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THE EFFECTS OF A LONG-TERM ISRAEL TRIP UPON JEWISH IDENTITY

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ISRAEL CONNECTION

Trips to Israel are generally believed to heighten an individual's Jewish awareness. Israel today offers a variety of possibilities for visits ranging from a two-week summer tour, highlighting areas of historical and geographical interest with time for sampling the culture, foods, and wares, to a long-term study program chosen for a student who desires to enhance his or her own Jewish knowledge in the context of modern Israel. The motivations for going on one kind of trip rather than another are likely to be different; the fact is, that most American Jews who visit Israel do so on a short-term basis.

What motivates a young American Jew to go to Israel for six months or a year on a long-term study or work/study program? Specifically, what motivates a Jew brought up in a Reform Jewish environment to do so? Can such a trip have a lasting effect upon the participant? Will the perception of himself or herself as a Jew be significantly affected by a long-term stay in Israel? If so, how?

My Jewish identity was significantly enhanced by my experiences in Israel: I was deeply impressed by the vitality, the sense of history, the physical beauty--in all, the reality of the modern state of Israel. My many relatives there increased the personal connection and my Hebrew-speaking ability opened up many avenues of communication for me. Jerusalem itself left a marked imprint on me--both the essence of traditional Judaism that it represents, and the unique physical and spiritual characteristics that it is known for. The deep personal connection to Israel, developed through two long-term stays there, prompted me to pursue this study.

Today my consciousness and commitment to Israel remain the focal point of my Jewish identity. My personal connection to Israel motivated me to choose to discover how and to what extent Israel has had an effect on others like me.

The object of this study, then, is to discover the apparent effects of a long-term stay in Israel upon the Jewish identities of young Reform Jews. In the process, the previously mentioned questions were posed, along with many others. Individuals who participated in several different Reform-sponsored long-term Israel programs were encouraged in personal interviews to focus on significant experiences during their stay. Directed questions

elicited the impact that Israel has had upon their conceptions of themselves as Jews.

My hypothesis for the study is the following: An extended visit to Israel makes an important impact on whatever one might think of as Jewish identity. As Simon Herman states, "No Jew can escape the necessity of defining his Jewish identity in relationship to Israel, particularly so after the Six-Day War."[1] If Israel has this significance in the abstract, how much more of an impact must Israel have on a Jew who has visited there, and how much more on a Jew who has spent an extended time there! I am fortunate to have been able to relive this meaningful experience through research work.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Simon Herman, Israelis and Jews (Random House: New York: 1978), p. 8.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IDENTITY QUESTION

There has been considerable debate as to what exactly Jewish identity is. The dictionary definition of identity is: "Sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing; the condition of being the same with something described or asserted."[1] For an individual, identity constitutes the resolution of choices between one's available options and the integration of them into a meaningful whole. Each American integrates into his or her identity a range of aspects of the broad American culture as well as aspects of his or her ethnicity. The sorting out of these aspects is an important task as the Jewish adolescent moves into young adulthood.

This chapter discusses learning through interaction, what Israel trips are supposed to do for a person, and what other studies on the effects of Israel trips have shown.

Erik Erikson defines identity as a gradually accruing sense based on experience and integration of the ego stages at the different stages of a person's life.[2] He maintains that social health and cultural solidarity

which occur at the end of each major developmental crisis create a sense of psychological equilibrium.

One cannot discuss individual identity without reference to the larger society as a whole. The words "social," "cultural," and "psychological" in the above reference are crucial. A person, then, develops his or her identity by integrating into his or her ego important reference to the culture and society surrounding him or her. "A necessary step in forming an individual identity is a reservoir of collective integrity from which the individual derives his stature as a social being."[3]

In other words, part of an individual identity formation is being part of a collective identity formation. Identity is an integration of identifications with a number of individuals and by extension of reference groups. The majority collective culture does not have to be the exclusive one affecting the individual's development. A person is socialized to learn and accept the norms and values of the larger society. He or she must function in a civic and national sense or he or she will be termed "deviant." There is nothing in Erikson's definition which mentions behavior as a component or index of one's identity. This will be developed later.

Harold Isaacs' idea for writing American Jews in Israel came from a study of American Negroes in West Africa in 1964. In the beginning of their stay, they felt themselves to be in the majority (racially), a feeling they enjoyed immensely, since they did not stand out as separate as had been their experience in America. However, as time went by, they felt the need to separate themselves, in a psychic sense, and maintain their separate American Negro identity. A friend of Isaacs commented that the American Negroes' experience in West Africa at that time sounded to him like an American Jew's experience in Israel. Israel would invoke in the American Jew a cultural, religious, national, and perhaps historical sense of belonging to a majority culture. While the analogy cannot be maintained on a racial level, the comparison seems clear. One's individual identity may be reinforced if the collective identity it is based on happens to be the majority culture.

However, identity is not so clear cut. While it is true that being in Israel evokes a sense of national belonging for a Jew, and may be considered a positive element in identity formation, why do Jews who make aliyah form landsmanschaften upon arrival there? The Association for Americans and Canadians in Israel boasts a membership of about 4,000. There are counterpart organizations from

different regions in Eastern and Central Europe, North Africa, Latin America, etc. Jews from these areas often choose to settle among people who share their diaspora origin in the cities, and many moshavim and kibbutzim have been settled by single diaspora Jewish groups, or a combination of two or three, e.g., Polish or Latin-American.

These facts have many implications. One might not be so surprised to see a landsmanschaft in America; here such a group would perpetuate both a local, national, and a religious feeling among members. It might be desirable to join together religiously because Jews are a minority in America. But why do so in Israel? Is not being in the majority society enough of a boost to individual and group identity? Apparently not. However one may define "Jewish," whatever component one may attribute as the major one of this concept (religious, historical, cultural, even national) the facts show that where Jews are the majority, there is still a separate and distinct need to continue to maintain one's national identity, apart from whatever spiritual, communal, or psychic need is being fulfilled by living in a Jewish state. This may be true for visitors as well as for those who have made aliyah, as elicited in the following response from college students who had spent a year studying in Jerusalem: "In America, we were Jews. In Israel we become Americans."[4]

It is also interesting to note that all persons in Israel whose native language is English, whatever their country of origin, are called "Anglo-Saxons." Thus the Israelis include them in a larger reference group.

One cannot conclude from the above quote that these students lost their Jewish identity in Israel; however, their identity as Americans was more clear cut to them when they were outside of America. This phenomenon would seem to have many implications, e.g., should one separate oneself from the majority in order to develop the strongest possible identity? This is the kind of question which Simon Herman discusses in Israelis and Jews: The Continuity of an Identity. His study focuses on the Israeli conception of self--whether it is an Israeli or Jew. But he probes deeper than what might seem to be a discussion of semantics. The Israelis he interviews are all Jews; however, not all Jews are Israelis, and most of the Israelis in his sample chose to identify themselves as Israelis.

One of the reasons that American Jews may have difficulty finding their "niche" in Israel is the difference in religious practice there as compared with the United States. What has been evolving in Israel since the initiation of the Zionist enterprise in the late 19th century is a clear delineation between either "religious" or "non-religious" Judaism. Every form of Judaism which is not strictly observant of the laws, customs, and practices (and

there are many "somewhat" observant Jews) is considered "non-religious." Thus, strictly observant Jews see no place for Conservative or Reform Jews in their understanding of religious practice. These definitions of Judaism grew up in compatibility with whatever has been the government of what is now Israel; thus Israel has no separation of religion and state as is known in America. Although the majority of Israelis are not strictly observant, they have not offered a serious challenge to the official--i.e., orthodox-rabbinate.

Reform and Conservative Judaism, though largely American phenomena, began in Germany as reactions to pre-modernist Orthodox Judaism. Today, a very sizeable number of American Jews affiliate themselves with either the Reform or Conservative movements in the United States. Therefore, American Jews visiting Israel have to come to terms with the strict delineations of "religious" or "non-religious" Judaism that they will inevitably encounter. Encountering religion in Israel will likely cause visitors to consider their own Jewish identity.

Since this is a study of young Reform Jews, the relationship between (a) Reform Judaism and Zionism, and (b) the Reform movement and traditional observance need to be discussed briefly. In order to establish a strong American Reform Jewish movement, Jewish leaders in the early 1900s believed they should sever themselves from all

other universalist movements, including Zionism. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 was a definitive statement of Reform Jewish practice and anti-Zionist in essence. Reform Judaism has now found a way of reconciling Zionism with its own beliefs. Today there is large-scale support for Israel. But Reform Judaism does not believe that the only viable Jewish life is in Israel. It does not emphasize longing for the homeland, but it recognizes the importance of Israel for the continuation of contemporary Jewry. A current article states that there is an "emergence among committed Reform Jews of a strong drive toward ethnic identification, centered around the state of Israel. . . ."[5]

The Reform position is moving toward stronger support of and identification with Israel. A Reform Jew need not feel any guilt about being in Israel with no plans to make aliyah. Neither need he or she feel guilt about not practicing the rituals that are seen in Israel. Strict observance of Halachah is not a requirement of Reform Judaism. Reform Judaism denies the "eternal validity of any given formulation of Jewish belief or codification of Jewish law."[6] There is little unanimity, therefore, among Reform Jews, with regard to practical observance. A Reform Jew studies the Bible from an historical and literary perspective, rather than a legal one. The message of one prophet serves to elucidate this anti-Halachic stance taken by Reform Jews.

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
It hath been told thee, O man, what is good,
And what the Lord doth require of thee:
Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God.[7]

Studies of Jewish identity, such as those by Bubis and Marks, and Sklare, have concentrated on behavior as an index of Jewish identity. In the Bubis/Marks study, questions asked participants upon return from Israel included frequency of attendance at religious services, participation in ritual ceremonies, etc. Sklare's Lakeville study pointed out that of the two major immigrant groups to a particular midwest city, the German Jews especially tended to keep their identities separate and to refuse to assimilate with the East European Jews. They wanted to associate with other Jews, but with those who immigrated from the same regions. It would seem that what these studies do is assess Jewish identity based on tangible evidence of activity in the Jewish community. In this case, behavior was a clue to their attitudes but not necessarily a sign of their Jewish identities. This fact also sheds some light on the earlier discussion of a need to maintain a separate and distinct national or ethnic identity, even while among co-religionists.

Earlier studies, such as Janowsky's in the late 1940's, concluded that programs with a high degree of Jewish content must take priority in Jewish community center programming. Jewish community centers made an effort at that time to help Jews develop a strong Jewish identity as a reaction to growing anti-Semitism.

Two major studies on Jewish identification were done in the 1950's; one by Bernard Lazerwitz and another by Ludwig Geismar. Lazerwitz based his study on that of Isadore Chein and Jacob Hurwitz, who studied the reaction of Jewish boys to various aspects of being Jewish. Lazerwitz's emphasis was on determining the components of Jewish identification as a phenomenon of minority group identification. Using a sociological framework, he stated that members of minority groups can be placed into two categories--pluralist and assimilationist. The pluralist-tending group wishes above all to maintain its cultural identity, and strives for toleration of group differences in the larger society. The assimilationist-tending group "craves the fullest opportunity for participation in the life of the larger society . . . it seeks complete acceptance by the dominant group and a merger with the larger society"[8] at the expense of losing their own identity.

Lazerwitz's study was devoted to the investigation of the basic characteristics of Jews tending toward

a pluralistic orientation. He contends that the main difference between pluralistic and assimilationist Jews is behavior, and determining the level of participation in Jewish communal activities is the key to distinguishing that difference. He conducted interviews with sixty American Jews who, through personal interviews, each answered a questionnaire whose broad categories were behavioral, attitudinal, and conceptual background. His index consisted of sixteen dimensions, e.g., office holding in Jewish organizations, social distance, and Confirmation intentions for daughters. He sampled adults, as opposed to Chein and Hurwitz, and Geismar, who sampled young adults and children, and divided his results into "highly identified" and "lowly identified" Jews. His analysis of test results led him to develop the hypothesis that Jewish identification is complex and may constitute more factors in other than additudinal and behavioral areas investigated. His sample revealed a wide variety of ways of behaving toward one's own Jewish group. He questioned the validity of even comparing one type of Jew to another, but concluded that it could be done if certain value judgments are made. Those value judgments must assume that certain behavior patterns are considered desirable, and that these desirable patterns are composed of certain activities and/or attitudes.[9] The key to any statement

of Jewish identity, he maintains, is the structure of values. His study did not attempt to explore the ingredients of Jewish identification (as Rinder, Gale, Rivkin and others sought to do). His study suggests the potentialities for understanding the make-up of the modern Jew through research on Jewish identification. Future studies, he suggested, should seek to find out what basic factors seem to be most influential in producing Jewish identification. He suggested the possibility of in-depth interviewing.

