Jewish Continuity and Israel Visits

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The relationship between Jewish continuity and Israel visits can no longer be understood without an appreciation of the nature of contemporary globalized Western society, the nature of modern identity and the differential bases of attachment, longing and belonging of the individual to the collective. The collective may include some or all of the following: the State, the Nation, an ethnic group or perhaps a transnational People. Moreover, international travel or in this case the Israel visit, may be better viewed in its special binding role between homelands and their diasporas.

I have been working for over 30 years on Israel–Diaspora relations and the role of the Israel experience in that relationship. Primarily I have used the historical paradigm born of the particular experience of the Jewish people: The unique case of the Jewish Diaspora vis-à-vis the homeland of Israel, rather than looking at the Jewish Diaspora as a part of a broader typology of diasporas.

The Israel–Diaspora Jewish discourse does take place within one language, but it is a contested language, not consensus-based, dominated by the migration paradigm. I mean by this that Jewish peoplehood is literally exhausted by the question of whether Diaspora Jews do or do not migrate actually or metaphorically to Israel. This prescriptive metaphor has come to imply that an authentic experience of the Diaspora migrant in Israel could be achieved only by immersion into the host culture, then distancing from the culture of origin, and ultimately the abandonment of the culture of origin for the new chosen alternative culture of the country of destination, namely Israel.

Today, a new context and debate is emerging that reflects a radical and rapid globalization of the phenomena of diaspora itself and consequently the growth of diaspora tourism, its analysis and its celebration. Indeed if the meta process is the globalized proliferation of the diaspora condition the responses are often local or rather multi-local.
Globalization and Ethnicity

Giddens (1991) points to a mode of social organization that separates time and space without the “situatedness of place”. Put another way, this refers to the integration of people in “lived time” — not only in their presence but often, typically, in their absence (Featherstone 1995). More specifically, Featherstone views globalization as:

producing a unified and integrated common culture . . . (where) . . . (we find the most striking examples of the effects of time–space compression, as new means of communication effectively make possible simultaneous transactions which sustain ‘detrimentalized cultures’.
(Featherstone 1995, pp. 114-115)

If the genesis and persistence of ethnicity has been traditionally understood as a residual outcome of migrant national ancestry and religious affiliation, the dissipation of ethnicity was then anticipated as a function of both generation-time and modernizing secularization. In contrast to this thesis of linear attrition, globalization presents an unanticipated contemporary macro genetic force which generates the invention or reinvention of ethnicity as a response to those very same global forces of cultural homogenization, social meaning, deconstruction and the atomization of social relationships (Mittelberg 1999).

In this world, identity is privatized — an outcome of personal choice. Indeed, the preservation of this personal choice has itself become the metavalue of postmodern society. That is to say, in the emerging postmodern North America, what matters most is the fact that you can choose which ethnicity to assume as well as the timing, intensity and salience at any given time throughout the life cycle.

Hence, the contemporary world becomes one in which the ethnic is not disappearing, rather one where postmoderns typically live through personal multiple identities in a pluralized world (Mittelberg 1999). With this backdrop it now becomes necessary to engage in a reappraisal of the homeland–diaspora dichotomy outside the old migration-based paradigmatic teleology. What is a Diaspora and what is Diaspora tourism?

Diaspora and Diaspora Tourism

The process of rapid globalization and localization of the last thirty years, together with mass movements of labour and other migration, have fundamentally transformed the nature of diaspora–homeland categories and thought, while multiplying the number of peoples who in 2005 live simultaneously in a homeland and a global diaspora. Gabriel Sheffer (1999, p. 400) has made a short list which includes:

Turks in the United States, Germany and Sweden . . . Moroccans in France, Spain and Germany . . . South Koreans in the US, Canada, and various countries in the Middle East; Filipinos in the US, Japan, and various Asian and Middle East countries . . . the 25 million Russians in the former Soviet republics.

How should these different diasporas be understood? One scholar has generated a nine-fold generic typology of diaspora (see Coles and Timothy 2003, pp. 4–5). These
include both dislocation and relocation, the maintenance of collective memory or myth including an ongoing relationship to the homeland and the possibility of return. In addition, diaspora members share an alienating relationship with the host society as well as a solidarity relationship with co-ethnics in parallel geographic sites, what Clifford calls “multi-local diaspora cultures” (Clifford 1997, p. 246). Here I will primarily utilize the definition of cultural diaspora, which attempts to elucidate the issues of collective identity of homeland and nation recognizing, following Mitchell (1997), that diaspora identities are:

multifaceted and composed of complexly interwoven strands of ethnicity, religion and ancestry. Diaspora communities have specific geographies and histories, they have multiple loyalties, they move between regions, do not occupy a single cultural space and, perhaps most importantly, operate exterior to state boundaries and their cultural effects. (Cited by Coles and Timothy 2003, p. 7)

What then is diaspora tourism? Clearly there is a great deal of conceptual overlap and symbiosis between diaspora and tourism.

Coles and Timothy (2003) offer six distinctive patterns of travel and tourism that are derived from three characteristics of Diaspora. They are: (1) the duality of home and host country; (2) the real and imagined collective memory of the group; (3) the contrasting and distinctive nature of diasporic identities “abroad” (Coles and Timothy 2003, p. 13). The six patterns of diaspora tourism which are not as distinctive analytically from each other as the authors suggest, include the following: first, diasporic tourist seeking roots in homeland; second, genealogical or family tourism; third, homeland tourists visiting the diaspora spaces; fourth, diaspora destinations as tourist sites for mainstream non-diaspora tourists; fifth, homeland and diaspora members travelling to transit spaces such as concentration camps in Poland; sixth, travel by diasporans to vacation spaces in the host state.

Where does this leave the Jewish people, whose supposedly unique historical condition has been appropriated by analysts as only one case among many? It seems that it locates the reconstruction of Jewish peoplehood in a very mobile and better integrated world on the one hand, but subject to a stressful process of postmodernization, privatization of religion and community on the other, combined with acutely heightened possibilities and probabilities of personal cultural choice for the moderns.

