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Israel, Zionism, and Emigration Anxiety

> Every Intelligent Israeli understands that the Yerida of Jews from the land of Israel is a national disaster. Almost Holocaust without murder.
>
> —Margalit, 2012

In 2012 poet Irit Katz was interviewed in *Haaretz* upon publication of her first book, *Hibernation*, which was written in the United Kingdom. She had left Israel five years earlier. In the interview, the journalist asks Katz how she explains the large number of Israeli emigrants. Katz replies: "I guess they can. It is easier; the discourse of *Yordim* is no longer there, not as it used to be" (Sela, 2012:14). The journalist then asks Katz if the fact that so many young people are leaving Israel mean Zionism has failed? Katz gives a very interesting answer: "Maybe it's the success of Zionism. Maybe we became *normal* and it is *allowed* to emigrate" (ibid.).

In what follows, I wish to explain the cultural context in which this interview takes place. This chapter explores the relationship between Zionism and immigration, as well as the meaning of emigration in the Jewish-Israeli world. Investigating notions of migration under a discourse of failure and success would enable a better understanding of the critique Katz attributes to Zionism. It is not just a simple choice of words, and the question of *normality* within this context is meaningful.

Zionism expressed a dialectical tension between the desire to be *normal* in the face of anti-Semitism and the desire to retain difference in the face of assimilation (Boyarin, 1997). The question of *normality* in the Zionist context is not just about the notions of immigration and emigration, *aliyah* and *yerida*. Normality stands at the base of political Zionist thought, as the goal of Zionism was to normalize the Jews, to become normal, a nation like all other nations (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:23).

Here, I wish to focus on the *abnormality* of the Israeli discourse regarding emigration. What are the social implications of emigration, and how do the Israeli society and state perceive it? Most importantly: What are the institutional acts and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society, and how, if at all, has this discourse changed over the years of Israel's existence? In this chapter, I attempt to articulate the gaps and tensions structuring a discourse of anxiety regarding migration.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the unique discourse Zionism has developed to deal with immigration and emigration of Jews (*aliyah* and *yerida*) and shows the connection between this discourse and the national narrative of Israel. The second section of the chapter offers a chronological analysis of how this discourse is manifested in literary texts and popular media, reflecting widespread assumptions regarding emigration. I focus mainly on the discourse constructing the image of the emigrants, as well as constructing emigration as a national problem. This description is followed in the third section by an investigation of how this discourse is expressed in academia. The examination centers on the way academics choose to frame their subjects of study. I claim here that Israeli academics work within a set of Zionist assumptions similar to state policy, Israeli media, and public figures. This chapter introduces the institutional acts and academic and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society.

Zionism, Migration, and State Policy

Zionism

From Theodor Herzl's El-Arish plan, to Joseph Chamberlain's Uganda plan, and later the British concept of a national "home" for the Jewish people in Palestine, the state of Israel was finally established in 1948 (Heymann, 1977; Vital, 1982). With the assistance of the British Empire, and after almost two years of violent battles between the Jewish inhabitants and the indigenous population, the Palestinians, the borders of the new state were marked for at least 20 years, grasping much more than the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, and much less than the biblical promised Jewish land (Galnoor, 1995).

Apart from striving for the establishment of Jewish political autonomy in the biblical land of Israel, Zionist ideology also constructed and

desired a new type of Jew, a character imagined contradicting the image of the diasporic Jew. Statehood Zionism was accompanied by the transformation of the image of the effeminate (and to some extent, queer) Jew, into a powerful, dominant, masculine (and of course sexually normative) Jew (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Mosse, 1993; Kadish, 2001). As Boyarin has concisely put it, Zionism can be constructed as a male "return to Phallustine, not Palestine" (Boyarin, 1997:22). The Zionists were aiming to normalize not just the image of the Jew, but also the image of the nation. Normality stands at the basis of political Zionist thought, as the goal of Zionism was to become normal, "a nation like all other nations" (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:23).