In his 1968 study, Lazerwitz developed a nine-point scale, which included the following multi-dimensional components:

1. Religious behavior
2. Pietism (involving religious items at a more intensive level than the standard ones, e.g., attending Rosh HaShana services: a religious item; fasting on Yom Kippur: a pietistic item.
3. Jewish education
4. Activity in Jewish organizations (apart from synagogue membership)
5. Attitudes toward involvement with Israel
6. Extent of acceptance of traditional religious beliefs
7. Degree of concentration of friendships and

courtship behavior among Jews

8. Jewish education intentions for one's children
9. Jewishness of childhood home.[10]

Lazerwitz's 1968 study does reveal a more varied set of components, and is more sophisticated due to his continuing research in the field. However, there is further evidence that many attitudes and behaviors which are very important to Jewish life in the United States today do not fall into these categories.

Geismar designed a "Scale for the Measurement of Ethnic Identification" in 1954. His goal was to arrive at a definition of Jewish identification and to construct a scale for measurement. He wanted to set up enough categories to be able to register any possible mode of self-identification as a Jew. Geismar developed a questionnaire with 60 positive identification items (e.g., should Jews who live among Gentiles celebrate Christmas just as their neighbors do? Possible answers: yes, undecided, and no). Also 60 negative identification items were asked (e.g., American Jews who go to Israel for a year to help in the reconstruction work there are unpatriotic because they are helping a foreign country. Possible answers: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree). In some cases, he used a short form of twelve scale items

based (as the larger one was) on the following eight categories of identification, which he felt were sufficiently diagnostic:

1. Religion
2. Quasi-secular cultural
3. Cultural Zionist
4. Socio-political Zionist
5. Personal and social
6. Cultural social
7. Bio-social
8. Defensive identification as a reaction to anti-Semitism.

Separate scores were calculated for category number eight because persons falling into this category were not identified with any of the other categories. These people considered themselves Jews only as a reaction to anti-Semitism, and possessed no characteristics of positive identification apart from that.

The eight categories were used to analyze (1) identification and home environment, (2) identification and social adjustment, and (3) measurement of changes in attitudes of identification. Geismar originally sought to develop a definition of minority group identification based on the eight categories to be used in "quantifying

the concept attitudes of Jewish identification." He felt that a study of ethnic identification might be more promising with adolescents rather than children or adults, because children are still sheltered by the home environment, and adult personalities may be more resistant to change.

Lawrence Marks' 1976 study attempts to develop a scale for the assessment of Jewish identity in terms of an attitude universe. The attitude universe consists of the following six components: cultural stereotype, cultural norm, personal moral evaluation, personal hypothetical behavior, personal feeling, and personal action. Content themes of the dimensions of Jewish identity were chosen to fit into the attitude universe scale. These dimensions are:

1. Historical time perspective
2. Psychological salience of being Jewish
3. Psychological salience of being American
4. Ethnocentricity
5. Pietism
6. Orientation towards traditionalism
7. Orientation towards the family
8. Orientation towards Jewish community affiliation

While Marks acknowledges that Jewish identity must be analyzed into its meaningful dimensions, he finds his model

of applying a facet analysis scale to be not applicable.

Thus, during the last thirty years, many attempts have been made to develop scales to measure Jewish identity. Janov's questionnaire, in 1960, comprised a totally behaviorally-oriented study. Since the 1960s, Jewish identity has been seen as a multi-dimensional concept. Some of the studies may appear to an observer to be multi-dimensional, but Marks points out that they used uni-dimensional scales based on a multi-dimensional concept. Massarik, Bubis and Marks, and the later Lazerwitz study do use scales of multi-dimensional character, but there still exist many attitudes and behaviors which do not fall into the categories presented in any of the most recent studies.

Behavior and attitudes are in fact components of identity, but, as Erikson states, the synthesis of many elements is what creates identity. In our daily lives, we have a variety of social roles and role models. Identity, states Erikson, is partly created out of these meaningful social models. In this sense, Jewish identity can be seen as one of the many components that comprise our identities, along with others. Our "psychosocial identity develops out of a gradual integration of all identifications."[11]

During adolescence, an individual makes choices for himself or herself from a range of alternatives. Among these are interpersonal relations, sexuality, relationships to family of origin, occupational choice and value. Identity constitutes a synthesis of a variety of role models. Thus, Geismar's statement of the advantages of studying adolescents is borne out by Erikson.

This study also focuses on young adults, who are still in the process of clarifying these roles for themselves. Decisions relating to a belief-system and cultural identity in areas where intellectual choices are required are made at a later age.

Based on most of the above discussion, a number of conclusions may be drawn about Jewish identity: It has no geographical limits, it can be separated from one's nation of origin, it is in some sense both cultural and religious, national and historical. Most important, outward behavior is not necessarily an adequate index. Both identity and Jewish identity are affected by external influences. For an American who experiences his or her Jewishness as part of a minority ethnic group, he or she must interact with others and integrate the total experience into a sense of self. Thus, a definition of Jewish identity might include the following: being conscious of and identified with one's roots, caring for the fate of

people involved in one's reference group (just as one cares for one's family), having a clear conception of who one is (i.e., no identity diffusion) without reference to where and among whom one is, and the ability to be critical of one's own group in an appropriate way.

Just as identity is affected by what influences one is exposed to, so too Jewish identity is affected. We learn by doing, and much learning can occur in the context of a group experience. A visit to Israel affords the opportunity for interaction and integration that Erikson refers to in forming and maintaining identity. Visits to foreign places create a broad cross-cultural experience, and an optimal learning situation. One's own identity may come into focus much more clearly outside of the usual environment. John Dewey stated,

> An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment. . . . Continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience.[12]

An Israel trip, for a Jew, however, is a special kind of cross-cultural experience. There are similarities in it to trips overseas. Upon arrival, a Jew will not find himself or herself surrounded by a totally exotic culture. The Jewish people are one's own; they are not or for the most part will not be perceived as a different

ethnic group. A Jew feels an historic sense of kinship with Israelis even though so many of the Israelis have Near Eastern or North African rather than European antecedents. Only a few generations ago, many of our relatives lived in Central and in Eastern Europe; some left for Palestine and the Israelis we meet were born or at least raised there; others left for America, and we find ourselves as Americans now visiting Israel. The situation could easily have been reversed. In any case, the Israel trip is found to be a broadening experience but at the same time an integrating one. The experience may clarify one's roots and provide a meaningful experience from which one's roots will grow and one's identity will develop.

Some of the reference groups that a person integrates may include components that are in conflict with one another; this may increase the difficulty in formulating a clear-cut identity. Individuals in transition use new experiential opportunities which may contribute to identity. Many of the categories of identification used by the studies on identity may prove applicable in this research. Since identity includes components such as feelings, values, and attitudes related to behavior, an attempt was made to explore these dimensions.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1970, p. 413.

[2]Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958.

[3]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 154.

[4]Harold Isaacs. American Jews in Israel (New York: The John Day Co., 1966), p. 61.

[5]Norman Mirsky, "Preisand Prejudice," in Moment, 3 May, 1978, p. 53.

[6]Encyclopedia Judaica, "Reform Judaism," 1974, p. 74.

[7]Micah 6:7-8, The Holy Scriptures. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1955.

[8]Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups," in The Science of Man in the World Crisis, ed. by Ralph Linton (New York: 1945), p. 355, quoted by Bernard Lazerwitz, "Some Factors in Jewish Identification," Jewish Social Studies, 15, 1953, p. 5.

[9]Bernard Lazerwitz, "Some Factors in Jewish Identification," Jewish Social Studies, 15, 1953, p. 14.

[10]Lawrence Marks, An Application of the Jordan-Guttman Facet Analysis Model of Attitude Structure to the Assessment of Jewish Identity in the United States (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U.S.C., 1976).

[11]Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1950), p. 239.

[12]John Dewey, Experience and Education (New York: Collier Books, 1938), p. 34.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Data about Jewish identity have heretofore been gathered by standardized questionnaire which explored primarily the prevalence of Jewish behaviors. The method used in this study--assessment of personal experience through detailed, in-depth interviews--was central to the object of the study: ascertaining the amount and kind of impact that an Israel experience has on one's Jewish identity.

The sample was obtained through the following processes: Nina Schafer at the office of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) (a division of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) in New York was contacted for a list of names of all participants in all of the long-term NFTY-sponsored Israel programs since 1970. A long-term program was defined as consisting of a minimum of six months. From a computer printout of approximately two hundred names, thirty-three names (all California based) were selected as a sample pool. These thirty-three people received a letter stating the intent of the study. Included in this letter was a stamped self-addressed

post card eliciting information regarding the nature of the program in which they had participated, and data necessary to establish contact with them (see Appendix for letter and post card).

Within two days after they were mailed, three cards were received. A total of nineteen were returned, including one post card from a former participant now living and working in Israel. This constituted a return rate of 58 percent. Of these, ten were selected, who, because of their residence in Southern California, were most readily available for a personal interview.

The ten persons interviewed consisted of five men and five women who had participated in the following programs for the corresponding year:

	Year	Number of Participants
College-Academic Year (CAY) on Kibbutz Ma'aleh HaHamishah (in cooperation with Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem)	1974-1975 1975-1976 1976-1977	1 1 2
Kibbutz Ein Dor Program (one year eleventh grade high school)	1976-1977	1
NFTY post-high school six-month work-study program	1975 1977	1 1
One-year Kibbutz workshop	1974-1975	1
Eisendrath International Exchange (EIE) program (six-month high school)	1972	1
Machon--Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad	1976-1977	1

The instrument consisting of an interview guide (see Appendix) focused on a range of aspects of Jewish identity which would appear to have been enhanced due to specific experiences in Israel. It was developed with a broad scope to allow for the inclusion of anecdotal material. The questions were open-ended which allowed for full descriptions of personal experience, but structured, which allowed for comparability of data. Each interview was taped and lasted approximately one hour. Significant responses in the areas covered by the interview guide were recorded in writing during the interview to facilitate the analysis of the tapes as well as precaution in the event of mechanical failure.

The major content areas on which interviews focused were (1) the participant's motivations for participation in the Israel trip, (2) expectations of their experience and subsequent reactions to events, (3) a description of their every day life experience there, (4) particular experiences and impressions with regard to Israelis and Americans in Israel, and (5) the interviewee's degree and kind of religious involvement in Israel. Reactions to events in Israel (particularly traumatic ones) and current religious involvement were also explored in the context of their return to the United States.

The interview process was a very enjoyable one, because there were many answers that the interviewer would have given, as well as because of the personal interest and excitement about the subject matter. However, the research biases reflected even in the enjoyment of the interview process must be accounted for. Through experiences in Israel, the researcher has come to value and internalize the following beliefs:

1. Acknowledging one's Jewishness is part of Jewish identity.
2. A sense of kinship with other Jews around the world is also part of it.
3. The study of modern Hebrew and connection to Israel as a focal point in one's life are also important components and enhancers of Jewish identity.

Because of these research biases, it was difficult to conduct an interview in a purely "scientific" or routine manner. The researcher had to restrain the impulse to exclaim definite agreement or argue a point, so as to listen and ask the next question. The respondents as a whole were very cooperative and extremely interested in the study. Almost all were sincerely convinced of the worth of the research project. A certain level of trust had to be

established with the interviewees due to the personal nature of the study in order to elicit the honest and spontaneous answers that were sought and received.