I now move on to the question of precisely how this Jewish peoplehood is to be articulated. Contemporary Jewish Israel-Diaspora discourse continues to be dominated by the language of migration as either a moral imperative (contemporary Zionism) or as a heritage that may now be passe and irrelevant for existential questions of Diaspora Jewish life. By maintaining, albeit anathetically, the same migration paradigm both in Israel and in the Diaspora, both sides continue to share (though in a weakened mode in the last five years) a rejection of the other, as a part of everyday life. The result is a minimal interconnection and interdependence between the vast majority of Israeli and Diaspora Jews on the foundation of the worlds they actually live in. Instead, they are engaged with each other, if at all, either in the imagery of ancient historical and ethical language of the synagogues or in the rarified sociopolitical debates and reportage of CNN and the New York Times. The first has important though limited relevance by virtue of religion, whether as an essential or only a symbolic part of Diaspora Jewish lives. The second draws relevance from affirmation or alienation from
Israel as a basis of Diaspora public collective identity as Diaspora Jews, for thus the non-Jewish world defines them in good times as well as in bad. What is still required is a paradigmatic redefinition of the structure of Jewish peoplehood; one that encompasses the everyday worlds in which Jews in Israel and its diasporas actually live. I will return to this question below. It is now necessary to consider the role of visits to Israel by Jewish Diasporans within the broader context of Jewish peoplehood.

The Visit to Israel

The data on the Israel visit is growing very fast, dominated by the overriding concern of how that visit contributes to the Jewishness of those who make that journey. Previous research has demonstrated the Jewish impact of Israel educational trips on participants (see, for example, Mittelberg 1988, 1992, 1994; Horowitz 1993; Israel and Mittelberg 1998; Chazan 1997; Saxe et al. 2002, 2004). In an extensive survey of this literature, Chazan (1997) has prepared an updated and comprehensive analysis of over 100 items of recently reported research investigating the impact of the Israel experience on identity formation among youth. The research supports the conclusion that youth visits to Israel have positive outcomes for measures of Jewish identity in adulthood, both as part of a cluster of other experiences and also with an independent causal weight. As Chazan (1997) makes clear, important questions still remain to be answered, involving the weight of ideological content on programme outcomes, and the role and definition of pedagogical excellence. In addition, we know very little about the degree to which the measured impact on adult behaviour is a function of the Israel visit itself, or post-visit environment and programming, or combinations of these. Much additional work is called for, particularly in regard to the role of the post-trip environment in sustaining long-term attitudinal change.

The Visit to Israel: A North American Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) Decennial Comparison

Based on analysis of the North American Jewish Population Survey 2000–1 data (NJPS), provided by Len Saxe and colleagues (Saxe et al. 2004b) from the Brandeis Center for Modern Jewish Studies,\(^1\) it is possible to make some cautious comparisons between data I reported a decade ago (Mittelberg 1999) and data based on NJPS 2000–1. These comparisons allow us to determine changes in patterns and the strength of the connection to Israel between North American Jews who have visited Israel and Jews who have not. I will limit myself to only a few dimensions of comparison, leaving a more detailed analysis for a later essay. It needs to be mentioned, however, that such a comparison is fraught with many methodological issues that have been the subject of intense public and scholarly debate. Notwithstanding these issues, I do conclude, as do all the disputants, that important analyses can be made and certainly broad patterns can be confidently observed.

1. Who visits Israel? Saxe (2003) distinguishes between two sectors in the NJPS 2001 data. The first includes the total population, including both self-identified Jews and those who are of Jewish background (together totaling 5.2 million Jews), out of
whom only 36 percent have ever visited Israel. The second sector comprises only the self-identified Jews (4.3 million Jews), out of whom 42 percent have ever visited Israel. In 1999, I reported that out of the total 5.5 million population of core Jews only 26 percent had ever visited Israel, while out of those who identified as Jews by religion this number rose to 31 percent (Mittelberg 1999, p. 144). On the face of it, a significant increase in the number of North American Jews visiting Israel at least once. But who are these Jews and what is the source of this increase?

In 1999, I reported that out of all core Jews representing a population of 5.5 million, 60 percent of Orthodox Jews have visited Israel, 39 percent of Conservative Jews, 23 percent of Reform Jews, and 21 percent of Other Core Jews (Mittelberg 1999, p. 68). In 2001, Saxe reports that 75 percent of Orthodox Jews have visited Israel, 54 percent of Conservative Jews, 35 percent of Reform Jews and 34 percent of Secular/Just Jewish. This again seems a remarkable increase but it must be stressed that the population that Saxe’s data is based on, as the authors explicitly point out, refers to a population of 4.3 million Jews today in North America and NOT the 5.2 million that the sponsors of the survey, the United Jewish Communities (UJC), regard as the total population of American Jews. The Saxe data analyzes the more connected Jews, presumably on the grounds inter alia that this data is more reliable than the broader data set. In addition, respondents of Jewish background only, in NJPS 2001, were not asked many important questions related to Israel, thus complete comparisons cannot be made between the two sets of data. Despite all this, what remains interesting to me is how similar the relative patterns have remained over the ten-year period, indicating that the data and findings are more robust than both sets of disputation may have felt.

Thus while there may remain some quite significant dispute about the size of American Jewry and therefore the size of the increase in the rate of visiting Israel, the overall relative percent gap in the frequency of visits between the denominations has remained the same.

2. Age  Here I believe the most important pattern-breaking finding is revealed. While the 1990 and 2000 studies both report in different ways that the rate for first time visitors to Israel is higher amongst the older sections of the public, in 2001 Saxe reports an increase in 18–29 aged respondents visiting Israel, namely 38 percent. In 1999, I had reported that only 22 percent of core Jews aged 18–35 had ever visited Israel (Mittelberg 1999, p. 147).

3. Income  Both the 1990 survey and the 2000–1 surveys show that there does not seem to be a great difference in the number of visitors to Israel from the lower and moderate-income groups. The 2001 survey showed that those who earned less than $15,000 were the least likely to visit Israel (29 percent), compared with those who earned $75–100,000 (41 percent), $100–150,000 (40 percent), and more than $150,000 (56 percent). All middle income earners seemed to visit Israel at the same rate. Providing similar findings, the 1990 survey said that both low and moderate-income persons visited Israel at a rate of 14 percent. The highest earning group, those making over $80,000, visited Israel more. I concluded that, “this pattern shows people with a high income visit Israel more frequently. This implies that a subsidy for a first-time, young adult, single visitor could have a leverage effect on the rate of visiting Israel” (Mittelberg 1999, p. 67).
Emotional Attachment to Israel and a Visit to Israel (NJPS 2000–1)

This data is presented here as a comparative baseline for the programme analyzes that will follow below. Based on the NJPS data, Saxe and colleagues report that 30 percent of 18–29 year old self-identified Jews responded that they were emotionally attached to Israel, 26 percent of 30–39 year olds, 30 percent of 40–49 year olds, 29 percent of 50–59 year olds, 35 percent of 60–69 years olds, 41 percent of 70–79 year olds and 34 percent of 80+ year olds. The general pattern seems to be that people over 60 maintain a deeper emotional connection to Israel than those in the younger groups. However, 18–29 year olds maintain a deeper connection than 30–39 year olds and 50–59 year olds, and they maintain the same connection to Israel as 40–49 year olds. At the same time, Jews who have been to Israel maintain a far deeper connection to Israel than those who have never visited Israel. Fifty-two percent of Jews who have visited Israel feel emotionally attached to Israel compared with the 16 percent of Jews who have never visited Israel. From this data it can be inferred that visiting Israel does serve to strengthen the connection a Jew develops to the Jewish state.