The Zionist settlement in Palestine was set to present the Jewish nation as the emblem of democratic modernity, as well as to create a sense of a strong national collectivity. A socialist rhetoric was deployed in the service of a nationalistic collectivism, for which the kibbutzim were the propagandistic image: the state's essential means of social organization, promoting ideals of self-sacrifice, voluntarism, camaraderie, and patriotism (Strenhell, 1998). Ze'ev Strenhell rightly argues that this image was misleading, as the kibbutzim gathered only 6% of the population and that the members of the founding Labor Party were bourgeois autocrats not committed to socialist values.

Also used as a propaganda tool was the myth of gender equality, featuring women soldiers. The pictures of girls with guns consumed abroad served two nationalistic purposes. They suggested that Israel was under such severe existential threat that it must train women as combat fighters. In addition, they advertised a view of Israel as an enlightened democracy, as opposed to the surrounding Arab countries, where women were veiled and suppressed (Sharoni, 1995).

Zionism's major tenet in Palestine was the settlement of a magnitude of Jews, and this was addressed both in the declaration of Independence and by various Israeli officials. In the early days of Israel, the government promulgated the Law of Return, securing the right of each Jew to immigrate to Israel and to receive full citizenship (Carmi, 2003). In addition to immigration, Zionist ideology has always been invested in Jewish demography. Orna Donat identifies Israel as a Western country with a pronatalist ideology: a complex of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that encourages reproduction. According to Sigal Goldin (2008), traditional family notions and the expectancy of parenthood in Jewish-Israeli society stem from three collectivist narratives that exist simultaneously: the national-religious-demographic narrative that centers on the right to

Jewish existence in the context of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict; a discourse of rights and emotions that creates a hegemonic narrative in which children are a source of personal happiness; and a biological narrative that assumes an inherent need to start a family. The Jewish family has been "among the material and ideological cornerstones of the Zionist nation-building project" (Bat Ami, 1992:235). In general, women's citizenship and their civic functions are strongly tied to motherhood (Berkovich, 1999). The Israeli government is greatly invested in fertility: it offers the highest support and subsidy rates for citizens' fertility treatments in the Western world, and citizens even see it as the state's responsibility to assist them in this area (Goldin, 2008; Solomon, 1993). In the mid-1990s, Israel had the highest rate of fertility clinics per capita in the world. In 2004 it was also the only state that offered subsidized fertility services to all female citizens who wanted biological offspring, even those who were unmarried or were not heterosexual (Hashiloni-Dolev, 2004). Israel's "birth rate is by far the highest in a comparison of twenty-one post industrial countries," Fogiel-Bizaoui argues (2010:44–45). The connection between the military service and women's national service cannot be better articulated than in David Ben-Gurion's words from the early days of the state: "Any Jewish woman, so far as it depends on her, who does not bring into the world at least four healthy children is like a soldier who evades military service" (Solomon, 2003:161). His words reflect the militarism that can be identified as a main characteristic of Israeli society. This militarism is based on the construction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a routine reality. A state of emergency, which was declared in 1948, was never canceled and still allows the government and army to act upon security reasons, promoting national needs while neglecting human rights (Kimerling, 1993:137). Most of the state's Jewish population performs obligatory army service (two years for women, three for men), and major parts of the experience of being an Israeli are formulated during active army service, and later on as part of the reserve forces (which men are obligated to do a few weeks a year until they are 40).

The centrality of army service and high birth rate still characterize contemporary Israel. However, other aspects of Israeli collectivism have been fractured, and questions regarding Israeli ethos and institutions are starting to appear. Yaron Ezrahi claims that Israel's national consensus is moving away from the "elevating spiritual and moral significance of the collective narrative" (1997:83). Religious, nationalist, and socialist Zionism is now infected with rifts between religious and secular communities, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, rich and poor, men and women, Jews and

Arabs. Ezrahi tracks the fracture of the national collective to the year 1982. According to him, the First Lebanon War was the first Israeli war to lack widespread public support. It was the first time Jewish citizens did not accept the loss of life of their children (Israeli soldiers) as they did not perceive this to be a defensive war (Ezrahi, 1997). He also argues that the first *intifada* and the opening of classified documents have produced a new historiography demystifying the heroic myth of Israeli military leaders. "Jewish Israelis are increasingly regarding themselves not primarily as actors in the Zionist drama of Return but as distinct citizens deserving of privacy and liberal rights" (Solomon, 2003:155).