It had been originally thought that it would be an advantage to interview people whose Israel experiences were three or more years earlier, in order to get a mature perspective which might allow for a more comprehensive interview. The researcher also decided she would not actively seek out those who had returned very recently, in order to avoid a de-briefing atmosphere. However, the opposite was found to be the case: The five people interviewed who had returned as recently as July 1977 had the best recall and, it seemed, found it easier to probe their hearts and minds for the answers to questions. Many of the questions asked for recall of emotion, and sometimes the participant whose experience was a number of years ago, simply could not remember either emotions or factual information.

In a number of cases, while walking up a driveway to meet another participant and begin another interview, the interviewer was pleasantly greeted by a nameplate in both Hebrew and English--only available in a certain ceramic shop in the Old City of Jerusalem. Another time, the researcher was inconvenienced by having to wait for someone to return home, but upon his return, discovered that he and

a friend had been at Shabbat services, and had not been able to leave because of the necessity for a minyan. Another home was filled with artifacts from Jerusalem, which had been brought by a member of that family who makes a semi-annual pilgrimage to Israel. One respondent had so much to tell that the interview lasted one and one half hours. The interviewer was also asked once if she would mind having someone sit in on the interview. The friend had never been to Israel, and he thought he might learn something by listening to the questions and answers. The interviewer consented!

The major limitation of the study was the small sample of ten participants. While the data from the ten interviews do show a representation of different feelings and reactions to the Israel trip, the small sample necessarily presents a more limited look at Israel and Jewish identity than a larger sample would be able to show. However, each of the ten interviews was analyzed in depth, and a content analysis of the data is presented.

In order to protect the identities of the interviewees, alternate names, as well as changed names of places have been used. The use of these pseudonyms has been consistent so that one name was used for each person interviewed to represent only that person throughout the content analysis. Since substantial parts of a person's

identity are unconscious, the responses per sé could not constitute an adequate index of their meaning.

Responses were divided into categories and each response evaluated in the light of the general pattern of each individual.

Responses were compared to responses of individuals with more extensive, deeper, or more meaningful Jewish experience (see Chapter Two).

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT THEY SAID

Jewish identity appears to be more complex and elusive than most Jewish identity studies would lead one to believe. The interviewees found it difficult to conceptualize and the researcher difficult to extrapolate from the responses. Jewish identity was expressed in many different and subtle ways, louder by action than words:

> I've always been proud that I'm a Jew and when I was there, I could bring out my Jewish feelings . . . not by telling someone how great it is to be a Jew, but by doing things that are Jewish . . . like attending the holiday celebrations and joining in.
>
> I wanted not to lose it . . . the emotional high from Israel. When I got back I was feeling like super-Jew. In Israel you don't feel like that. Is it going to Hillel, teaching in religious school, sending money to Israel, involvement with Soviet Jewry? Each person has to define it for themselves. . . . It's something that means alot to me. At times I don't know where I stand as a Jew as far as religiously, culturally, etc., and then I realize it's not something you can define . . . it fits in now. My Jewish feelings are acted out in what I'm doing; not so much in words. . . .
>
> How did you see yourself as a Jew in Israel?
>
> That's what I've been talking about all along!

On the other hand, actions and behaviors are not unambiguous indicators of attitudes. They need to be seen in the context of associated feelings. In line with the procedures described in Chapter Three, responses were divided into the following categories:

1. Interactions with Israelis
2. Religious experience in Israel
3. Identification as an American in Israel
4. Group experience in Israel: motivations and expectations
5. Impact of incidents endangering Jewish/Israeli lives
6. Impact of other individuals' decisions to make aliyah
7. Sense of history evoked in visits to Israeli sites
8. Experience of returning to the United States.

The variety and range of views and approaches will be illustrated, including the most extreme and opposing points as well as those in-between.

Three examples of such actions may be seen in the following: As part of her Israel experience, Joan went to classes at the Diaspora Yeshiva for one week in Jerusalem. This is a traditional yeshiva in which texts are studied

and in which the men and women study separately. She is not an Orthodox Jew and does not lean toward that life style, but has an interest in studying Jewish texts--an interest which may have been sparked by her family's weekly study of the "portion of the week" every Friday night.

Marcia and a friend who had also been in Israel with her spoke Hebrew at every opportunity on their trip to Europe, on the way home. One might be led to conclude that they were so infused with Zionist spirit that they wanted to carry it with them to the point of continuing to immerse themselves in the language. But Marcia says, "it was fun to be able to speak in another language and not be recognized as Americans." Thus, in all likelihood, the latter were the motivations and feelings underneath the action.

Mark described,

> the whole concept of traveling around the country and seeing it in its modern forms. Reading . . . hearing passages from the Bible about these places really forced one to try to find one's place in Jewish history. . . . What could be more Jewish than standing for hours and staring at the Western Wall?

Mark described a strong historical feeling and connection to Judaism in Israel. One of the major catalysts for this historical connection was the fact that much of what he learned, he heard from the people on kibbutz who knew the story and "I was impressed by that," he states. This

historical sense was evoked in him through personal models of Jewish knowledge, and for that reason, probably had more impact than if he had read the history in books and then gone to visit the sites.

The connections between actions, attitudes, and feelings can be clearly seen in the above three examples. One cannot look at experience in a vacuum. For the three people described above, the incidents occurred in the context of their growing consciousnesses of themselves as Jews and as human beings who were experiencing themselves in a different social milieu for the first time.

Many similarities of feeling and reaction to the Israeli environment were found among the interviewees. It was interesting to note that some of those interviewed took the interview into their own hands at times, and told stories, or related previous thoughts about a subject being explored. In this way, a further variety of experience was opened up for study and which brought to light more general insights both about Jewish identity, and about how the Israeli experience related to what may already have been a dilemma and source of concern to the interviewees prior to the interview.

Interactions with Israelis

Most of the participants had limited interaction with Israelis. Some say this related to their Hebrew fluency level; others felt that the American group experience did not lend itself to such interaction; and still others described a personal shyness as the reason. All ten interviewees were assigned to a family. In seven cases, it was on a kibbutz; two lived with families in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv; and one participant first lived with a family in Jerusalem and for the second part of the program, went to a kibbutz, where she was assigned a family. The purpose of assigning visitors to a kibbutz family is to help them integrate themselves and feel more at home in the society. There were varying responses to the kibbutz family experience: "I saw the goal of the family as helping me to learn Hebrew, from the beginning." Another said, "I loved my family for not making it easy for me." (The family only spoke Hebrew.) Another, on kibbutz, said, "I had a really good relationship with my family so I went home a couple times a week." But it seems that in more cases, there were family problems that interfered with the family's "hosting" responsibilities. Usually the participants took the matter into their own hands and went to the leader of their program to describe the problem. Because of these problems, one participant's glorified perception of

kibbutz was soon shattered. "There were personal, marital, sexual problems. . . ."

Four of those interviewed were on a kibbutz which was a fifteen minute bus ride from Jerusalem; they had mobility after work or ulpan. One participant commented:

> Those of us who succeeded in integrating ourselves into kibbutz did not go to Jerusalem very often at all, whereas there were those who went every day.

This integration, though, may not have been as easy as it may sound. Even though the program of a large kibbutz, such as Ma'aleh Ha Hamishah, had been in existence for four years, one respondent reported that, "there was a section of kibbutz who were hardly aware of the CAY program, and made no effort to mix." The same person commented later about the generally low visibility of the Reform movement in Israel.

One participant on kibbutz found that his "program" was very loosely structured. There were only three participants and no separate or special activities for them apart from the tiyulim set aside for the regular (non-Reform movement-sponsored volunteers, in which they participated. At first he was very disappointed, but then he saw this circumstance as a great advantage, because he:

> . . . got to be friends with the young kibbutzniks my age. I felt very assimilated with the Israelis; went on trips with them; the other Americans missed so much [by not

> having this], but I didn't . . . meet too many Israelis outside of my friends on kibbutz.

This seems to be a fairly typical statement, because the group provided such a good structure. (One could insulate oneself in the American environment if desired, whether on kibbutz or in the city.)

The city-dwellers had their immediate family surrounding them and got to know their sister's and brother's friends.

> Growing up Jewish in America made me a totally different creature from these Israelis kids I met. As much as we had common ground, we were totally different . . . constantly dealt with issues of God

> She didn't even know the Sh'ma! . . it made me think.

The experience of religion in Israel, Jewishness vs. secularism, and the larger issues of Jewish identity will be discussed in the next section.

Religious Experience in Israel

A very diverse spectrum of experience, belief, and thought falls into this category. People's own religious beliefs will be discussed, personal definitions of Judaism, definitions and conceptions of Israeli society in terms of religion, and perceptions of identity based on

Jewish/secular experiences in Israel.

The question, "How did you see yourself as a Jew in Israel?" elicited the following responses:

> I did feel more Jewish on kibbutz than at Davis.
>
> I feel much more Jewish here in the United States.
>
> My Jewishness was just being in Israel, and supporting a place where Jews can be non-oppressed. . . . Everything I did, I was with Jews. . . . I enjoyed seeing the religious people, but I always felt like an outsider looking in. I would watch them at the Wailing Wall, for example, and it was like I was [from] a completely different religion. I didn't like that feeling at all. They were saying prayers I couldn't recite. I couldn't even read it, let alone feel it.

How is it possible that individuals with such similar backgrounds had such differing perceptions of themselves as Jews in Israel? Whereas Jeff, in the first quote, even with the secularism surrounding him, felt more Jewish on the kibbutz, Joan said that she felt much more Jewish here in America. Diane then described how she enjoyed seeing the religious people, in Mea Shearim or at the Western Wall, but that evoked in her a feeling of estrangement. They are Jewish, and she knows she is Jewish, but it seemed to her to be almost another religion.

"We were all disillusioned with religion in Israel. We were very bored at services." When asked what kind of religious practice she had, she replied, "None, and it was a big empty spot in my heart."

In the context of the first quote, Diane does not express a desire to have found more meaningful prayer services. But Matt, in the second quote, clearly was feeling a gap in that aspect of his life in Israel. "But I'm not going to do it myself," he added, "the enjoyment of it is being with others--a community."

"The most religious thing that happened all year was that the NFTY group had Havdalah every week."

> We made our own little services on Friday night. We baked challah every Friday. We'd go to our families, and there was always a special dinner on the kibbutz, of course. . . . The first time I had a free weekend away from Ein Dor, I didn't have a Shabbat and I really missed it. When Friday comes and when it's time to light the candles, you know.
>
> In Israel, you feel Shabbat. You know it's Friday afternoon--even if you're doing a secular service for Kabbalat Shabbat.

These three people appear to have reacted very similarly to the group experience of celebrating Shabbat. While others experienced disillusion with types of prayer services found in the cities, it seems that in general, religious celebrations generated by the American groups themselves were more satisfying. If the American group prayed together, they knew all the participants. They also usually wrote the service or chose forms of prayer with which they were familiar. These factors appeared to account for their greater satisfaction with their own

religious celebrations than with the Israeli celebrations.

One interesting story was related by Don. On the first Shabbat after he arrived in Israel and visited with his "family"[1] in Tel Aviv, he found that they lit the candles, and said the blessings over the wine and challah, to welcome in the Shabbat. It had not been his habit to practice these rituals at home, but he participated nonetheless, as a temporary member of the family, so as not to disappoint them. Later, when he and his family became much closer, he confided in them that he did not practice those rituals at home in the United States, and he took part then for their sake. They in turn told him that they expected him to be an observant Jew from America; they never celebrated Kabbalat Shabbat before he came, but they did it for him! Don added that in doing it for each other, they had all grown to enjoy it and they continued it. Don said, "We learned a lot from each other."

Although religious observance and practice was not widespread among the interviewees, some of them were best able to view this aspect of their stay in Israel by comparing it to their level of Jewish activity in the United States. Two interviewees shared similar experiences in which they developed a desire to celebrate Shabbat before their Israel trips. To the question, "How did you see yourself as a Jew in Israel?" Joan responded as follows:

> There were many conflicts. Before I went to Israel, I was a cheerleader at school, and all the games were Friday night so I could never spend Shabbat with my family and that was something that really hurt me. I always used to get back [home] just as they were ending the parasha. . . . I'd made that [cheerleading] my priority. . . . I participate much more now in my religion than before because of that conflict. . . . But I still did teach last year [religious school] and this year I've been taking Hebrew every quarter at college and I'm taking a sociology class. . . . We're doing a comparative study of Jewish communities and I'm learning all about the Holocaust. My interests are the same . . . I was very interested in it [Judaism] before I left and it's the same as now. . . .