In another recent study by Mayer, Kosmin and Keysar (2002), attachment to Israel is strongly correlated with religiosity, both on measures of actually visiting Israel (where we find that 47 percent of religious Jews report visiting Israel compared to 23 percent of secular Jews), as well as in regard to the degree of attachment to Israel. Here the authors report that 58 percent of religious Jews see themselves as very attached to Israel compared to only 15 percent of secular Jews. The authors are perturbed and perplexed by the disconnect between secular Jews in the Diaspora and secular Jews in Israel, calling for more research on the trend. But really is it any wonder when one considers that the primary paradigm of the discourse is first, in religious terms itself, and second, dictates a one way migration imperative? Interestingly enough, Mayer et al. also report that both religious and secular Jews report an increase in travel to Israel compared to the findings of the 1990 NJPS of a decade earlier. On the other hand, previous research indicates that the visit to Israel enhances attachment to Israel and the Jewish people both for the religious and the secular Jew (Mittelberg 1999). Is there then a connection to be made between the apparently inexorable attrition of attachment of American Jews to Israel (especially younger American Jews) and the increasing opportunity of travel to Israel of younger American Jews? It is to this question I now turn.

The Short-Term birthright israel Israel Experience Programme

The birthright israel programme was launched in the winter of 1999–2000, when nearly 5,000 young college students from Diaspora Jewish communities responded to an unprecedented invitation to visit Israel as a gift of the Jewish community. This marked the start of a massive educational experiment, funded by a partnership that included the government of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Israel and Jewish Federations, as well as a consortium of private philanthropists. Later on, during the
summer of 2002, the programme was expanded to include Former Soviet Union (FSU) Jews.

Since the launch of *birthright israel* at end of 1999, nearly 50,000 young adults aged 18–26 from North America have visited Israel on a free educational trip for ten days. An additional 22,000 from 26 Diaspora countries have participated. Research by the evaluators of the programme, Saxe et al. (2002, 2004), as well as independent research by this author, demonstrates that the programme elicits a consistent set of normative and attitudinal changes in participants, as will be seen below. However, the larger question that remains is, to what degree do these changes persist over time back in the countries of origin? While it may be still premature (given the short number of years that this programme has been in existence) to draw final conclusions, this question has nevertheless been examined in both sets of data analyzed here, with the trend further corroborated by reference to research on longer term programmes (referred to briefly below).

This question has been analyzed at two separate levels of resolution and by two independent analyzes. Saxe et al. (2004), show that changes do persist over time and that they are statistically significant both longitudinally (over a three-year time period) per participant, as well as when compared with non-participants in the programme. The non participants, being interested registrants who actually never participated for one reason or another. Our own research (Mittelberg and Lev Ari: forthcoming) was also based on a longitudinal design of pre and post questions administered at both ends of the short visit, however the degree of analysis of actual programme detail was of a higher resolution than that of the Brandeis study, primarily since the unit of analysis was actual complete busloads of participants, their staff and actual programme itinerary.

The *birthright israel* visit to Israel was designed to be an educational experience, not just a tour, in order to connect college-age Diaspora Jewish youth with their heritage and to strengthen their Jewish identity. These ten-day trips have been run in winter and summer cohorts, timed to coincide with university inter sessions.

*Birthright*[s] only eligibility requirements were that applicants consider themselves to be Jewish, fall between the ages of 18 and 26 and not have participated previously in a similar 'peer educational program' in Israel. Birthright (*Taglit* in Hebrew) is an umbrella organization that authorizes and coordinate[s] the efforts of approximately 30 university-based, community-based, religious, for-profit, and secular not-for-profit trip providers. (Kelner 2004, p. 4)

The empirical data for the article quoted below was collected from the participants of one such provider. Underlying the itinerary designed for each trip was a carefully planned set of experiences whose goal was to influence participants both intellectually and emotionally (Saxe et al. 2000). Thus *birthright israel*'s short-term goal was to provide participants with "... a stimulating encounter with Israel — and by extension with their own identity" (Post 1999).

Shaul Kelner, a member of the official Brandeis *birthright israel* evaluation team, sums up succinctly the core structure and educational strategy of the programmes as experienced by over 5,000 participants. This structure and its educational rationale were mandated to all providers, including of course the participants of the provider under review here.
The experience itself was a fast-paced bus-trek across Israel. Each group of approximately 40 people had its own itinerary, tour bus, driver, American or former Soviet Union staff, responsible for group building and an Israeli facilitator, charged with presenting a narrative about the sites. Itineraries — relatively standardized — included visits to Jewish holy sites, tours of ancient and modern historical areas, nature hikes, meeting with Israeli youth, social events, and guest lecturers on a variety of topics regarding Israel and Judaism. (Kelner 2004, p. 4)

Birthright arranged its presentation of Israel in a way that encouraged tourists to project Jewish and Zionist meanings onto the sites. All trips address the following themes: (1) The nature of contemporary Israeli Society, (2) meetings with young Israelis, (3) Jewish values, (4) Zionism then and now, (5) an overview of Jewish history, and (6) the Holocaust and Jewish life. In order to ensure a personal implication in the collective Jewish narrative for the participants the final theme of 'what it all means for us' is implemented. (Kelner 2004, p. 7)

Elsewhere Kelner articulates the theoretical underpinnings of this educational strategy (Kelner: forthcoming, p. 3), whereby "group tourism is a potent medium that can be manipulated to enable the illusion of a singular core self and thereby effect profound changes in the self concept of the individuals"; birthright israel engaged in a purposeful project designed to achieve precisely that.