Uri Ram suggests that the 1970s were the decisive years when social and political undercurrents transformed Israeli society, which "resembled more of a boiling pot than an melting pot" (1995:9). Ram refers to the dissolving of the Labor Party's hegemony and the rise of widespread skepticism toward conventions and "sacred cows" (ibid.). He claims that 1973 and the Yom Kippur War led to the rise of different political powers, such as militant religious nationalism and the Mizrahi uprising (ibid.:11–12). In his later book, *The Globalization of Israel—McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (Ram, 2008), he describes the impact of globalization on the development of two opposite camps in contemporary Israel, symbolized by Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. While Tel-Aviv, termed "McWorld," is identified with capitalism, postmodernity, high-tech industry, and an atmosphere of no solidarity, Jerusalem, or what he termed "Jihad" is identified with "tribalism, Neofundamentalism and sacred sites of veneration" (Ram, 2008: vi–viii). Ram continues to argue that globalization bifurcates the "Jewish and democratic" union of the state of Israel and splits the "Jewish" and the "democratic" dimensions into a Jewish-Jihad trend, which he terms "Neo-Zionism," and an Israeli-McWorld trend which he terms "Post-Zionism" (ibid.:7).

The transformation of the Israeli society follows these two extreme oppositions. Neo-Zionism is to be found in the continuing settler colonialism in the West Bank, apartheid mechanisms, Jewish terrorism, and the emergence of the radical right wing as a significant political power. The McWorld model, on the other hand signifies the transformation from nation–building and collective responsibility to a theology of consumerist individualism, and a general decline from a collective ethos of solidarity to an "every-man-for-himself" notion of society. This terminology can explain a wider acceptance on the part of civil society (in the McWorld/ Tel-Aviv model) of young Israelis who end up not serving in the army. These changes are also apparent in the official attitude of the state, which

now recognizes the need/possibility for national civil service for both boys and girls, thus fracturing the myth of the People's Army. The change in the collective understanding regarding civil responsibility is also manifested in a change regarding the attitude toward emigration.

Aliyah

Aliyah is a Jewish term appropriated by Zionism for inbound migration. People migrating to Israel are called *olim* (ascenders), akin to pilgrims. The term *aliyah* symbolizes the progress toward Jerusalem, which, relative to the rest of Israel, is at a higher altitude. Reaching Jerusalem, the holy city, signifies closeness to God. Hence, *aliyah* is conceptualized as "going up" both geographically and metaphysically.

When Zionist immigration to Ottoman Palestine began in 1882, there were in the area barely 25,000 Jews (Aliav, 1978). In 1947 the Jews were already 33% of the population of Palestine with approximately 650,000 people (Cohen, 2003:36). In the first decade of the new state, 900,000 Jews immigrated to Israel; most of them were either Holocaust survivors or Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries. By 1964 this number rose to 1,213,555 (Samooha, 2008:2). In total, by the year 2000, Israel had absorbed 2.8 million immigrants, including the mass immigration wave in the early 1990s from the former Soviet Union (Cohen, 36). A variety of literature regarding inbound migration to Israel was written over the years, considering the effect of being a migration state on the economics, culture, and politics of Israel (Bachi, 1977; Ben-Rafael et al., 2009; Schmelz et al., 1991).

Upon the establishment of Israel, *kibbutz ha'galuyot* (the gathering of the exiles) became the institutionalized raison d'être of the country to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine. The new state had to legislate, construct, and improve its practices in encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine. This was manifested in the Declaration of Independence (1948), the Law of Return (1950), Nationality Law (1952), and the Entry into Israel Law (1954), which secured the right of every Jew (every person with Jewish ancestry or any person who converted to Judaism) to immigrate to Israel and receive full citizenship (Carmi, 2003). The state of Israel also created the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (*hamisrad leklitat Aliyah*), a governmental office to deal with immigrants, which still exists today.

