Center for the Documentation of the Performing Arts at Tel Aviv University.

Exhilarated and enthralled by Eshet's assuring promises of collective oblivion, the mother cries cathartically "yes! All of us together! Me and my son and my grandchild—together!" Disgusted, Eshet spits at her face. The consul immediately informs him "Now you may have your visa to America."[105]

105. Levin, *The Patriot*.

The play was considered so offensive that it was initially banned by the film and play review (a governmental censorship committee).[106] Interestingly the play did not depict the United States as a golden promised land of comfort, and the 'Yored', Eshet, faithful to the negative stereotype of the Yored, would indeed sell out his own mother. The most disturbing aspect in the scene from the perspective of the state was the character of the mother, who would egotistically prefer the children stay—happy to guilt-trip them into oblivion. The audience is brought to hope for Eshet's escape.

Even beyond the fringe stage, Israelis in the early 1980s had already learned to cheer for the emigrant to the United States—under specific circumstances. Even as state authorities rebuked all formal attempts to legitimize the emigrant, the rehabilitation of the emigrant was already underway. Indeed, the story of the Israeli who found success in the United States became the fascination of Israeli media. Meshulam Riklis, who left Palestine to New York in 1947, is one case in point. While Riklis's emigration was framed as "deserting . . friends in Tel Aviv," reportage of the successful businessman throughout the 1960s included praise for his funding of a new wing of his childhood school, his construction of factories in the town of Kfar Saba, as well as his sponsorship of a new veterans' house in Ramat Gan.[107] In the late 1970s, when resentment of those who left to the United States grew more pronounced, columnist Nahum Barnea mentioned again that Riklis was considered a deserter in Israel's first years, and rebuked those who courted the wealthy emigrant.[108] By the late 1980s, however, reporters agreed that Riklis—for good or for bad—had become fully rehabilitated by the Israeli military and political elite.[109] Economic philanthropy bought Riklis friends in high places and plenty of envious eyes. But his unapologetically predatory tactics in venture capital limited his public appeal. Upon taking over the company Haifa Chemicals, Riklis stated "we want to run companies in Israel without anyone telling us what to do."[110] Moving back to

106. Moshe Shnitzer, "More Patriot than 'Patriot,'" *Ma'ariv*, October 28, 1982, Hebrew.

107. Yuval Elizur, "The Rise and Fall of 'Zoske' Riklis," *Ma'ariv*, October 14, 1963; D. Golan, "The Millionaire from the U.S. Remembers His 'Herzlyia,'" *Ma'ariv*, October 18, 1962; "Tycoon from the U.S. Establishes Factories in Kfar Saba," *Al HaMishmar*, July 6, 1969; Yishayahu Aviam, "Friendship Created 'Paratrooper's House,'" *Ma'ariv*, September 24, 1969. All articles in Hebrew.

108. Nahum Barnea, "Elite Emigrants," *Davar*, January 15, 1976, Hebrew.

109. Riklis donated one million dollars to the Likud Party for the 1988 general elections. See: "Rapaport donated a million and a half to Labor. Riklis to Likud—a million," *Hadashot*, October 18, 1988, Hebrew. For ambivalence towards Riklis's rehabilitation, see: Moshe Dor, "The Reformed Reputation of Meshulam Riklis," *Ma'ariv*, June 5, 1985, Hebrew; "the Gull to Succeed," *Ma'ariv*, June 19, 1989, Hebrew.

110. Oded Shorer, "I would not have invested a single agora in Israel if it would have been up to me," *Ma'ariv*, November 16, 1986, Hebrew.

Israel at the age of eighty-seven, Riklis still doubted if Israelis really forgave him for having left in the first place.[111]

Other emigrants who made a successful career in the United States enjoyed a more favorable portrayal in the Israeli press. The clearest representatives of that category were film producers Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus. Golan and Globus, two cousins from the town of Tiberius, moved to Los Angeles in the late 1970s and purchased Cannon Films, an independent production and distribution company.[112] Golan, who started his film production career in Israel, felt that Israel held him back. In a 1980 interview, he explained "producers in Israel do not think in terms of the global market."[113] Whereas in the United States he could hope to reach 200 million viewers, in Israel he had to fight "like Don Quixote to finish films."[114] From the peaks of his success, it was important for Golan to emphasize that "I keep faithful to my home and will always be 'Menahem Golan, the Israeli director'. But I have to stay in the cinema's Mecca, in Hollywood."[115]