Joan's family celebrates Shabbat regularly, and in fact is more observant than all the other families in this study. Joan had the option of not participating in the celebration, but it developed into a conflict for her because the desire to celebrate Shabbat with her family was becoming an important part of her Jewish identity.

Matt described his conflict by first stating that one of the major advantages that living in Israel has to offer him is the availability of a traditional observant community. He was then asked if he saw the possibility of finding or creating that traditional environment outside of Israel, and if he did, would he he fulfilled? He replied, "Yes, I could do it; no, I wouldn't be as fulfilled." His response to the question, "So why Israel?" was:

> Because that's where we're all Jews and that's where our survival is on the line. . . . I don't

> like the feeling of being in the minority [in the United States], I don't know why. . . . I don't like the fact that I really have to compete between two cultures, which I do have to do here. . . . When I was playing high school football, it was at the expense of Friday night at Temple.

Referring back to an earlier quote, Joan had commented that she feels more Jewish in America, and is happier with the level and kind of Jewish activity in the United States than in Israel. Matt, however, whose Shabbat conflict closely resembles Joan's, feels more comfortable in a "traditional" environment in Israel, and sees more viable possibilities for the growth of Judaism there due to the competing cultures in the United States. As a result of personal differences, two very parallel experiences were resolved in different ways by these two people. Joan, it seems, experienced the conflict, and resolved it by choosing to end cheerleading and thus participate with her family. Matt did not say whether his conflict was resolved or not, but he still looked upon the problem as a reality, and his choice of moving into an observant community in Israel seems to be the way in which he plans to resolve it.

Matt acknowledges the many secular, non-observant communities in Israel, but sees the future of a strong Israel resting on its choice to be observant. He stated, "I think that when it comes down to it, the basic character of the continuation of a Jewish identity as opposed to an

Israeli identity is religious."

This comment brings into focus the topic of religion in Israel. Each interviewee touched on aspects of this encompassing topic many times--both in direct answer to specific questions, as well as indirectly. Many of the interviewees had classes which dealt with precisely the issue of how Israelis view their identities, and the interviewees were able to confront the issue first-hand.

Jeff's answer to the comparison of his religious activity while there and before he went was:

> Observance . . . it wasn't a whole lot different [in Israel] except everybody was Jewish. . . . Everything there has a connotation of Jewishness, whether it's just the food or the places that you may go . . . they have some religious connotation to them; they don't have a secular connotation besides that to me; you walk down the street in Jerusalem and it has a certain perspective whereas you walk down a comparable street in Los Angeles; it doesn't have the same religious connotation.

In this comment, Jeff intertwines the use of "Jewish" and "religious." Others attribute different meanings to these words, but all these meanings distinguish "Jewish" from "secular." This description of a "certain Jewishness" to Israel is consonant with Jeff's earlier statement. He said that he feels more Jewish on kibbutz than at college. Even before going to Israel, Jeff had questioned whether there was a meaningful Jewish life outside of Israel. His experience in Israel did not really help him to resolve this

question but he felt that:

> Israel has great beneficial parts of it, to being a Jew in a daily sense . . . but I don't think it's necessary to being Jewish to be in Israel. But there's a more intensive Jewish existence in Israel. When everything hits you in the face everyday, how can't it? When the hills are named for one thing or another that's historical . . . when the streets refer to what happened historically, whether it be Jewish or other religions--it's pretty much all Jewish in Israel . . . but as far as whether there is meaningful Jewish life outside of Israel . . . Israel is not the only meaningful Jewish existence.

Jeff's comments on personal religious activity in Israel, as well as Matt's, which follow, and those of others, evolved into a definition and overview of religion in Israel. It seemed to be a natural transition from discussing kinds of religious observance to defining how they view religion as a whole in Israel. Matt was not satisfied with the "creative" type of prayer services that his fellow Americans held on kibbutz. He had the opportunity to participate in a more traditional afternoon minyan that was instigated by a Reform rabbi on kibbutz, and Matt was much more comfortable with the more traditional prayer service. When asked, "How did you come to want something more traditional, coming from the Reform background that you described?" he replied:

> Well, the trip [to Israel] in '73 definitely had an effect on that. At an early age I always felt nice with a knowledge of Hebrew. . . . Praying in Hebrew, whether I know what it means or not,

> meant more to me, just because this is the same thing that people have been saying for . . . God knows how long. So there was that kind of identification. When you go to a classical Reform service in Israel, there's no English, and that's when it hit me that prayers are prayers. Everybody in the Reform movement in Israel wears a kipah. When a Jew prays, he wears a kipah. There doesn't have to be any logical explanation for it. That's what Jews do. So why are we trying to change that? By changing it, I saw it as another way of losing our identity. It's something physically that you do to put you in a different state of mind. So when I came back [to Israel] I was very much into wearing a kipah. During the next two years, my own personal feelings toward prayer changed and moved toward Orthodoxy. But the catalyst, the acceptance of Orthodoxy . . . seeing Orthodox forms of prayer and not looking down on them . . . and not thinking they're strange . . . that took place in Israel.
>
> As far as being a Jew, living in Israel fulfills a major part of it. Everything about being Jewish is a continual road, redefinition, a continual quest . . . And I can never really say I know what it is to be Jewish unless I've been there . . . speaking Hebrew fluently and being in Israel is very important to me.

Matt ascribes a similar sense of "Jewishness" to Israel, as Jeff does, without saying exactly what it consists of. Matt's feeling for Hebrew is shared by others as a definite link to their Judaism. Mark added:

> What could be more Jewish than standing for hours and staring at the Western Wall? . . . I always felt an incredibly dynamic Jewish feeling standing on the corner of Jaffa Road and Ben Yehuda. . . . That place always looked different to me because I was always different every time I went there.

In response to how he saw himself as a Jew there, Sam said:

> I didn't feel different from anybody else, whether they were Jewish or not. . . . It was more a human kind of thing than religious. . . . I was on a very non-religious kibbutz and I am very non-religious myself. I didn't really think of Israel as a Jewish experience. It was more a living experience.

He commented that he feels equally as Jewish as an observant Jew because:

> I feel Jewish. I believe in God and the Bible. Aside from feeling Jewish and knowing that I was in Israel, that was about the extent of religion for me when I was over there. But I do feel a tie with all Jewish people in the world.

Sam also said that that feeling of kinship was definitely something he developed as a result of his trip. It was not something he felt before his trip to Israel. Contrary to the old adage that "actions speak louder than words," he believes that his Jewishness is:

> . . . more of an inner thing. It's more feeling than action. Ever since I was a little kid, I've known I was Jewish. When I was in Israel, I knew I was Jewish. It's like I know I'm male, or I know I'm an American. It's just something that I am; it's not something that I have to do anything extra for, because I am.

Sam's comments reveal a deep sense of Jewish identity, but for him, this identity is a consciousness, and not something that requires action in order to be maintained. In fact, he said he had recently been more reminded of this tie to other Jews because of a growing feeling of anti-Semitism around him. This aspect of his identification can be compared to Geismar's category of defensive

identification as a reaction to anti-Semitism.

Marcia saw her Israel trip as "the logical outcome" of all the Jewish activities in which she had been involved in her native Los Angeles. Although she did not usually celebrate Shabbat before she went to Israel, she commented that she "felt weird coming back to the States and not having Shabbat feel special." She also feels that "an awareness of myself as a Jew" is the most important part of her Jewish identity. She feels "basic differences" between herself and non-Jews, and the differences are something she wants to distinguish. She related how one December in the United States she was sitting with a number of people in a house with a Christmas tree in it, and people were complaining that the commercial aspect of Christmas depressed them. She said that in a situation like that, she wants to make people aware that theirs is not a universal experience. She feels that her identification with Israel and its fate has always been strong, and she even sets herself up for political discussions in which she defends Israel. "I think that my consciousness of Israel is crucial to my consciousness of myself as a Jew," she added.

Jeri also experienced a relatively secular year on kibbutz, except for the weekly Shabbat celebrations. She said that she now knows more about Judaism due to classes

in Bible and history which were a part of her program. "But Judaism to me is more a history than a religion. . . . [It is a] tradition and culture. . . ." She feels that many American Jews relate more to a cultural than to a religious Judaism. She commented, also, about its survival after the "torment" through the years: "It [Judaism] must have something in it . . . so I'm interested in knowing more about it." In answer to how she saw herself as a Jew in Israel, Jeri answered that she felt more important than she feels here: "I felt special being there . . . because I felt I was with my people." Also she added, as a justification for non-religious Jews being in Israel:

> Americans, because they're not in Israel, want to relate to Judaism, and the only way they can is through religion. Being in Israel you don't have to be religious. Just being there qualifies you [as a Jew].

Because her kibbutz had been founded by Americans, Jeri had a unique opportunity to talk to its founders about their sense of Jewish or Israeli identity, and how a religious component fits into that. What she found was that they stressed their Israeli identity rather than their Jewish identity. Her impression also was that being Israeli does not necessitate being religious: "They call themselves Israelis rather than Jews, but underneath they realize that everyone's Jewish there, so they don't have to think about being Jewish. . . ."

Sherry stated that her Judaism was also more cultural than religious:

> I enjoy the tradition . . . lighting candles, celebrating holidays . . . the stories behind them; the morals, values, philosophies . . . a way of life; not necessarily the 613 commandments.

As to how she saw herself as a Jew in Israel, she said:

> I wasn't striving to be an Israeli. I knew who I was. I was an American staying in Israel. A lot of times I would question myself as to my amount of commitment [asking] "could I come back and live here?" I don't have that answer yet, and I have to go back to find that out. . . . Now I listen to the news about Israel. That's my commitment here. . . . Israel is a place that I know for the rest of my life will mean something to me . . . no matter if I work here or in another country . . . Israel will always be a concern.

It is possible that the interviewees who define their Jewishness as more cultural than religious would have done so without having been to Israel. However, it is likely that many if not all of them got their first glimpse of Jewish Orthodoxy while in Israel, and are therefore now in a better position to evaluate their own religiousness. The concept of a cultural Judaism was preferred by almost all of the interviewees, and all included some commitment to Israel as a component of their Jewish identity.

Don commented that:

> Judaism first had a religious connotation to me; then it turned out to be more of a way of life, because of my experience in Israel . . . . Now I know I can be a Jew and not go to Temple and not be afraid to say I'm Jewish.

The difference between an American Reform Jew visiting in Israel and the Orthodoxy of Mea Shearim was eloquently described by Diane. She initially felt that the people in Mea Shearim were "my people" and that she was supposed to feel close to them, but she and her friends could not relate to them at all. She felt that she "could never live like that." Later, Diane had an opportunity to get very close to that religious community. In December of her year there, she went to visit a friend of her home town rabbi who lived in Mea Shearim. She dressed very modestly for the visit. Since it was December and snowing, she bundled up with scarves and other warm clothes until she was covered from head to toe. As she walked through the streets of Mea Shearim, she realized that no one was giving her a second look, and she thought, "They think I'm one of them!" She suddenly felt like she belonged there. Some kids waved to her from a window and instead of being an observer and feeling analytical, she experienced a sense of freedom. "For a minute," she said, "I felt like I was really that religious and that I could live there . . . and then I came back to reality, and it had been a whole different identity." What she liked about the experience is that she felt that she could fit in. Diane's experience explains, in a dramatic way, the real division that Reform Jews and very likely, less religious

Israelis feel in relation to the ultra-Orthodox communities of Israel.