Before the establishment of the state, the Jewish Agency was one of the main factors facilitating Jewish immigration to Palestine. Established in 1929, the Jewish Agency's website declares it to have brought

more than 3 million Jews to Palestine/Israel from 1929 until today.[1] The Agency's role in encouraging *aliyah* remains crucial even in today's Israel. It plays a fundamental role in Israel's unusual constitutional makeup, as a nongovernmental agency that sustains and promotes the Jewish character of the state (Yiftachel, 1999).

The Jewish Agency encourages *aliyah* through various education programs in Israel. The most famous of them is Birthright (established in 1998), which allows youngsters to experience "Israel's ancient history, its modern development, its people and places" (Saxe et al., 2008:3). From 1998 to 2000 Birthright had approximately 6,000 participants and is estimated to have brought 150,000 young Jews to this pilgrimage by the 2007.[2] In terms of world Jewry, it is considered the "largest educational experiment ever attempted" (Aliyah ambassadors, 2010). Birthright trips offer a free tour in Israel, where the youngsters are presented with only a partial view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are met with Israeli soldiers encouraging them to join the Israeli army as volunteers, and are later pursued to immigrate to Israel (do *aliyah*) and receive the full benefits *olim* are entitled to, benefits that (ironically) Israeli-born Jews are not entitled to (see figures 1.1–1.5).

Figure 1.1. Birthright offers Jews all over the world free tours in Israel. Birthright Israel. Retrieved from http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/08/29/looking-back-on-13-years-of-birthright-israel/.

Figure 1.2. Birthright trips land at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. Retrieved from https://www.ujs.org.uk/current/events/ujstrips/birthright/.

Figure 1.3. Jewish Americans encouraged to serve in the Israeli Army. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUEtrXo

Figure 1.4. Benefits and financial support offered to Returning Citizens and American Jews. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUEtrXoFXAE.

Figure 1.5. "Come Study with Us": Israel to convince American Jews to Study in Israeli Universities, and receive financial support. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w33hut3PY-w.

It's important to mention programs like Birthright due to their potential involvement in the institutionalization of *aliyah*. The chairman of the Jewish Agency, Natan Sharansky, discussed the connection between strengthening Jewish identity in the diaspora and *aliyah* in a Knesset committee for *aliyah* and absorption: "If there are no Jews, and they are not proud of their Jewish identity—we won't have *Aliyah*" (ibid.). In the same Knesset discussion, Alan Hoffmann, the CEO of the Jewish Agency, said that programs like Birthright are securing the future of the Jewish people. He declared that the Jewish Agency is "obligated to increase the numbers of Jewish youngsters in those programs and to increase the number of *Olim* among them" (ibid.).

In contradiction to these declarations, sociologist Shaul Kelner describes Birthright as a "diaspora-building enterprise" whose raison d'être is to ensure the continued existence of vibrant, Israel-oriented Jewish communities abroad (Kelner, 2012). However, even alumni of the program share the widespread misconception "that Birthright's main purpose is to encourage participants to do *Aliyah*" (Getz, 2011).

Yerida

Outbound migration also has a specific term in Zionist discourse. Emigration is called *yerida*, and the emigrants are called *yordim*. Just like *aliyah*, the concept of emigration is not neutral: its connotations are negative. Literature regarding emigration from Israel is easy to find. Much of it is quantitative research (Lev-Ari, 2008; Alroey, 2003; Cohen, 2003, 2011), and a minority of the literature is more ethnographic and qualitative (Mayers, 2001; Sabar, 2000; Shokeid, 1988; Urieli, 1994; Sobel, 1986). Massive numbers of emigrants are considered to be more of a contemporary phenomenon (since the 1970s onward), but Jews were emigrating out of Zion even at the pioneer stage of the Jewish state. Gur Alroey argues that emigration from Palestine during the first years of the twentieth century (1900–1914) reached as much as 80 percent of the immigration levels (2003:114). He also shows documentation of early Zionist leaders of the Yishuv (the Zionist settlement in Palestine) who were trying to minimize the immigration of Jews lacking capital and advising people attempting to immigrate not to do so (ibid.:113).