A 1983 article in the Israeli daily *Davar* reported the approval that Golan and Globus received from Americans, who saw in them a "strange mixture of dreams and gull, hard work and sophisticated funding."[116] Israelis saw Golan and Globus as amplifiers of the Israeli national brand in the United States. While Golan highlighted that the two distinguish themselves in Hollywood by not riding around in limousines, the Israeli reporter assured readers that "they both own houses with swimming pools" in Los Angeles, "aside their houses in Israel."[117]

As Melani McAlister has shown, the films of Golan and Globus, and the 1986 action movie *Delta Force* especially, popularized the notion of a U.S.-Israeli military alliance against threats in Lebanon and Iran. The film, starring Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin, decontextualized the particulars of the Middle Eastern conflict, cementing the notion that Israelis and Americans stood together against barbarous terrorists.[118] For Israelis the film was a boon. Premiering at the same time that U.S. sailors of the Sixth Fleet frequented Israeli shores, and invited Israeli troops onboard their aircraft carriers, *Delta*

111. See: "Meshulam Riklis Accused of 'squeezing' the companies he takes over," *Hadashot*, July 18, 1988, Hebrew; "The 'Deserter' who Turned 'Billionaire': Farewell to Zus," *YNET*, January 26, 2019, last accessed October 18, 2021, https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5452869,00.html, Hebrew.

112. The humble Tiberius origins of the cousins was highlighted in the Israeli press. See: "Tiberians Caught America," *Davar*, September 16, 1983, Hebrew.

113. Yossi Harsonksi, "Cinema is Mass Entertainment," *Ma'ariv*, November 11, 1980, Hebrew.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.

116. "Tiberians Caught America."

117. Ibid.

118. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters, Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA, 2005), 295–300. See also: Tony Shaw and Giora Goodman, *Hollywood and Israel: A History* (New York, 2022), 189–91.

Force helped provide a sense of camaraderie between U.S. and Israeli soldiers, fighting together for a common goal.[119] Ariel Sharon, recently ejected from the security ministry after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, was invited to the festive Tel Aviv premiere of *Delta Force*.[120]

Israelis found particular joys in the production circumstances of the film: "most importantly, I almost forgot," stated one reviewer, "*Delta Force* is an international production based almost entirely on the purity of the white and blue [the colors of the Israeli flag]."[121] Shot in Jaffa (which replicated Beirut), the film showed "America's best—with the help of IDF intelligence and equipment—finally obliterate the barbarous terrorists."[122] Israelis also praised the that fact the production employed key personnel from the Israeli cinema industry, from the cinematographer David Gurfinkel "until the last members of the technical team and supporting roles."[123] By producing fictions that hyped-up Israel as the United States' main security ally, Golan and Globus flattered Israelis and demonstrated they remained committed to their homeland even from afar.

The Israeli who did the most to cement the notion that Americans and Israelis stood shoulder to shoulder in a joint fight against a common threat was Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu's ability to cast himself in that role was tied to his dual background living in both countries during the formation of his political career. Netanyahu, born in Jerusalem, relocated with his family as a teenager to the United States, where he spent most of the 1960s in the Cheltenham suburb of Philadelphia. His father, the historian Ben-Zion Netanyahu, taught intermittently at Cornell University. Crucially, Netanyahu served his three-year stint as a combat soldier in the Israeli military and flew back for reserve duty during the October War as well. This was politically significant, as it allowed Netanyahu to retain the ultimate symbol of national loyalty in the Israeli context—military service. After his time in uniform, Netanyahu returned to the United States where he studied at MIT and Harvard—the ultimate symbol of prestige in the U.S. context. Netanyahu was sensitive to the need to fit in. While in the United States Netanyahu changed his surname to Nitay, making it easier for Americans to pronounce (he would later change it back).

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119. On the fleet in mid-1980s Israel, see: Sarai Aharoni, "The Intimacy of Power: Gender and U.S. Naval Visits to Haifa Port, 1979–2001," *Mediterranean Historian Review* 34, no. 1 (2019): 71–94; David Zohar, "From now on I will prefer Shore leaves in Haifa," *Ma'ariv*, November 10, 1985, Hebrew; Shlomo Giv'on, "Budget Missing? Call The Sixth Fleet!," *Ma'ariv*, December 3, 1986, Hebrew.

120. See: "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the events at the refugee camps in Beirut- 8 February 1983" *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, last accessed September 17, 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook6/pages/104%20report%20of%20the%20commission%20of%20inquiry%20into%20the%20e.aspx. On Sharon at the film premiere, see: Irit Shamgar, "Sharon Force," *Ma'ariv*, April 1, 1986, Hebrew.