Data Analyses

The comparison that follows is between Oren birthright data with the national birthright israel longitudinal impact study conducted by the Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University (Saxe et al. 2004). The data of the latter is based on the Winter 2003–4 cohort for which 15,000 young adults applied in Fall of 2003. Seven thousand of these actually took part in the inter session break of December 2003–January 2004. The data is based on 7,660 respondents to a pre-trip survey and 6,097 respondents to a post-trip survey; actual participants comprised 72 percent of the first group and 45 percent of the second group, the remainder being non-participants (Saxe 2004, p. 67). The data of the former is drawn from the same period.

In their important study Saxe and colleagues (2004, p. 6) demonstrate the impact of the experience in Israel on participants. In their analysis they describe two kinds of persisting effects.

1. Conversion effects; the degree that a participant is changed by the programme trip, for example, on a measure such as a feeling of connection to Israel. Indeed they report a strengthening of connection to Israel, to the Jewish people and to Jewish history.
2. Preserving effects; which refer to the absence of erosion of pre trip positive attitudes towards Israel and the Jewish people (ibid., p. 7).

The strongest effect reported is the connection to Israel followed by connection with Jewish peoplehood and Jewish history (Saxe 2004, p. 42). Perhaps not surprisingly, given the short duration of the programme, no impact was reported on measures of religion or religious practice, nor, must it be added, were these goals of the programme.

In addition to pre and post at both ends of the programme, Saxe et al. (2004) studied the long-term impact of the trip, two years after the conclusion of the pro-
gramme (see *ibid.*, Appendix A, pp. 59–66 for methodological details of the study). For these purposes and in addition to the above analysis, they studied a sample of participants from the year 2002 cohort (N = 281), which they compared to a group of non-participants from the very same cohort (N = 268), making a total survey population of 549 students. With respect to the impact of the programme on the participants’ feeling of connection with Israel, while both groups began at a common benchmark base of 44/47 percent of a high degree of connectedness to Israel, programme participants increased their score on this measure to 75 percent at the end of the programme and maintained this higher rate at 62 percent even after two years (Saxe et al. 2004, p. 20–22). At the very same time, the non-participants hardly increased their measure of connectedness over the same period. Similarly the analysis was repeated with a random sample from the year 2001 cohort (N=501), with follow up being after three years. Here, too, the same pattern was observed, namely, that while the pre-trip benchmark was a 25 percent/20 percent pre-trip score of feeling of connection to Israel, at the end of the programme participants’ score had increased to 58 percent, while after three years their score was maintained at 49 percent, compared to a score of only 27 percent for the non-participants (Saxe et al. 2004, pp. 19, 60).

The above rich and comprehensive data refer to a series of national samples of both participants and non-participants, while in our own study of *birthright* groups, the overall sample studied is smaller in number. However, in our own study, it should be noted that the samples are based on unit analyses of complete buses of *birthright* participants studied by pre and post questionnaires (without, however, any opportunity to study non-participants). In this data similar patterns can be reported. What can we learn from the Oren *birthright israel* data, which reports the responses of *birthright israel* participants from North America as well as the former Soviet Union?

**A: Post-Trip changes in Jewish Identity, Diaspora Identity and Attitudes towards Israel among North American (NA) and Former Soviet Union (FSU) birthright Israel Short-Term Participants**

As can be seen from table 2.1, following the trip, in response to the question: “Is it important to you to belong to the Jewish community?” a positive significant change was reported by participants, both from North America and the Former Soviet Union. Regarding the question: “Does being Jewish play an important part of your life?” the respondents indicated a similar slightly higher sense of identity at the conclusion of the programme (although the change itself was not statistically significant among the FSU respondents). In response to the question: “Is Israeli culture important to you?” participants in both groups reported a positive (and significant) change. Regarding the question: “To what extent do you see Israel as a source of pride and self-respect for Diaspora Jewry?” there is almost no change found, though the pre- and post-scores on this measure remained high in both groups. In both of these measures of identity, the scores were already high at the beginning of the programme and were preserved high at the conclusion of the programme. However, the most dramatic change amongst participants from both groups is to the degree of *emotional attachment to Israel*, which was not very high at the beginning of the programme and was strengthened during the trip. This outcome, together with the higher importance now attached
to belonging to their Jewish community, all contribute to a heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood. These impacts are better reflected in the participants’ own words:

"The trip was a once in a lifetime journey, both spiritual and mental."
"This trip gave me the insight into my heritage that would have otherwise been unavailable to me."
"I somehow truly feel connected to other Jews in a way previously unknown to me."
"The Israeli soldier experience was the best part of the programme and a huge influence in my and the others on my bus’s want, to come back to Israel to study or to live."
"I feel a closer connection to Israel and have a greater understanding of the issues facing the state."
"The trip was an experience that somewhat has changed my life. Because of this trip, I feel more connected to the Jewish culture, religion, and heritage. I feel that I want to be more involved in the Jewish community when I get back to [the] USA."
"The trip has inspired me to make aliyah and I know that it has inspired some of my friends on the trip as well . . . it is really important to expose all kinds of Jews to Israel." (Lev-Ari and Mittelberg 2005)

By way of comparison, in both groups of North American and FSU participants, no change, either positive or negative, was recorded on the measure of Diaspora Citizenship Identity (namely, the importance of their attachment to their country of origin) as an outcome of the visit to Israel.

B. Long-Term Israel Experience Programmes

Almost two decades ago (1986), I had the privilege to be associated with the launching of two long-term programmes in one year (Oren and Otzma), each a forerunner of the entirely new MASA initiative launched in 2005. This new initiative of the government of Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel was aimed at radically increasing (by subsidizing) the participants in long-term (semester to one year) programmes in Israel in order to quadruple the number up to 20,000 by the year 2008. These two programmes (Oren and Otzma) have been extensively researched and findings published. They are briefly referred to here both as examples and predictors of the likely outcomes of this new but belated initiative of global Jewish leadership, allowing us to explore its long-term implications (Mittelberg 1988; Mittelberg and Lev-Ari 1995; Mittelberg 1999; Mittelberg et al. 2003).

Similarly to the birthright data just reported, respondents in both programmes reported a sustained heightened importance of being Jewish in their personal lives, as well as continuing to see Israel as a national cultural and religious centre of the Jewish people. Unlike the birthright participants however, these alumni experienced a weakening of their American identity compared to their scores at the outset of their longer term programme. Summing up, the centrality and salience of the Jewish and Israeli ethnic components of self-identity were seen to be strengthened in increased measures over time; withstanding attrition over the follow up period back home in North America. However, this Jewish peoplehood identification was correlated with a slight decline in the weight of the American component of their identity. All in all, one can say that the visit to Israel changed the relative weight of different components of the ethnic iden-
tity of young American Jews on their return home to America. As has been shown elsewhere (Mittelberg 1988; Mittelberg and Lev Ari 1995), these impacts are neither automatic nor guaranteed. The primary factors of the Israel experience that contribute to this ethnic impact include: close social interaction with the host, the sense by the participants that they contributed to the host society, and finally, high satisfaction with the educational and social programme that was provided for them.