Jeff said that sometimes there is a religious component in the Israeli atmosphere:

> You walk near the Western Wall and the fact of the matter is you're near where the Tabernacle and the Ark were, and in that sense, it is religious. But my feeling is that much of Jewish religiousness grew up in Eastern Europe and Sephardic countries. The connotations are not purely religious, because what is practiced has come out of a lot of things that are not [practiced]. Judaism doesn't subscribe to the Israelite religion. Israelite religion is different from rabbinic Judaism that evolved over the last 2,000 years. So you may see religious Jews in their payis but I say that is a manifestation of Jewishness as it evolved over centuries and not "Israeli" Jewishness. . . . I see the religion of Israel being more than the Israelite religion. The sacrifices to God and the necessary rites that are laid down in the Torah were done while the Temple existed or before.

Jeff's comprehensive statement clearly shows he has considered the issue before and approaches it with a level of intellectualism that was rarely seen in any of the other interviewees' answers. His sense of history tells him that what he observes on the surface is not a post-1948 phenomenon, but the roots are much deeper and the history goes back much farther.

An American in Israel

It goes without saying that the reference point for all of the comments made were from the perspective of

American Jews. Some of the incidents and feelings, however, were specific to the American experience there: "I felt American in Israel, but not conspicuous." Matt's feeling may result from the fact that his Hebrew was fluent, so that he could integrate himself very well. "There was a certain amount of respect that Israelis had for me on kibbutz as an American." "I never felt so American before as when I was with the Israeli family. It was hard to break down stereotypes. . . 'you rich Americans.'" These two quotes reflect stereotypes--both good and bad. Matt was treated well on kibbutz because "all Americans" are held in a certain esteem in Israel, while Marcia experienced a negative feeling expressed toward her, as she represented "all Americans" who are seen as wealthy enough just to come and visit Israel for a while and then return home.

> Regardless of how I identified myself, all these Israelis were telling me I was American and my Jewishness was something less.

Marcia said that both groups--Americans and Israelis--had stereotypes of each other. She wanted to prove herself different from all the other Americans, probably out of a desire to assert her individuality. But she did recognize the partial validity of this perception: "I did have enough money to go there. We had a lot of freedom; then I felt kind of apologetic for the 'American' in me." She added

that "no matter what you wear, they know you're an American, but it bothered me not to be able to be less obvious." Then the Jewish identity issue entered the picture:

> Even though someone told me I was an American, the Jewish identity never left. Constantly being made aware that I am an American does not in my mind invalidate the fact that I am Jewish.

Marcia gives us a clue as to what she means when she later adds:

> Basically, the way I identify myself has not changed and didn't change in Israel either. . . . I felt first . . . a Jew, then an American.

For Marcia, the conspicuousness she felt there was caused by others. Her Jewish identity was stronger but had to be asserted through her American identity.

For Don, the issue of being an American came forth in terms of a conflict about religious practice:

> In Israel when I considered the question of what do I have to do to be a Jew, I was more in conflict about it. Do I have to light candles, etc.? Here I had more of the answers.

One might understand this comment (1) in light of the previous discussion about Don's Israeli family assuming he would be an observant Jew, and (2) knowing that Don was observing varying kinds of religious practice while in Israel.

Group Experience

Whether living on kibbutz communally or with a family in the city, the participants took classes offered for their programs only. In the one case with only three participants and little structure, no classes were offered. Almost all interviewees took classes dealing with Jewish identity; most of the interviewees also said that they learned more about that topic in informal encounters than in the classroom itself. Diane's program, sponsored by the World Zionist Organization, stressed Israeli society as its major theme. Her Jewish identity class met one day a week for five hours, and during that time the group would often go out and interview Israelis about their conception of themselves.

> The question we would ask on field assignments was "Do you feel Jewish first or Israeli first?" They would answer, "Israeli." Unless you talk to religious people, and then they would answer "Jewish." Most of the Israeli's Jewish identity was not really very strong.

The way Diane and her peers phrased the question suggested that they saw a dichotomy between "Jewish" and "Israeli." The Israelis saw a dichotomy between "Jewish" and "Israeli" with "Jewish" defined as religious.

Diane also related how hers was a "pushy" program. Aliyah was stressed very heavily and the pressure caused those participants who were not sure about aliyah to band

together for support. Her year was the first in which there were representatives from the Reform movement, and they often remained together. In fact, they were housed according to the movement they represented--B'nai Akiva, Young Judea, NFTY, etc.

Because Sam's program had little if any sturcture, the group experience for him consisted of associating with Israelis. He said that on kibbutz he volunteered to wash the dishes by hand almost every other Shabbat. One was only required to do this once a month, but, "I volunteered because I liked it." One night he said he got to be a good friend of Yosi's, and he remained friends with him throughout the trip. Certainly a desire such as Sam had--to work hard and integrate himself into the communal living structure--facilitated the development of friendships. In an appraisal of the impact that Israel had on him he later stated, "I learned how to work hard and how to get along with other people . . . I developed a sense of maturity." Mark stated, "I learned a lot about the way I react to people, more than anything else." He learned about his own levels of tolerance and about living with people of different intelligence levels.

The group experience for Jeff was disappointing on a number of levels. While he did make some good friends, he said that the classes were on a lower academic level

than he had expected. Referring to the other Americans in his program, he said, "I felt intellectually superior to most . . . so that my socialization with them was at a lower level than I would have liked." He blamed his slow progress in Hebrew on the Hebrew teacher and since his fluency level remained low, he felt he was forced to spend more time with the Americans than he would have liked. Thus, Jeff connects a number of factors which helped shape his group experience.

Reactions to Terrorist Activities in Israel

The question regarding reactions to terrorist activities was originally conceived of because it was felt that strong reactions to these events would yield information regarding the interviewees' sense of Jewish oneness and that there would be data due to the frequency of bombings and other terrorist activities in Israel. However, this was not the case among the interviewees. Fortunately, the majority of those interviewed reported no major terrorist actions during the six months or year that they were there. Those few who did report incidents did not describe strong reactions to the events, as was expected by the interviewer. Some of the responses speak for themselves, e.g., Joan's response to whether any terrorist activities occurred: "No, nothing, thank God." Jeff commented,

"Terrorism is part of what goes on; therefore, it isn't terrifying." Matt reported that the incidents at Ma'alot and Kiryat Shmoneh had occurred just before his program was due to begin and because of the incidents, five of the participant's parents would not let their children go to Israel for the year. Matt said, "My personal reaction to that is the minute we say, 'O.K., we're not going to go because of that,' then they've won." He did refer to a Jerusalem explosion where he had been the day before it happened. He made no reference to having been in the exact spot where a bomb went off the next day, but did comment on how the whole mood of the kibbutz changes, when something like that occurs. Also he mentioned that news like that "spreads like wildfire" on kibbutz.

Sam gave an answer filled with ambivalence in which he stated that he, "Kind of wanted some terrorist thing to happen" when he was there--"the excitement . . ." of it was something he wanted to feel. He said that he felt a sense of power when the Israeli planes passed by overhead. But he added, "I guess I wasn't really anxious for anything to happen . . . I'm glad nothing happened . . . terrorist-wise." While it would be difficult to explain why someone would want brutal killings to occur, one might understand that being in the tense Mideast could bring some measure of excitement to it--certainly more than living in

a Los Angeles suburb would bring on the international political front.

Marcia was extremely close to the Kikar Zion bombing in Jerusalem on July 4, 1975. Scheduled to meet someone there at exactly the time the bomb went off, she arrived there a few minutes late. She commented only that it "affected her"--but she did not go into any further detail. However, she did call her parents in Los Angeles to assure them of her safety, since an American girl of the same age was involved in the incident. Regarding the Savoy Hotel incident in Tel Aviv that same year, she commented that the Israelis reacted more intensely than she did because "they had to deal with it." Her feelings, however, were of anger and shock.

Marcia most likely blocked out her real fear about this incident. As is often the case when one is very close to serious danger, or when one is constantly threatened, a person denies or blocks out the threat in order to be able to deal with it. This, unfortunately, has had to become the Israeli response to the very frequent deaths and accidents which occur from the regular terrorist activity over the years.

Don expressed a very similar sentiment about the Israelis (i.e., his Israeli family) having to deal with these incidents, and therefore being more justified in investing their emotions in them. The 1972 incident at the

Munich Olympics, in which twelve Israeli athletes were killed, occurred when Don was in Israel. His comments were:

> They didn't even know the people. How could they be so upset? . . . It was like their own son [had died]. They were feeling sorry for themselves . . . it was nice that they could feel that. I didn't feel that.

He said that what reaction he did have was more emotional when such events occurred while he was in Israel, than the reaction he has here. (He was speaking in reference to the March 1978 bus bombing outside of Tel Aviv.) He said, "I had a totally intellectual reaction to that." Don did admit that watching the Munich reports on television with his Israeli family was scary. But the comments quoted give us more of an insight into his feelings. Don could not identify as an Israeli, or perhaps as a person or potential family member. He does not share that feeling of kinship with Jews throughout the world that some of the other interviewees voiced. (Need it be added that scores of American Jews and Jews throughout the world, and many non-Jews watched those events with the same grief-stricken horror as any Israeli? One need not share the citizenship of the victim in order to mourn.) Don's lack of feeling, exhibited in other instances, may have become more conscious to him because he was in Israel among Jews, where, as he puts it, "I'm supposed to feel something." This lack of feeling,

also exhibited by others in different circumstances, will be more fully explored later.

Jeri found life on kibbutz to be somewhat "insulating." She said that there may have been some terrorist incidents during her year there but she found that news did not readily get through to her on kibbutz. Her impression was that people in the States have a much better idea of news occurring in Israel than those within Israel itself.

Aliyah

Aliyah was not stressed as the outright goal of any of the programs except one--The Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad. It may be considered to be a latent goal of the other programs, but it had an effect on most of those in the CAY program because, of the sixteen participants in the first year of that program, seven have already made aliyah. That is a very high percentage, and Matt mentioned that the Israeli government is considering funding part of the CAY program because it has been so successful in terms of aliyah.

Diane, enrolled in the Institute for Youth Leaders, had many discussions about the option of aliyah with her Reform roommates in Israel. In order to make aliyah, she

concluded, she would have to come to terms with Judaism in Israel, but she was disillusioned with Judaism there:

> I had figured out two options for myself--living in America and having the occupation that I wanted and having my Judaism fit into that . . . or living in Israel and having my Jewish identity be the main thing, and having the rest of my life fit into that.

One wonders whether the solution must be so "cut and dry." Would it not be possible to live a meaningful Jewish life with a strong Jewish identity, but not in Israel? For those who believe only in aliyah, that is a rhetorical question because the possibility of living such a life outside of Israel is unthinkable. Diane had come to this Zionist program with a history of active and satisfying involvement in both the regional Reform movement and her own Jewish community. Although she appeared to have been living a meaningful Jewish life with a strong Jewish identity prior to going to Israel, during her stay, she began thinking that such an existence was without meaning. She did say, however, that she was aware that she was allowing their line of thinking to be "pushed on her" and she did maintain a kind of autonomy in her thinking, as reflected in the following comments:

> We [roommates] also discussed what our Jewish identity meant . . . if that was the most important thing to us. . . . We talked a lot about if we believed that Judaism was the most important identity that we had; being Jewish--[was it] more

> important than being a woman or being a student or being an American? [If it was] then we'd have to live in Israel--that was the conclusion we came to. The main thing was: was that the most important identity? Or do we have other identities that we have to fulfill or other goals . . . that we might not be able to do in Israel? Like occupation. . . . I think that's why every experience we had in Israel was so strong and so emotional, because everything we saw there we wanted to try to identify with . . . and sometimes it was really hard . . . like the military.

Both Diane and Sam consider their identity as a Jew on a par with their identity as an American, male, or female. A long-term stay in Israel forces one to give as much weight to one's Jewish identity as to all other identities and to ponder this Jewish identity. Every participant reflected in this study, however, went to Israel having already considered his or her Jewish identity, even if unable to define it or completely understand it. In this sense, considerations of Jewish identity and aliyah in Israel were catalysts for further probing but were not the initial impetus for such considerations.

The main purpose for Matt's Israel trip was "to go back and see about aliyah." Having been there twice before, he already knew that living in Israel was a possibility for him. He defines his attachment to Israel as an emotional one, but through his religious identity. He sees some parallels between secular life in Israel and secular life in America and he wants to return to a

religious community there. Matt did not have a definite date set for aliyah, but he planned to return to Israel in the summer. He will likely attend graduate school in the United States, after which, he said, would be the most likely time for aliyah. Of the ten interviewees, Matt was the only one who had definite plans for aliyah.