121. Aharon Dolev, "Screen Test—Golan vs. Qaddafi," *Davar*, Apri 18, 1986, Hebrew.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid.

Netanyahu's political career grew after the death of his brother (Yonatan Netanyahu) in the Entebbe hostage rescue operation in 1976. Netanyahu established a research institute for the study of terrorism and played an instrumental part in creating the alliance between U.S. neoconservatives and the Israeli right.[124] As his career developed swiftly in the 1980s until his first term as Prime Minister in 1996, Netanyahu's reputation in Israel was bound to the idea that he had succeeded in the United States, that he had U.S. advisors, and that he knew how to handle Americans.[125]

It was not only Netanyahu's access in Washington that earned him political capital in Israel. The perception that he was a man who could have chosen to stay in the United States, but came back, also signified his Zionist commitments. In Netanyahu Israelis found an American they could call their own: one who promised he would spin the Americans to Israelis' advantage.[126] Netanyahu provided his constituency with a happy resolution to the fears and doubts that the emigration wave of the 1970s sparked in Israeli society. Indeed, Netanyahu's path there and back again was not unique: about one third of Israelis who moved to the United States in the late 1970s returned to Israel by the 1990s.[127]

Broader political trends encouraged Israelis to see time spent in the United States as a potential contribution to Zionist missions. The growing enthusiasm of Evangelical Christians, neoconservatives, and leaders of militaristic Judaism, such as Meir Kahane, with Israel's unapologetic use of force, as well as the large role U.S. Jews came to play in West Bank settlements, created an affinity between right-wing publics in both countries.[128] While historian Gabriel Sheffer has argued that in the 1980s "a backdrop of the marked decline in patriotic and nationalistic fervour," meant that Israeli "emigrants are no longer regarded as 'deserters' who betray the nation and the country," the very assertion that there

124. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 217–8; Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind*, 289–93.

125. Of Netanyahu's reputation as a politician infused with U.S. influences, see: Efraim Inbar, "Netanyahu Takes Over," *Israel Affairs* 4, no. 1 (1997): 33–52; Myron J. Aronoff, "The 'Americanzation' of Israeli Politics: Political and Cultural Change," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (2000): 92–127.

126. Among other statements Netanyahu made advertising his ability to read and manipulate Americans, he assured his constituency that they should not worry about U.S. diplomatic pressure because, as he stated in a 2001 meeting, "America is a thing that can be moved." See: Naomi Zeveloff, "What do Israelis Think about Americans? Start with Disdain," *Forward*, March 8, 2015, last accessed February 16, 2021, https://forward.com/news/israel/216074/what-do-israelis-think-about-americans-start-with/.

127. See: Yinon Cohen, "Migration Patterns to and from Israel," 121. As another symbol of that softer approach towards emigrants to the United States, Shmuel Lahis was recognized with an award by the chairman of the Knesset for his efforts in immigration matters.

128. Daniel G. Hummel, *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations* (Philadelphia, PA, 2019), 125–44; Sarah Yael Hirschorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge, MA, 2017); Ami Pedhazur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right* (Oxford, 2012), 61–96; Colin Shindler (2000) "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (2000): 153–182; Amy Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), 211–38.

was any decline in Israeli nationalistic fervour is questionable in light of what Ami Pedhazur has convincingly defined as the "triumph of Israel's radical right."[129] In truth, the right-wing alliance of proud nationalists across the U.S.-Israeli divide posits another possibility: Israelis increasingly recognized the United States as a sympathetic and fruitful arena in which their compatriots would legitimately live from time to time, in order to further economic and political Zionist interests.

Even as he built his career on familiarity with Americans, Netanyahu's association with the United States still allowed his political rivals to exploit the old tropes of diaspora rejection as they sought to delegitimize him. On February 17, 2019, Benni Ganz, head of the newly-established Kahol-Lavan Party, gave a highly emotive speech, one defined by scorn and contempt, in which he attacked then-Prime Minister Netanyahu. Ganz, former Chief of Staff of the Israeli military (2011–15), sought to draw stark differences between Netanyahu and himself: "When I lay in muddy ditches with my soldiers in the frozen winter nights—you—Benjamin Netanyahu—left Israel to learn English and practice it at a range of cocktail parties... As I trained generations of commanders and fighters you took classes in a New York acting studio... In a month and a half we will need to choose between a leader who has English from Boston, heavy makeup, and luxury suits, and a real, caring, un-phony and un-artificial Israeli leadership." As it happened, Ganz was wrong: Israelis did not make a choice in 2019, or at least not a decisive one.[130] But his speech reflects the longevity and resilience of popular Israeli bitterness with the pull of the United States. The statement was somewhat facetious. Ganz himself, as someone who had served as Israel's military attaché in Washington, D.C., was not as alienated from the United States as he suggested. But Ganz recognized that anchoring his political rival in Boston could carry dividends in front of Israeli voters by playing the old emotive strings of contempt towards U.S. culture and towards those emigrants who seek to join it.