The visit to Israel for American Jews is made possible by the globalization of travel and tourism, allowing integration of American Jews with Israelis within time, without sharing a permanent place of residence. This process results in the relativization of American identification as part of global Jewish identity, within which belonging to a wider imagined community is incorporated.

Ultimately, the burden of integration of the different worlds of experience into a pluralized American Jewish identity remains incumbent on the participant-alumni, as he or she renegotiates their identity in the pluralized world of the community on their return home.

**Jewish Continuity and Israel Visits**

It is often asked to what extent Jewish continuity is possible in the Diaspora today. The honest answer is that we don’t really know but we can perhaps determine the lines of analysis. We can ask to what degree is the Jewish culture of most Diaspora Jews filled with content that determines behaviour (often characterized as “ethnic”), or whether this content is reduced to the symbolic, lacking behavioural consequences. To what degree is this culture — however rich — made plausible to the individuals who share it by virtue of a community structure that reinforces its reality status and maintains processes of socialization (both formal and informal) from generation to generation? We can further ask what proportion of Diaspora Jewish children grow up in ethnically homogeneous households that serve as the source of the historical memory and culture that is being transmitted to them. By the same token, we need to know what sort of ethnic outcome arises from dual-identity households where the adults choose to be ambiguous about their multiple ethnic heritages. In these cases, it is unclear what the children of such households will adopt as their nominal or symbolic ethnicity, if any, and what will be its subsequent strength.

Finally, we can ask about the role of Israel in this emerging ethnic culture of choice. Israel is the one place in the modern world where Jewish values are nominally those of the dominant culture of society. This situation is in contrast to the minority status of Jewish ethnicity in the Diaspora. Israel, therefore, has the potential to be a focus (partial or otherwise) of Jewish identification for all Diaspora Jews, or to act as a locus of Jewish experience — whether physical or virtual — to be lived through.

Diaspora Jewish youth today share a set of common background experiences, which can be termed agents of re-ethnicification. These include formal Jewish education, the celebration of rites of passage such as the bar/bat mitzvah, participation in informal Jewish youth groups, educational trips to Israel at all ages, and Jewish studies courses at universities (Mittelberg 1999).

The visit to Israel is a potentially important agent of Jewish ethnicity, precisely because it stands at the interface between the private and the public, the religious and
the secular, and the particular and universalistic aspects of Jewishness. In Israel, the visitor experiences a manifestation of Jewish sovereignty which is nonreplacable beyond Israel's borders. Israel contributes affect to Diaspora symbolic ethnicity. Israel supports Diaspora Jewish identity by acting as the object of organizational efforts in the areas of philanthropy and politics. Ultimately, the effect of the Israel experience is to influence North American Jewish teens and young adults toward Jewish marriage, volunteer social involvement, and communal responsibility. Its normative and behavioural consequences may then contribute to the re-ethnification of Diaspora Jews.

Israel represents a partner for enriching Diaspora Jewish consciousness, for Israel is itself at present involved with its own process of defining Jewish continuity in ways different but no less significant than those of Diaspora Jewry. Although Israel and Diaspora Jewry have different challenges with regard to Jewish continuity, they need to explore a common and shared solution. This involves a programme of reciprocal personal, cultural, and economic interchange between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora. Modern Jewish identity is incomplete without the contribution of both communities. Israelis should seek greater integration of the forms of Jewishness represented in the Diaspora. Diaspora Jewry could develop a better understanding of the historical role and opportunity inherent in the Jewish sovereign state — something that no minority Jewish culture could ever generate. Modern Jewish ethnicity will develop in its fullest form from all that the Jewish people can collectively offer.

However, the Israel connection can be relevant to Diaspora Jews only if the latter are existentially relevant to Israeli Jews; currently they are hardly at all. To this end, Diaspora-based Jewish institutions will be compelled to work with grass-roots Israeli institutions in order to build together a new common culture that is relevant to Jewish people everywhere. It is perhaps somewhat ironic that today we find that the issues of (a) what makes up being Jewish in Israel, and (b) how that Jewishness determines or affects all the other aspects of Israeli public and private life, stand at the centre of Israel's own quest for identity. This issue challenges, indeed threatens, in its divisiveness, the very sense of peoplehood without which Israel's existence is unthinkable or even justifiable. A significant part of the Jewish identity crisis in Israel resides in the absence of a sense of belonging, both to the Jewish people and to one's local community. Any serious grappling among Israelis with the issue of their own Jewish identity and culture must include a continuous dialogue with Jewish peers from the Diaspora. Through this dialogue, Jews in both communities must interrelate so that we may understand and deal with the complexity of Jewish identity — an identity that embodies cultural, national, and religious components.

Thus the Jewish communities in the Diaspora today could assume a new historic role of partner with Israel, to ensure the Jewish future of Israel in the Diaspora and the Diaspora in Israel — the Jewish future of the Jewish people. Diaspora Jewry together with Israeli Jewry would pursue this goal by engaging intentionally, purposefully, and programmatically in Jewish People Building through lateral Israel–Diaspora Jewish programming; that is, social engagement and interaction between different Jews from different communities who mean something personally to each other and who live out existential commonalities in partially shared communities, even if only for segments of their daily lives, or at important stages in their biographies. Some successful programme examples have already included (1) Israel–Diaspora Twin Community Leadership Development, (2) Israel–Diaspora Family Life Cycle
Celebration and (3) Israel Experience Peer Encounters. Today it is painfully clear that the image of Israel cannot serve the Diaspora as a surrogate for a community that is absent. The challenge to and responsibility of Diaspora Jewish leadership is to reconstitute the role of Israel in community life by transforming the image of Israel to an experience of Israel. They must move the Israel–Diaspora relationship from the transcendent but ephemeral to the contractual but central.

Finally, Diaspora Jewish leaders must transform the individual experience of Israel to a community relationship with its own bilateral institutional basis. The next steps beyond the Jewish Agency’s Partnership 2000, which is essentially programmatic, is the establishment of concommittant structures, Regional Israel–Diaspora Federations which would maintain — along the whole spectrum of twinned local community functions — the intrinsic Israel–Diaspora relationship.