Impact of Visits to Historical Sites

Going to visit historical sites in Israel generally awakens certain feelings among visitors. The question asked in this category was: "Do you remember any particular place or places that you visited on tiyulim? What significance does or did that place have for you?" If the researcher could will answers from people, she would have wanted every person to answer "Sinai," because of the personal significance of that place of all sites in Israel. (A different significance than Jerusalem holds.) Eight of the ten interviewees did, in fact, say "Sinai." Sinai was not the only place cited, but it was consistently mentioned. There appears to be some particular significance attached to this vast stretch of land that each person described in a different way:

> Sinai was my favorite place . . . it comes to my mind first, but I can't really explain why. I

> loved it. . . . We learned so much history on the buses; they'd pull out the map and show us where we were . . . we had a fantastic tour guide.

In response to the further question, "Why do you think Sinai comes to your mind more than any other place?" Joan stated:

> . . . cause it's the most incredible piece of land . . . it's so opposite to most of the land in Israel . . . to think that the life we saw in the Sinai compared to life in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv . . . such a contrast that it's all Israel--that little country. Just a pinpoint on the map [and it] has so many different cultures and ways of life.

Jeri answered the question almost before it was asked with "Sinai." In response to the question regarding how it had significance, she said that she knew it wasn't "what [the interviewer] was looking for."

> It was my favorite place. . . . I didn't like to leave kibbutz . . . to go on trips . . . but I really wanted to go through Sinai. . . . It's something you can't do here; you can't do it in the States. I don't think you can do something like that anywhere in the world.

Jeri specifically referred to climbing to the top of Mount Sinai. "What was significant? The mountain and the climb, or the Sinai (desert) altogether?"

> Being in the Sinai desert and just really realizing that people live there . . . people walk through there without having water. . . . People walked through that desert to get to Israel. . . . After going through Sinai

> reading The Source . . . it's just unbelievable. I just couldn't understand how they could live without having the modern day things that we have . . . .

Jeri also mentioned Mount Tabor and Masada:

> . . . to realize that these things that are written in the Bible are really still there . . . .

The places that were the most significant to Jeff were those he had read about: "Things have been going on here for the last two or three thousand years . . . this is significant." He mentioned the Galilee and some West Bank sites. For that tour, his group had had a guide "who was very Zionistic and knew the history quite well and was able to present it." Jeff felt very attached to those sites--where the Patriarchs are buried and where the Maccabees fought. . . . Sinai also had significance in that respect--historically, ". . . going up Jebl Musa (Mount Sinai), Wadi Firan, Santa Katarina." Jeff said that Jerusalem did not have any overwhelming religious significance for him for the first two or three months of his stay, but then, "I liked it." Jeff also attributed historical and religious significance to Holy sites in Jerusalem.

Matt responded to the question by saying:

> Emotionally, no place triggers . . . anything. . . . Sinai, of course, is my love. I've been there seven or eight times. . . . I remember one night on the beach at Eilat looking across at the lights of Aqaba [Jordan]. . . . I stayed up all

> night one night doing guard duty. . . . I don't remember thinking about very much. . . . I just remember being terribly content. . . .

"What was significant about the Sinai?"

> My parents brought me up loving backpacking. . . . I don't think it's the significance of the mountain. . . . Just that it's gorgeous. . . . When I first saw the [Western] Wall . . . that was the true meaning of a symbol.

Matt, who planned to return to Israel to seek out a traditional Jewish environment, saw no religous significance in the sites he mentioned. The sites were definitely significant--but not with any specific Jewish connotation, except perhaps for the Western Wall.

Don attached no particular significance to places visited in Israel. In fact, he stated, upon looking back: "A felafel stand had as much significance to me as the [Western] Wall. It was all Israel." He reacted with considerably less feeling than the others. This may in part be due to the fact that he brought with him a conscious attitude not to react, but to step away and react only intellectually.

Marcia responded:

> I loved Sinai--the desert. It [the trip there] was also an introspective time for me. I felt a stronger bond with Israel and with being a Jew there, than I did anywhere else. . . . It was unexpected that those feelings would come in a place like the Sinai.

Her comments revealed a great deal. She was one of the people who answered immediately; she knew which place came to mind. She remembered Sinai because it was an introspective time for her. One does attach significance to a place in which something personal happened. Marcia is one of the few who experienced any Jewish feeling with regard to the Sinai. For most of the others, Sinai was in the main physically impressive or historically significant. Marcia does not explain her final statement beyond the fact that she would not have expected those religious feelings to surface in the middle of the desert. Perhaps those feelings were even more significant since they occurred in a place where she least expected them.

Sam responded as readily as Marcia:

> The Sinai desert. . . . It's a magnificent place. There's so many things you can do there and it's still a desert. . . . We went all the way down to the far tip. . . . We would get scuba gear and go check out the coral reefs and all the fish. . . . [We saw] mazes inside the land . . . from the run-off from the rain.

I asked how he felt there, expecting perhaps an historical answer, and instead, he said, " . . . [I felt] like it was ours . . . we shouldn't give it back . . . at the time I felt that way. I think my views have changed a little bit now." It was not expected that Sam would attribute any religious significance to a place. The physical features of the land, and the experience of camping in the unusual

terrain were what impressed him about Israel, in general, and so, too, about the Sinai.

Mark's comment was broader than the other responses:

> The whole concept of traveling around the country and seeing it in its modern forms . . . reading and hearing passages from the Bible about these places . . . really forced one to try to find one's place in Jewish history. We even lived in a Biblical place . . . near Jerusalem, and one of the places nearby is mentioned. It's where the Torah was kept before David brought it to Jerusalem. Even the fact that I can say that; [that I] know that for a fact is because I knew people on the kibbutz who knew the story, and I was impressed by that . . . I began to get engulfed in history. People lived in Caesarea in 1200 . . . being in Israel and seeing those places put me right into the history. . . . I could touch Jewish history and I was a part of it, and I became part of that whole dialectic.

He attributes a great deal of religious and historical significance to all of Israel. His comment about feeling a dynamic feeling on a certain corner in Jerusalem has already been recorded. Of his four peers who also lived just outside Jerusalem, he is the only one who made the following comment: "There was a whole dichotomy of being on a kibbutz near Jerusalem, and being near Jerusalem, but being severed from it. . . ." For someone who said, "What could be more Jewish than standing for hours and staring at the Western Wall," a statement about being severed from Jerusalem makes a great deal of sense. In this way, Mark records his very special feelings for this city.

Sherry said that Masada, Jerusalem, and Mount Sinai had special significance for her. Her Bible class made her much more aware of historical sites in Israel. She said that she mainly felt an historical attachment to the sites.

> This happened here and I can stand here 2,000 years later and be in the same spot. . . . Our madrich Moshe had fought right there in the Golan. . . . Things like that would hit me. . . . You can touch it [the specific place being described]. If it was told to me on kibbutz, it wouldn't mean that much, but if I'm standing there, and the story is related, it would mean a lot more. Also if it was told in Hebrew, it would mean a lot more.

Sherry has a very interesting insight with this answer. There are those who said that simply being in Israel, Eretz Yisrael, has a degree of historical or religious significance. But one might conclude that hearing the story told in Los Angeles would have as much significance for Sherry as hearing it on kibbutz--unless it was told in Hebrew--as she specified. This is a significant point because she differs from those who accord significance to any spot on the land. She did not.

To sum up, most of the interviewees accorded historical significance to the particular sites. The time line of Jewish history came alive for them as they visited different places and had the histories explained to them by Israeli guides. Many mentioned how much more

significant it was to hear the history related in Hebrew. Perhaps this is really getting back to one's roots. There was even further significance attached to a place if a recent battle had been fought there, and if one of the guides had taken part in that battle. The Sinai evoked strong feelings within people: generally a sense of awe, which was shared by eight of the ten interviewed in this study.

The Experience of Returning to the United States

Leaving Israel was not easy for many of the interviewees. Some had become very emotionally attached to it and they left resolved to return soon. That resolution made it easier for them to leave.

Mark commented upon leaving Israel: "I'll be back . . . I was embarrassed in front of myself. I wanted to get emotional about it . . . trying to bring myself to tears." On the other hand, Sam said: "I've been on a lot of trips, and they all come to an end, and this was just a big one coming to an end." Don said:

> When the time came to come home, I said a good-bye to the school and the house, but not a good-bye to Israel, "land of the Jews"--it wasn't that for me. . . . The hardest thing was to say good-bye to my family.

Both Sam and Don had a more practical and less emotional

approach to leaving than the other interviewees.

Jeff commented that for some of the participants in his program, the experience "didn't end": some stayed in Israel and married Israelis. But, he stated, he "had other things to do in his life" and so he returned.

Even Diane, who had felt very pressured by her program and welcomed the change when the program ended, commented: "I knew that I'd go back . . . at least for a visit." One direct result of the Israel trip for Diane was her decision upon her return, to "live a year completely away from organized Jewish life." The structure she was surrounded by in Israel was very different than that of her active high school years, and a year away from all organizations, she felt, would give her a chance to have an objective look at both life-styles of which she had been a part.

Jeri said:

> I knew I had to come home to see how I felt about Israel. . . . I had to come home and deal with it with the eyes of an American . . . but it was so difficult [leaving] . . . being in Israel meant something to me that I still can't describe in words. . . . [Now] I love running in to people who have been to Israel . . . Israelis that are here. . . . I guess I really haven't finished off my encounter with Israel yet . . . but I think I knew in my heart that I was going back to Israel.

Reflected in these statements may be a feeling that one is actively committing himself or herself Jewishly by

being in Israel, and by leaving, one is lessening that commitment. The promises to return, then, may be rationalizations that enable the person to leave Israel physically.

Although the majority of interviewees were not observant Jews during their stay in Israel, they did feel surrounded by a vibrant, dynamic Jewish life--both in its historical and modern forms. This vibrancy which surrounded them is what was found to be lacking upon their return, and some of the interviewees explained a need to compensate for that lack. Sherry said:

> I wanted not to lose it . . . the emotional high from Israel . . . [but] I didn't want to overdo people with my Israel experience. I knew it would be inside of me. . . . So when I got back, I took a Jewish history class at college and I looked into graduate programs in working professionally in the Jewish community.

She later added:

> I had one close friend who wasn't Jewish, and I think [who] terribly wanted to be. . . . [She] was very jealous of my experience [the year in Israel]. Israel as a whole took her place as a friend. . . .

Sherry's desire to take a Jewish history class and look into graduate programs was a direct result of her stay in Israel. One interesting comment that she added was:

> I never thought that it [Israel] would affect me as seriously as it has. . . . I didn't think that I'd be committed to Israel or the Jewish people afterwards, and I find that I really have that feeling.

Sherry has also decided to act on that feeling. She applied to a graduate program in Jewish social work, and will begin her field work this fall in Israel.

Joan also expressed a desire to extend the Israel experience. She said that before she went she had decided the trip should not be just to have fun:

> I really didn't want it [the trip] to be a six-month chunk out of my life and have a good time and come back and continue my life again. . . . I just wanted to apply it and share it with people here.

She said that since not everyone has the opportunity to go to Israel for six months, she hoped to share what she learned and experienced through her work in the Jewish community. This summer she will work as a counselor at a Jewish day camp. She also has definite plans to return to Israel for her junior year in college. Upon her return from Israel, Joan enrolled in a Hebrew class and a Jewish sociology class at college, as Sherry did.

Mark commented:

> It was hard to leave a place I had fallen in love with. I wasn't losing any Jewish feeling by leaving Israel, but I remember thinking, "How am I going to express my Jewishness when I go back to America?" Here I don't have to do anything; this is Israel. Whether riding a bus in Jerusalem or picking cotton [on kibbutz] I'm leading a Jewish life in the fullest sense of the word. . . . Don't ask me why sitting in a lecture in Israel is Jewish, but it is. . . . What could be more Jewish than saying תחנת- המרכזית [tahanat- ha-merkazit]--not "central bus station," but saying it in Hebrew, in Jerusalem . . . it's Jewish and it's nice!