Such emotive expressions had purposeful political goals, and a target audience. Overall, expressions of Israeli contempt towards emigration to the United States were kept mostly in-house, rather than communicated to Americans. Israelis have long recognized sustaining and enlarging U.S. support as a crucial national interest, and U.S. officials expected to witness Israeli expressions of gratitude in return for U.S. largesse.[131] Indeed, Israeli condescension over U.S. society emerged partially as a response to the humiliation of growing material

129. Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge, 2003), 130; Pedhazur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right*.

130. See Yuval Karni and Moran Azulay, "Ganz vs Netanyahu: 'When I was in the Canals You Left Israel,'" *Ynet*, February 19, 2019, last accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5466452,00.html, Hebrew. 2019 marked the first of five general elections Israel would hold in the span of 38 months, as the political system spiralled around Netanyahu's efforts to form a coalition while facing corruption charges.

131. Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind*, 29–32.

reliance on U.S. support. This historical trend complemented the Zionist principle of diaspora rejection, but as this article has shown, it was amplified and articulated more sharply in the 1970s surrounding bitterness with growing Israeli emigration to the United States. Even the greater acceptance of emigration to the U.S. in the decades since was based on expectations that the Israeli emigrant would use their influence in American corridors in service of Israel's interests.

Beyond the immediate confines of U.S.-Israeli relations, this article pushes us to incorporate emotive expressions into our analysis of transnational relations. Clearly elite actors such as political leaders and state officials in many ways defined normative emotive expressions regarding emigration through their public statements, the laws they made, and the demands they made on American NGOs in closed meetings. But analytical attention to emotive expressions also reveals the roles journalists, poets, filmmakers, playwrights, and mid-level bureaucrats played in asserting and negotiating Israeli attitudes towards emigration to the United States.

By focusing on the concerns of non-Americans (Israelis in this case), the article reveals intricate dynamics surrounding U.S. power that cannot be seen from U.S. shores, or read through U.S. sources. In that, it demonstrates the benefits of extending the transnational turn in the field of the United States in the world. Scholarly works on U.S. perceptions of Israel often emphasize the dynamics that brought Americans to see Israel in a favorable light.[132] Such works are necessary, because they help explain how Israel came to be the main beneficiary of U.S. material support.[133] By focusing on the non-American position, and examining Israeli perceptions of emigration to the United States, this analysis reveals layers of U.S.-Israeli relations that cannot be noticed within a U.S.-centric approach. While Israelis recognized the retainment of U.S. support as a national interest, they also continued to worry that American temptations and the prosperity of U.S. Jewry might draw Israelis away from the Zionist project. Over recent decades Israelis increasingly framed certain forms of emigration to the United States in more benign terms that sought to salvage the emigrant's enduring patriotism. But suspicion of those who chose the United States over Israel has remained a rich discursive vein in Israeli life.

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132. For recent examples, see: Kaplan, *Our American Israel*; Emily Alice Katz, *Bringing Zion Home: Israel in American Jewish Culture, 1948–1967* (Albany, NY, 2016); M. M. Silver, *Our Exodus: Leon Uris and the Americanization of Israel's Founding Story* (Detroit, MI, 2010); Sandra F. Fox, "Tisha B'Av, 'Ghetto Day,' and Producing 'Authentic' Jews at Postwar Jewish Summer Camps," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 156–172; Mira Katzberg-Yungman, *Hadassah: American Women Zionists and the Rebirth of Israel* (Liverpool, 2012); Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY, 2006); Rossinow, "Edge of the Abyss"; Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*; Hixson, *Israel's Armor*; Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind*.

133. For a comprehensive study of recent developments in the cultural study of U.S.-Israeli relations, see: Geoffrey Levin, "State of the Field Essay on Culture, Communities, and Early U.S.-Israel Relations," *H-Diplo* Essay no. 160, January 18, 2018, last accessed May 20, 2022, https://issforum.org/essays/PDF/E160.pdf.