A contract binds two sides. The implication here is for nothing less than the reconstruction of the basis of Jewish peoplehood. At the base of such a contract lies the view that Jewish continuity in Boston and Haifa, for example, is not only dependent on what goes on within each community, but also on what goes on between each community. While each community can in principle go its own way, the Jewishness of neither will be strengthened by it.

This is the Israel connection to Diaspora Jewish continuity; it is as well, somewhat paradoxically, the Diasporan connection to Israeli Jewish continuity. Jewish peoplehood requires the input of both ends of the asymmetrical though symbiotic relationship in order to be sustained.

**Travel to Israel: Migration of Another Kind**

Fifty years after the establishment of the State of Israel, but especially following the Six Day War, travel to Israel has been transformed from a demand of external migration to a case of internal migration — internal, that is, to the Jewish people, with temporary travel of a round trip nature.

As such, the visit to Israel that is now understood as an educational programme in Israel (not the migration to Israel) represents a broad consensus between the Jewish elites of Israel and Diaspora society. Witness especially the birthright israel program and the entirely new MASA initiative launched at the time of writing, between the Government of Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel, with the aim of radically increasing (subsidizing) the participants in long-term (semester to one year) programs in Israel in order to quadruple the number up to 20,000 by the year 2008.

In all of these efforts, the consensus of both lay and professional leadership — and one which is supported by research — is that an educational experience in Israel has a formative impact on the Jewishness of the traveller (even though there is much debate regarding the power, weight and sustainability of the educational experience in Israel).

From the perspective of the sociology of tourism, the Israel experience of those who travel there, can be understood as a particular case of diaspora cultural tourism, in all its six forms cited above, often more akin to a pilgrimage than to recreational tourism.

The Jewish Diaspora now can be understood as a particular case of contemporary peoples that live in a multi local environment with an embedded homeland and lateral dias-
poras. That is to say, modern Jews may well simultaneously live in and feel a belonging to a number of places, all of which are part of their spiritual home. They may belong to a given Diaspora community as well as to one in Israel sustaining the social fabric that joins both communities. Israel–Diaspora relations therefore may be best viewed within the context of a particular case of a transnational peoplehood which, in the Jewish case, predated the rise of the nation state in the midst of which was born the Zionist movement and the Jewish state.

International travel from the Diaspora to Israel then can be seen as a particular form of cultural tourism which has the effect on the traveler of building a level of attachment to a physical society outside the locale in which he or she resides permanently, as well as generating an attachment to the imagined people to which both the traveler and the hosts purportedly belong.

Summary

The current Israel–Diaspora discourse maintained almost exclusively by the elites of both Israeli Jewish society and Jewish Diaspora institutions has been antagonistically dominated by the one way migration paradigm, as a categorical imperative demanded by the State from its distant and dissident fellow (Western) Jews. As categorically as it was demanded, so, too, was it denied; certainly at the personal level of Diaspora leadership and the Jewish masses. Failure to fulfill this goal invited both sides to participate in a choreography of mutual rejection, and not to an opportunity to rethink the paradigm itself. This missed opportunity is especially poignant in view of the fact that significant sections of both Israeli and Diaspora Jews do indeed maintain long-term family, business and career relations with Jews in their opposite community. Globalization brings a growing number of Israeli Jewish young adults into the labour and social markets of Diaspora community and institutions. The reverse is also true, both as part of the “push” programmes of educational travel to Israel and the pull of the Diaspora for exploration and growth for Israeli youth in search of higher education and/or post army growth and experience.

Alongside this paradigm of discourse has also blossomed the default philanthropic paradigm, the Diaspora-sponsored trade-off for the absence of migration just referred to. This philanthropic support (as important as it undoubtedly is, both for the donors and the recipients) was and remains often captive to the images most likely to serve the interest of capital mobilization rather than the generation of Israel–Diaspora reciprocity and interdependence. Relationships were often, if not always, marked by an emphasis on vivid images of the needs of the recipients, and the weaknesses of Israeli society, thus defining Israel as a place to support but not to join..

While the importance of the educational visit and its impact are recognized, it begs the question with which we began. The overarching question that has yet to be answered is: what sort of Jewish continuity do we seek and hope for? What continuity will the visit to Israel sustain, and what kind of people will modern Jews sustain?

Towards Global Jewish Peoplehood

- Can we see Jewish peoplehood as a de-territorialized culture in the existential
sense? Can Jewish peoplehood be not limited to only one territory?
- Can we discuss this possibility without being accused of denying the centrality of Israel in Jewish history and contemporary Jewish peoplehood?
- Can we discuss being Jewish without having to see the Diaspora as a liminal event; liminal to primordial Jewishness which can only be found in Israel?
- Are we obliged by the recognition of multilateral Jewish peoplehood to deny the messianic vision and the Zionist programme of the ingathering of the Jewish people in its own land?
- Can there be perhaps an affirmation of the role of Israel in the structure of global Jewish peoplehood, as well as Israel being an agent for, and dimension of, personal Diaspora Jewish identity?
- Can Israeli Jews include Diaspora Jewish life worlds into its collective vision without making the demands of immediate physical residence in the land?
- Finally, can we leave the issue of personal permanent migration to the forces of biography, marriage and money markets, and concentrate on the global platform on which Jewish identity and social structure needs to be firmly placed in the twenty first century?

Diaspora tourism which is exemplified in the Jewish case by birthright israel and now MASA, points to the universal blurring of boundaries between home and host country and to the need to redefine both the real as well as the imagined collective memory of contemporary Jews. It furthermore invites us to take into account, openly and explicitly, the ways in which different Diaspora identities contrast with each other, as well as with the Jewish identity of Israelis in their homeland.

None of the issues raised by these questions can be dissolved into religious ideology — whether pluralist or fundamentalist ideology — nor can they be reduced to and exhausted by the exclusive political demand of migration to Israel. Rather, the debate needs to be structured on a more inclusive and broader paradigm of late modern Jewish peoplehood. Indeed, this discourse must be expanded to include the contemporary local community structures and the diverse cultural paradigms of the global Jewish community, in order to forge anew the binding affinities, common language and shared destiny that makes belonging to a people concretely relevant for its members.

If the discourse is restricted to the synagogue-driven religious paradigm in the name of the American ethos, or to the state-driven migration paradigm in the name of the Israeli ethos, the opportunities offered by a more inclusive global transnational paradigm of peoplehood may be overlooked or eliminated.