Mark claims not to have lost any Jewish feeling by leaving Israel, but he described a need to express his Jewishness after he had left Israel. Israel in and of itself has Jewish connotations for him, and he implies, any other place lacks those essential connotations. He handled this problem during his trip through Europe by going to every synagogue he possibly could. Mark, who did not attend synagogue very regularly in Israel or before he went to Israel, felt the need to go to services and observe Shabbat as a link to his Israel experience and as a way of continuing his Jewish identification. Mark asked himself:

> How am I going to express my Jewishness when I get back to America? Everything Jewish [that] I've done since I've been back is an attempt to answer that question.

Jeri said, "I don't know what I'm going to do with this Jewishness . . . [that she feels]."

Jeff commented that as a result of his trip to Israel, he reacts more severely to Israeli political issues than he did before he went to Israel. Others mentioned this also. Some have a better understanding of the political and governmental changes that occur, and some react more intensely to news of terrorist actions.

Questioning the interviewees about the experience of returning elicited some overall conceptual ideas they had about Israel and about Judaism. Joan commented:

I just love my religion and I try to participate [in it] and study it as much as possible. I always think of it constantly throughout the day . . . and priority-wise I'm a person, but I'm a Jew at the same time. It's definitely a very important part of my life . . . every day I have Hebrew [class] and so when I speak it, I constantly think of Israel and Judaism. In this sociology class, I'm constantly learning about what fellow Jews have experienced throughout their lives, so whether indirectly or directly, I'm still constantly thinking about it. . . . The way that Israel fits into my Judaism is that Israel is the homeland for the Jews. I definitely have concern for the country and where it's headed. . . . I care about it and think about it.

Jeri said:

Any news I hear about Israel touches me deeper . . . because of what Israel means to me and just the struggle they're fighting for. I wish they could have peace and I feel that they do need strong Americans, Jews, who are willing to do something for Israel. I feel that they need people; they need Jews.

Jeff commented further on the religious question:

My question has now changed from "Is there meaningful Jewish life outside of Israel?" to "Is there a non-traditionalist rationale for the practice of Jewish religion?" Just because the teachings of the Fathers and what has come from the Torah has in practice come down directly--so where do you break? Do you not keep kosher or not keep Shabbat? . . . not fast on Tisha B'Av . . . When these are, according to the tradition and the word . . . the right things to do as a Jew. When one practices Judaism, these are the things one does. Is there any other way to do it? If so, why? I don't know that there is another way, right now. I've chosen not to live that way, out of default . . . by realizing that it would take a lot of work and education on my part to do it that way . . . and whether it would conform to my own goals as they have developed in the

> secular society. . . . I don't think they're mutually exclusive--being a Jew outside of the United States, and practicing Judaism. . . . There's a more intensive Jewish existence in Israel, but it is not the only meaningful Jewish existence. . . . Being there my Jewishness became more emotional.

Joan, Jeri, and Jeff all explained or defined a personal Judaism that they understood better since their trips to Israel. Jeff, who had considered the religious issue before his trip, returned having seen more options for religious life. One senses that he will continue his questioning and searching.

A number of individuals expressed the wish that Israel become more religious. Diane said:

> The Israelis I meet in the United States don't really see any tie to the land besides the fact that they were born there. That's why at Machon [The Institute for Youth Leaders] we studied so much about Jewish identity . . . because I can see that it is important and I think it's sad to see so little religion there . . . real religiousness. I think that it [religious observance] is what is going to keep it [Israel] together . . . cause otherwise there's no reason to live in a tormented land like that.

Diane also spoke about not "needing" Israel as a refuge compared with Jews from Syria or the Holocaust countries. Since she grew up in America, she said, "I never had to worry about being Jewish."

Matt said:

> I think that when it comes down to it . . . the basic character of the continuation of a Jewish

identity as opposed to an Israeli [identity] is religious.

The Israel experience was summed up in a variety of ways. Don said: "Israel is a way of life. It has helped to influence the way I deal with people."

Sam said:

> I'm learning more about my trip now that I'm back here. When I was there, I didn't really think how it was affecting me. Or if it even was. I was there to have a good time. But now that I'm back here, I see that maybe the main reason I did go was . . . being a Jew.

Sam added that the letter he received from the researcher asking him about his Israel expeience was a catalyst for renewing and re-evaluating his thoughts about his trip to Israel. He said that perhaps his trip had become more useful since he had had the opportunity to be interviewed about his experience.

Mark stated:

> The Israel trip gave me the healthiest dose of Judaica that I've ever had . . . and it helped me realize that that's what was important to me . . . my Jewishness . . . in its political, cultural, ethnic, and religious senses, not law . . . and the perpetuation of Jewish peoplehood.

Sherry said:

> I'm committed to Israel . . . to work for it. It won't just be a place to visit any longer . . . it's a necessity and it has to survive. I look at Israel as a relationship I have with a friend . . . and it's going to grow . . . where it's going

> to take me, I don't know . . . I look forward to knowing more [about Israel] and getting to know it well. It's like someone I really like a lot, but I haven't spent enough time there to really know. Israel has a lot to offer the world if the world will only open its arms. . . . She doesn't have a friend, really, and it's a lonely existence. . . . I think it needs to survive; it has to survive.

Sherry elaborated on the "friend" metaphor, stating that she is dedicated to "getting to know this friend better," since after one year there, she feels strongly that she must spend more time there to learn more. She is very committed to Israel's survival.

Marcia's comments echo Sherry's:

> Regardless of whether you approve or disapprove of what Israel is doing [politically] [as a Jew] your fate is bound up there. I take that very seriously and I feel that very personally. I can't separate my feelings of myself as a Jew from my feelings for Israel. Some people use the analogy of Israel as a kid who doesn't always behave . . . . I get embarrassed sometimes [I feel] all kinds of things. I can't separate out one [feeling] from the other, nor would I want to.

Having never heard of Israel referred to as a friend, I think both Sherry's and Marcia's remarks are noteworthy. Both are very committed to Israel.

Diane commented:

> [My trip to Israel] was not like going to any other country . . . It's not like . . . if I had gone to England or somewhere . . . because Israel was [already] such an integral part of my life. I read about it and I saw it in prayerbooks, and I saw the word a million times. . . . [I saw it] in all these different forms all my life. I knew

> people that were going there all the time. . . . And so it was a real part of me. Then when [in Israel] you have to see the good and the bad, and there's a lot of bad . . . you have to justify it or want to change it . . . it's really [a] difficult [process] and sometimes I can't believe I did that . . . at 18.

Diane also does not sound as if she simply took a trip anywhere. She could not allow herself to be simply a visitor; she involved herself and attempted to deal ethically with the issues she confronted as a Jew in the Jewish State.

Mark, Sherry, and Joan all have plans to work in the Jewish community as professionals. Mark plans to enter the rabbinate and Sherry, as stated, has already been accepted to a graduate program in Jewish social work. Both of their career decisions were a result of their Israel trips. Joan had already planned to enter the Jewish communal field before her trip to Israel, but the trip did enhance her commitment to the Jewish people.

Profiles of Interviewees

The ten interviewees approached the Israel experience as well as their own Jewish identity in different ways. In this process, three outstanding prototypes appear who somewhat approximate three of the children from the Passover Seder.

The first type is that of the mature person, who did not generalize about Israelis, but saw them as individuals. For this thoughtful type, being part of the Jewish community is a given. This individual already had a good sense of his or her Jewish identity before the Israel trip, but was open-minded and allowed the experience of the trip to help solidify or modify certain feelings and knowledge that he or she already possessed. Some of those found within this group are Jeff, for whom Israel acquired a sacred quality, and Mark, who longs for a union between the mystical religion he found (which he expressed poetically) and the personal observance he would like to develop. Others, such as Sherry, expressed a maturity in the way she dealt with people.

The second type is the person who does not yet have a sense of his or her Jewish identity. A person in this group is still in the process of forming his or her own Jewish identity and therefore, had a simpler conception of events and experiences in Israel. The question raised by this person is, "How do I fit into this?" For Jeri, the Israel experience allowed her to return and be more comfortable in a Jewish atmosphere. She is finding all things Jewish to be more syntonic to her personality than before her trip to Israel.

The third prototype is the person who separates himself or herself from the experience altogether. One is reminded of the child from the Hagadah who excludes himself from the community by asking, "What is this to you?" This individual seems not to have a sense of personal Jewish identity, and consciously and deliberately sets himself or herself apart from identification with Israel and from Jews as a religious group. This takes the form of blocking out feelings. A person of this type will not allow himself or herself emotional reactions, perhaps being incapable of tolerating or sharing them. In the case of Don, and sometimes other interviewees, there was a strong consciousness of this separateness and the "lack of feeling," verging on "isolation of affect." The consciousness of the lack of feeling gives a detached and almost schizophrenic quality to this prototype. Don, for instance, often mentioned that he was aware of other's emotional reactions to certain events. "But," he says, "I didn't feel that. Mine was an intellectual reaction." The experience in Israel would appear to have had no particular significance for this type, but neither would an experience in any country have had significance. This personality can be compared to that of an adolescent, who has too many things to contend with and cannot allow himself or herself strong emotional reactions about any one thing.

Therefore, this type adopts a cynical attitude, such as Don did, about all things.

The other interviewees were combinations of the three prototypes described. There were elements of strong identification and intellectual awareness, elements of testing out certain events to see how they fit into an identity in the process of formation, as well as elements of separating oneself and not allowing oneself to have feelings in a given circumstance. Each individual reacted differently because each approached the experience from very different personal circumstances.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Each American student staying in a city was housed, for the duration of his or her program, with an Israeli family.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study started with the following assumption: Behavior alone is not an adequate index of identity or Jewish identity. There are other components such as values, attitudes, and feelings which play a role as important as behavior in determining identity. Identity has been described as the individual's having no geographical limits and being able to exist separately from one's place of origin--identity is in some sense, cultural, religious, and national as well as historical.

An attempt has been made to relate Jewish identity to the long-term experiences in Israel of ten American Reform Jews in their late teens or twenties. Essential information regarding identity was gathered in the following categories: (1) Interaction with Israelis, (2) Religious experience in Israel, (3) Identification as an American in Israel, (4) Group experience, (5) Reactions to terrorist activities in Israel, (6) Impact of others' plans to make aliyah, (7) Impact of visits to historical sites, and (8) Impact of returning to the United States.

A constant overlapping of categories reflects the degree to which interviewees' identities were affected in almost every realm of life in Israel.

There are no generalizations to be made about how the Israel experience affects one's Jewish identity or what those feelings are. Each person brought a different life-experience and set of expectations to Israel. The data cited in Chapter Four deal with ten separate circumstances. Matt's experience was found to be the closest to the traditional idea that behavior is the best index of identity. His choosing to make aliyah is the outward behavior upon which this judgment is made. Those who have chosen careers within the Jewish community have also expressed a component of their Jewish identity through their behavior. Thus, the data show that it is actions combined with feelings which give a clue to identity.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the data. All ten interviewees found the Israel trip meaningful; however, the researcher believes that the full potential of the experience was not tapped. For example, a majority of people were impressed by the natural beauty of the Sinai Desert. A majority of people also experienced conflict when they came into contact with religious observance in Israel. In each of these areas, as well as others, the "prophetic tradition" of Reform Judaism became a

significant factor. The tradition of Reform Judaism has emphasized the social message of the biblical prophets, acceptable ethical behavior, and a feeling of continuity and belonging to the Jewish people as its main tenets, while it has rejected the authority of traditional Jewish law.

Potentially, an individual reared in the Reform tradition would find certain experiences in Israel meaningful. It might be celebrating Shabbat in Jerusalem or visiting a biblical site which is known because a prophet was active there. A reform Jew steeped in this tradition would approach a visit to Israel seeking out places where historical events occurred with which he or she is very familiar. One ought to get a deep sense of satisfaction being part of a people with a deep ethical tradition, and one ought to experience a sense of awe when visiting places where ethically significant historical events happened. In all, Israel should enhance and enrich the pattern of Jewish life that has already been developed. Seeing forms of Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox observance would not create conflict, but would be integrated into one's Jewish identity.