Whatever the future holds for the Jewish people, it seems clear that not all the cards are held today in only one community. Moreover, interdependence and reciprocity between the different communities is a sine qua non for the continuity of the Jewish people. Finally, educational travel between Israel and its diasporas, in greater numbers and at earlier ages is likely to contribute to these very consequences and thus to the continuity of the Jewish peoplehood to which modern Jews widely aspire.
Table 2.1 Pre-Trip and Post-Trip changes in Jewish Identity, Diaspora Identity and Attitudes towards Israel among North American (NA) and Former Soviet Union (FSU) *birthright israel* Short Term Participants

NA: N=326; FSU N=155
Key: 1 to 5 scale; 1 = low degree, 5 = high degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity and attitudes</th>
<th>Pre-Trip</th>
<th>Post-Trip</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
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<tr>
<td>I Diaspora Jewish Identity</td>
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<td>(a) Importance of belonging to the Jewish community</td>
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<td>II Homeland Component of Diaspora Jewish Identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(a) Israeli culture is important to you</td>
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<td>3.94</td>
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<td>III Citizenship Component of Diaspora Jewish Identity</td>
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<td>Being American/FSU plays an important part in my life</td>
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<td>-0.48</td>
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Note

1 I wish to record my indebtedness to Prof. Len Saxe and Dr. Bruce Phillips at CMJS Brandeis, for their important methodological assistance with regard to utilization of NJPS 2001 data.

References


In his essay, Dr. David Mittelberg posits that the global nature of today’s modern world has changed the discourse regarding the “Homeland–Diaspora dichotomy”. He states that, as Israel and Diaspora maintain antiquated paradigms for viewing the other, there is little connection between these groups on the everyday level. Ultimately, he asks the question: what kind of Jewish continuity will Israel visits sustain, and in what directions are the Jewish people heading? Though Mittelberg presents some data reflecting the importance of Israel visits, I will argue that modernity has not only had an impact on the nature of Israel educational trips for Diaspora Jewry, but has also created a new necessity for these transformative experiences for Diaspora Jewish youth.

The issues facing the Jewish people today are unprecedented. Barely three generations ago, Jews throughout the world — most of whom were new immigrants, whether in the United States, Europe, South America, the Soviet Union or Australia — struggled for basic economic and sometimes physical security. These external threats, certainly in the first half of the twentieth century, but even later as well, prevented the Jewish community from truly confronting modernity and its impact on Jewish life. Today, although Jews throughout the world have achieved the basic economic and physical security they once lacked, an entirely new set of threats has emerged.

In under a century, the modern Jewish community has managed to realize many of its grandparents’ dreams. In the wake of these incredible successes, however, new threats to the survival of the Jewish people have emerged. For the first time in history, Jews have the opportunity to choose to be Jewish. Whereas in the past, Jews were still identified and labeled as Jews by the outside society, even if they chose not to affiliate with Judaism in any way, Jews today can “opt out” of Jewish affiliation and identification completely. Being Jewish today is completely voluntary, and, as nearly every demographic study undertaken in the last decade has shown, many young Jews are choosing not to affiliate.

Thus, modernity, with all of its advantages, has created a problem that threatens the future of the Jewish people. Young Jews today need motivation to be Jewish; no longer does society force Jewishness on them, and no longer is having Jewish parents enough to ensure that children will remain committed Jews. We know that the old
model of Jewish communities, centred around synagogues, is not enough to attract the next generation. The concept of Jewish peoplehood, which encompasses all aspects of the culture — including history, homeland, religion and spirituality — offers a fresh and exciting entry point for many young people. In the face of this crisis and these obstacles, Israel has a unique role to play in securing the Jewish future through strengthening Jewish peoplehood.

The Role of Israel

Since the founding of the State, Jewish communities around the world have cast Israel as the victim, primarily for fund-raising purposes. Although Israel still faces many challenges to its identity and Jewish nature, the vibrant, dynamic, and growing Israel of 2005 now has the potential to provide much-needed help to world Jewry. The connection to Israel is of utilitarian value in addressing the challenges of Jewish life around the world. At the same time, inculcating young Jews with a strong connection to Israel has intrinsic value as well.

From 1948, unmediated engagement with Israel has had the power to motivate and inspire Jews. It is in Israel that Diaspora Jewry can sense for the first time this notion of Jewish peoplehood and what it means to be part of the broader narrative of Jewish history. Exposure to the remarkable diversity of Israel, the rich tapestry of Israeli society, the modern Hebrew language, and the use of Jewish time has a profound effect and provides an answer to the all-important question of “why be Jewish?” Israel offers multiple gateways to Jewish peoplehood and, as such, is the single most powerful resource we have in ensuring the Jewish future. The experience of Jewish sovereignty, especially for prolonged periods of time, has a dramatic effect on many indicators of Jewish identity, behaviour and belief.

The transformative power of an Israel experience affects young and old alike and provides a unique anchor for the concept of Jewish peoplehood. Extensive research has shown that spending time in Israel can have a strong impact on people. Jewish education has to consider this transformative potential on all possible levels. Short-term programmes, including birthright israel and summer seminars for high-school students, can have a tremendous impact on young people, at precisely the key identity formation stages of their lives. Indeed, the Jewish community must strive to send no less than 50 percent of Jewish young people to Israel for short periods of time. Yet this is not enough. Long stays in Israel have been proven to definitively strengthen Jewish identity and generate a long-term connection to Jewish peoplehood.

According to a study that compared alumni of Young Judaea’s Year Course with those who applied to the programme but ultimately did not attend, a year in Israel has a transformative effect. Of those who participated in the programme, 91 percent went on to marry Jews, in contrast to the control group where only 48 percent did so. Synagogue membership is 79 percent among alumni and only 43 percent among those who did not come to Israel. Over 70 percent of Young Judaea Year Course graduates have been back to visit Israel more than two times, compared to 20 percent of the other group. Those who spent a year in Israel were also far more likely to send their children to Jewish day school, volunteer in a Jewish framework and to contribute to Federation campaigns (Steven M. Cohen and Alan Ganapol (1998) Building Jewish

It is, in fact, these statistics, combined with the growing concern for the Jewish future, that led to an historic policy shift by the Government of Israel. For the first time, the Prime Minister of Israel has decided to invest in the future of the Jewish people through a joint initiative with the Jewish Agency’s Department for Jewish Zionist Education. This programme will ultimately bring one in every five young Jews to Israel on semester or year-long programmes. MASA: The Gateway to Long-Term Programs was launched this year and serves as a platform for all semester and year-long programmes for Diaspora Jewry.

Not only will MASA ultimately bring 20,000 people between the ages of 18–30 to Israel annually and help countless individuals embark on their Jewish journeys, but it will help shift the cultural norm among Diaspora Jewry. Spending time in Israel will become as commonplace as synagogue membership once was. After completing high school, thousands of Jewish youths, from all denominations and backgrounds, will participate in a MASA programme. Israel will become a core part of Jewish identity for a significant percentage of the Jewish world, uniting diverse Jewish communities around the world and inspiring young people to explore and own their rich heritage.

The major challenge facing the Jewish people today is the openness of modernity and the newly voluntary nature of Judaism. By placing the engagement with Israel at the centre of Jewish education, both as a source of resources and as a locus of intrinsic and unique value, Israel has the potential to provide much-needed inspiration and motivation for young people to commit themselves to seeking Jewish meaning. Israel education, however, is just one piece of the broader struggle to deal with issues that modernity has imposed on the Jewish community. As Mittelberg argued, the issues he raised can only be addressed by structuring a debate on a broad, modern paradigm of Jewish peoplehood. Peoplehood is a unifying concept that can encompass all aspects of Judaism, and Israel education is the ideal gateway to Jewish peoplehood.

DIASPORA COMMENTATOR

Jewish Continuity and Israel Visits:
The Latin American Experience

Gabriel Trajtenberg

David Mittelberg’s essay accurately describes new focuses on the Israel–Diaspora relationship. His essay provides an excellent analysis on the impact of different experiences as regards duration as well as the knowledge about Jewish identity of its participants.

I would like to review the ideological aspects of the underlying discourse in this exchange called Israel–Diaspora.
The Israel Perception About the Command

How Israel is perceived varies from country to country in the Diaspora. Commonly, the approach tends to be generalized as from the American Jewish experience. This experience, prevalent due to its heavy demographic weight, differs greatly from others such as the Jewish and Zionist experience in southern Latin America. My personal experience has taught me that, within a globalised context, the South American Jew thinks, lives and feels Israel differently from his northern brothers.

Predominant Jewish and Zionist education in southern Latin American Jewish communities has generated an extraordinary bridge with Israel. This educational approach tends to place Israel in the subconscious of children and young people as the final destination of the Jewish people. Regardless of personal, family or working aspects that may postpone or call off the decision to migrate to Israel, Israel is our home; our final destination.

It is important to keep alive this paradigm mentioned by David Mittelberg as the “migration paradigm”. It is essentially the living spirit of the Zionist movement; the expression of the final destination, the historical understanding and the sense of Jewish people.

Each voyage to Israel should be considered as a remembrance of the revolutionary miracle of the Zionist experience and of the creation of the modern Hebrew State. As the famous phrase from the sixties says: *When something extraordinary turns into something ordinary, we’re witnessing a revolution*. Israel is the Jewish people living a revolution. The core goal of Jewish Zionist education is simple: *to keep Israel’s extraordinary nature alive*.

For a Latin American Jew, being a tourist in Israel is a mixture of six patterns described by Coles and Timothy (2003). Though there have been no studies into direct family bonds between Jewish tourists from our continent and Israel, it might be stated that the rate of visits of Latin American Jews to Israel is high. Educational Jewish tourism from Latin America to Israel during the seventies, eighties and nineties was dominated by short-term programmes averaging one to two months long over January and February. These educational experiences, headed by the Jewish Agency for Israel, were the final destination for young activists. The core programme was composed of three experiences of Israeli life. The first one was the educational programme itself, that is, the *Tapuz* plan (living in a kibbutz), Jewish studies, etc. During these programmes, the ideological transmission was so strong that the trip’s transcendence was indelibly stamped. The second essential element was the encounter or re-encounter with the Israeli family bond. This usually took place during Sabbath when the young could experience Israeli life through the eyes of an uncle, brother, cousin, etc. Finally, participants spent some extra days experiencing Israel — its streets, smells, transportation and pubs — on their own, without any *madrich* (youth leader). This last component was fully subjective because the young activist could put into practice the legacy of their Zionist education by means of the intensive use of Hebrew.
The Effects of Globalization on the Latin American Tradition of Visits to Israel

The new millennium brought new changes and reactions in the Jewish world, especially for the American Jewish community. The data collected by the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) in the mid-1990s on young American Jewish identity led to the birthright israel programme being enthusiastically created. Birthright israel is an historical milestone that builds a new bridge between the North American Jewish community and Israel. In my opinion, birthright israel has been a wise and successful answer to the growing challenge of assimilation within the North American Jewish community.

The emergence of birthright israel coincides with a particular juncture in Jewish communities from the southern region of Latin America, especially in Argentina, and within a background of economic recession in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. From the mid nineties, the mystique and structure of mid-range programmes began losing strength and the number of participants decreased. In conjunction with this reality, the economic depression made it difficult for families to finance their children’s trips, generating a gap between 1999 and 2001. Within this context, the programme spread to the Latin American regional market and strongly called, thanks to its generosity, to hundreds of young people imbued with the historical mysticism of traveling to Israel.

From 2005, MASA long-term programmes have gained rapid popularity among young people. In my opinion, MASA provides the optimum experience that any Latin American young Jew can have of Israel.

Globalization, in terms of educational tourist programmes to Israel, has both benefited and harmed Latin American Jewish communities. On the one hand, we have benefited from having amongst us members of the community who have experienced birthright israel programmes (short-term) and MASA (long-term). On the other hand, there is now decreased attendance in mid-range programmes (one to two months), which were once part of the tradition and spirit of the region. Mid-range programmes should be a complementary element to function as a link between the programmes mentioned above. They should be promoted as a gradual bridge to define longer-term programmes in Israel.

About Hebrew

If English is the language of globalization, then Hebrew is the language of the Jewish tribe and its Israeli State.

Educational tourist programmes to Israel should be the final closure of the long process of Jewish Zionist education, with Hebrew being the main access gate to Jewish culture and Israeli life. Hebrew is the link that gets us connected to the real Israel; to its music, television and everyday life. The deeper our knowledge of this language is, the stronger the link between the young from Israel and from the Diaspora should be.

To support Hebrew is to support Israel and Jewish people’s nature among the global concord of nations. If English is the language of globalization, then Hebrew is the language of the Jewish tribe and its Israeli State.
Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity

Edited by Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev

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