The potential reactions described can only occur if the person's identity is sufficiently developed. For

the interviewees, confronting greater Jewish observance constituted a loss of identity because ritual observance plays a lesser role in Reform Judaism. This loss of identity experienced by Reform Jews in Israel can be compared to the circumstance in which the secular Israelis find themselves. The secular Israelis have their concept of nationhood as one of the backbones of their Jewish identity,[1] while the Reform Jew has a personal value system. Therefore, when the interviewees confronted this more intense observance, they felt "less Jewish." If they had more knowledge of their own Reform tradition, and were secure in it, they would not have felt a loss of Jewish identity. While support for Israel and Zionism itself are latecomers to mainstream Reform Judaism (see Chapter Two) Israel now is a crucial part of a Reform Jew's life.

Because the history of Judaism and Jewish practice has been different in Israel and the United States, the researcher recommends that a better understanding of religion in Israel be acquired before a long-term trip to Israel is made. What effects this further understanding would have on the Reform Jew visiting Israel are not necessarily known, but he or she would be better able to integrate the clear divisions found there between religious

and non-religious life-styles. The acceptance of Reform Judaism as a viable form of Judaism is still in its beginning stages in Israel. As Israel has made an imprint on the Jewish identity of those visiting there, so, too, the vast numbers of Reform Jews visiting Israel with a strong feeling of commitment to it may leave an impression on it.

However, the researcher suggests that it is not only factual knowledge about Israel that will enhance and enrich the experience. It is a fuller and deeper knowledge of one's Jewish heritage that should be pursued, with a special emphasis on the specific approach that Reform Judaism has as a part of the entire Jewish tradition. Such a study program would emphasize the prophetic tradition and the ethics inherent in the Reform Jewish approach. It would also not emphasize ritual observance or adherence to the authority of traditional Jewish law. Therefore, a Reform Jew would complete such a course with a full understanding that his or her approach to Judaism is as legitimate as another's, but different. He or she would internalize the prophetic tradition and the values, and they would become a strong part of one's Jewish identity. There would not be a loss of identity, then, in the face of more substantial Jewish observance in Israel, but rather, Reform Jews in Israel would seek out their own meaningful rituals

in terms of their own beliefs and values.

The researcher recommends a stronger program of Jewish education than now exists. What is in existence has not failed, but can be improved upon. It has not failed because Israel can often be the catalyst for later Jewish learning. What is currently being taught would appear to be successful: In contrast to many secular Israelis, none of the ten interviewees showed any feeling of disdain for the "primitiveness" of the Orthodoxy they saw in Israel. They felt uncomfortable and rejected in the face of that more intense observance because they lacked the conceptual tools to integrate what they saw into identities still in the process of formation. The interviewees experienced less conflict between Zionism and Reform Judaism than between Reform Judaism and Orthodoxy. Many of the interviewees questioned how they, as Reform Jews, fit into that Orthodoxy. Jeff, for instance, asked whether Orthodoxy is the only meaningful expression of Judaism--whether other forms could be viable. It is hoped that he and others will seek those answers and will be able to find them in environments where meaningful Jewish learning is taking place.

The most successful Jewish education has been that which has had a component of affective learning in it. The researcher therefore recommends that such learning not

be done in a vacuum, but with the expectation and assumption that an Israel trip will follow. The Israel trip should follow as soon as possible after the study program, in order to affect the participants in the most significant ways possible.

With conceptual tools and further learning, future Reform Jewish youth on long-term Israel trips will not feel inferior and suffer a loss of identity when confronting Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox observance in Israel. Instead, their Jewish identities will be sufficiently developed and "portable" to allow them, while in Israel, to maintain the same comfort that they have as Reform Jews in America. The performance of certain rituals merely because they are part of a tradition can be a vacuous experience. Instead, Reform Jews in Israel can celebrate Shabbat or have a Havdalah service because those rituals are connected to the belief and value system they have developed as Reform Jews. They can experience a sense of oneness as a result of sharing beliefs and values, which do not have to be shared by behaviors.

The Reform movement needs to lay the groundwork for its constituents, so that a trip to Israel can reinforce Jewish knowledge and identity. The Jewish historical connection had not become significant to the interviewees; thus, significant Jewish learning must take place

in America before these trips are undertaken.

The researcher further recommends that this type of in-depth research on Jewish identity be continued, and on a larger scale. Such research may uncover much more information than is presently known about Jewish identity, and may also reveal deeper commitments and feelings about Judaism and Israel than statistics currently show to exist. It is hoped that this research proves helpful to those endeavoring to do such studies and to those interested in the subject matter.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Information gathered from interviewees' discussions with Israelis.

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APPENDIX

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

aliyah - (literally, "ascent") immigration to Israel

Eretz Yisrael - Land of Israel

Hagadah - liturgy followed at Seder service during holiday of Passover, commemorating the Jews' exodus from slavery in Egypt.

Halacha - Jewish religious law.

Havdalah - (literally, "separation") ceremony on Saturday evening signifying the ending of Shabbat.

Kabbalat Shabbat - (literally, "the reception of the Sabbath") ceremony on Friday evening welcoming the incoming of Shabbat.

kibbutz - (pl. kibbutzim) collective settlement

kipah - skull-cap worn by observant Jews

landsmanschaft - (Yiddish, pl. landsmanschaften) society of immigrants from the same town or region in Eastern or Central Europe.

machon - institute

madrich - counselor

minyan - required quorum of ten persons (traditionally men) in order to pray.

moshav - (pl. moshavim) smallholders' settlement

parasha - (literally "portion") section of Torah read each week.

payis - earlocks worn by observant Jews.

Rosh HaShana - celebration of Jewish new year.

Shabbat - Jewish Sabbath, Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

Shema - first word of prayer declaring God's unity and providence; central to Jewish faith.

tahanat-ha-merkazit - the central station

Tisha B'Av - ninth day of the month of Av, commemorating the destruction of the Temple.

tiyul - (pl. tiyulim) a hike, trip.

Torah - Pentateuch, also used more broadly to refer to the teachings of Judaism.

ulpan - intensive Hebrew language study.

yeshiva - religious academy.

SAMPLE LETTER

3609 Jasmine, #5
Los Angeles, California
90034

March 14, 1978

Dear

As a Master's student at Hebrew Union College, I am doing a study on the effects of a long-term stay in Israel on participants. The UAHC office in New York has given me your name.

I'd appreciate it if you would fill out the enclosed stamped, self-addressed post-card and return it to me as soon as possible, so that I can contact you to discuss your experience in more detail.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Gwynn Russler

SAMPLE POST-CARD

Which Israel trip did you participate in?

_____ YEAR_____

What are you doing now? College (specify)_____

_____ Graduate school_____

Working_____ Other (specify)_____

Name_____

Address_____

Phone (home) _____ (office)_____

Best hours to reach you_____

Again, thank you.

Interview Guideline

1. Introductory statement made to interviewee to explain goals of research and emphasis of questions.

2. Which program were you on?

   Why did you choose that program under the Reform auspices?

   Did anything significant to your Jewish identity happen to you on the way to Israel?

   What were your motivations for going to Israel on a long-term trip?

3. What happened when you arrived?

   What was your reaction to that?

   To what extent did your expectations affect your perception of the experience?

4. Did you feel comfortable about being on the kibbutz (ulpan, university)?

5. What were your experiences with Israelis in your normal situation?

6. What were your experiences with Americans in your normal situation?

7. What was your Hebrew fluency level?

   To what extent do you feel that your knowledge of Hebrew affected your acceptance into Israeli society?

8. What is your impression of what others in your program felt about their daily routine?

9. Regarding tiyulim, which particular place or places stand out in your memory, and for what reason?

10. Were there any occurrences in which people were killed through terrorist activity in Israel while you were there?

    What was your reaction to the events?

11. What was the nature of your own religious involvement and participation while in Israel?

    How does that compare with your religious involvement before you went?

12. How did you see yourself as a Jew while in Israel?

    What is your impression of how the Israelis see themselves as Jews?

    Was the subject of Jewish identity dealt with in any formal manner as part of your program?

13. Do you remember how you felt when the time came to return to the United States?

14. Did anything significant to your Jewish identity happen to you on the way home?

15. How did you feel when you were no longer in Israel?

16. What is the nature of your religious participation?

17. How would you describe your Jewish identity?

    What part does Israel play in that definition?

18. How do you relate to Israelis you meet in the United States?

19. Is there a relationship between your experience in Israel and your present or future professional plans?

20. Is there any other way in which you feel that Israel had an impact on you?

21. Are there any matters in connection with the subject that you feel I should know?

22. Do you have any questions of me?

HIGH SCHOOL

Join NFTY in ISRAEL 1978

LONG TERM PROGRAMS
(half year to full year)

GRADE 11 PROGRAM AT KIBBUTZ EIN DOR offers students who have completed 10th grade by June 1978 an opportunity to live and study on Kibbutz for a year using the 11th grade American High School curriculum. Major academic courses—English, Mathematics, Biology, American history, etc.—are taught in English by former American Educators. Judaic studies (taught in English and Hebrew according to participant's ability) include courses in Hebrew language and literature, Bible, Jewish history, contemporary Israel, Jewish values, etc. The Ein Dor program is accredited through the America-Israel Secondary School Program, Dept. of Education and Culture, World Zionist Organization. As part of their studies, students will visit major cities, Jerusalem, Negev, Sinai and the Galil.

Cost: $3400* 1 year. Departure Aug. 1978

THE EISENDRATH INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM provides opportunities for outstanding high school students to spend a summer and fall semester in Israel. Students experience another culture in depth. The summer session is devoted to an intensive study of Hebrew at the NFTY Ulpan at Ben Shemen. For the fall session students are adopted into Israeli families and usually attend local high schools with the "Brothers" and "Sisters" of their adopted family. Whenever possible there is participation in the youth activities of Israeli Reform congregations. The E.I.E. program includes trips to Jerusalem, the Galil, the Negev and Sinai.

Cost: $2400* 6 months. Departure late June

Optional Extension of program for full year total cost of $3400*

IMPORTANT NOTE

All costs are based upon round-trip youth airfares from New York as of Oct. 1, 1977 and are subject to change.
Price does not include a $25 non-refundable registration fee.

POST HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE

CREDIT & NON-CREDIT PROGRAMS

HALF-YEAR "WORK AND STUDY" TRACK #1 PROGRAM is a six-month experience during which the participants will spend approximately two months in Jerusalem boarding with Israeli families while studying at an intensive Hebrew Ulpan. Three months will be spent working and living on a kibbutz and/or serving children in a development town. Travel throughout the country is integrated into the above program. Students must have completed requirements for high school graduation by February 1978.

Cost: $1450*. 6 months. Departure February, 1978

HALF-YEAR "WORK AND STUDY" TRACK #2 PROGRAM is a six-month experience during which the participants will spend approximately four to four and a half months of FULLY ACCREDITED study at the Machon Greenberg Institute in Jerusalem. Course offerings include Hebrew; Jewish History, Text & Practice; Modern Israel; and the Arts. *Full college credit is offered which can be applied to high school diplomas for those who wish to complete their high school credits in Israel.* Travel throughout the country is integrated into the above program.

Cost: $1450*. 6 months. Departure. February 1978

IMPORTANT: The Deadline for receipt of "WORK and STUDY" applications is December 15, 1977

NFTY CONTINGENT TO YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (Machon L'Madrichei Chutz L'Aretz) is limited to 1978 high school graduates only. Five months of Judaica and Hebrew, one month travel, five months kibbutz. *Leaderhip orientation.* Suitability and commitment to youth work required.

Cost: $1375* 11 months. Departure September, 1978

COLLEGE & KIBBUTZ is an academic program co-sponsored by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and UAHC College Education Department. Students must have completed at least one year of study at an accredited college/university by June 1978. Academic courses for 39 credits are offered while students live and work on Kibbutz Ma'ale HaHamisha, eight miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Cost: $3350* 1 year. Departure late June

39 COLLEGE SEMESTER CREDITS OFFERED

Partial scholarships, on the basis of need are available for long term programs. The College & Kibbutz program is eligible for federally insured student loans.