During World War I the Jewish population in Palestine declined from about 80,000 to 56,000 (Bachi, 1977).[3] Emigration declined from the establishment of the state in 1948 until the 1960s. Moshe Shokeid suggests

that Israelis emigrated more freely and in larger numbers following the 1967 Six-Day War because "the victory of 1967, which eased the sense of danger to Israel's survival, might also have freed inner forces and social pressures of obligation and solidarity which had hitherto inhibited individuals from emigration" 1988:5). However, the rise in emigration rates in the 1960s might be due to another important factor—regulations of the new state, which had restricted emigration until 1961.

Orit Rozin (2010) reveals that between 1948 and 1961, those wishing to travel abroad needed an exit permit. Although between 1948 and 1951 more than 800,000 new immigrants had arrived, in 1953 departures were exceeding arrivals, which caused anxiety in government offices (Rozin, 2010:152). Exit permits were not granted easily. For example, in 1948 only 38% of requests to exit were approved (ibid.:7). Rozin suggests that security and financial considerations were the causes for the restrictions, which lasted 13 years. Security considerations mainly meant making sure that soldiers-to-be and men on reserve duty were not allowed to leave for fear they might not return (ibid.:8). However, Jewish citizens were also denied permission to travel merely for already having spent enough time abroad or for fear that they might not want to come back. Rozin quotes the response of the Ministry of Immigration Absorption to an appeal by a woman denied an exit permit in October 1950:

> The applicant had already spent time abroad this year in England and France. . . And we may suspect that the applicant is sick with the infamous Jewish illness known as "Travelitis." (2010:148)

The allegation that easing exit permit restrictions would encourage emigration was an "oft-repeated mantra" (ibid.:164). The association of illness with the wish to leave Israel would recur in the years to come.

Another interesting piece of research reveals that, during the 1950s, small numbers of Jews in Israel were so eager to leave that some even chose to convert to Christianity. The Catholic Church was assisting converted Jews to receive permits to exit Israel and receive visas to settle in other destinations, such as Brazil or Italy (Yehudai, 2014).

The fear of losing manpower in case of a war kept the limitations on the travel opportunities of men much later than 1961. Until 1986, every Jewish Israeli had to request permission from his army unit before every trip abroad. However, today this is not the case. Restrictions do not exist,

and Israeli citizens no longer need to apply for a permit to exit. This is important especially in regard to emigration anxiety, and it shows the gap between the state's declarations and state policies. If Israel was truly worried about losing its Jewish majority, or feared it might not have enough manpower to sustain an army, it could easily maintain its restrictions on the movements of its citizens.

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimates that in 1999, 480,000 Israelis were emigrants, and by the end of 2006 this number rose to 544,000. According to the CBS, the highest numbers of emigrants were from 2001 through 2002 (19,000 people per year), which coincides with the second *intifada* (CBS, 2014). In 2009 and 2010 there was a sharp decline in the number of emigrants, with only 4,900 and 5,400 emigrants per year, respectively (ibid.). Since 2011, the numbers have increased by about 1,000 emigrants each year.

This information is the result of calculating the numbers of Israelis leaving the country per year, minus the number of Israelis entering the country per year. However, we have no idea what the true numbers of emigrants are. The mechanism of data collection used by the CBS, informed by Israel's border control, cannot calculate new forms of mobility. In this respect, I mentioned the numbers above not to present accurate statistics of contemporary emigration rates, but to pose a question about the ways in which the CBS calculates the numbers of emigrants, as well as to critique the almost taken-for-granted apprehension of these forms of data collection by Israeli academia.

Yinnon Cohen (2009) claims that it is hard to estimate the true number of Jewish Israeli emigrants because of the difficulty of calculating mortality rates in the diaspora, as well as the percentage of Arab-Israeli emigrants within that number (ibid.). He critically indicates that ideology was always (and still is) part of the data regarding the numbers of emigrants presented to the public. Organizations that advocate for the Zionist demographic mission, Cohen shows, tend to offer higher numbers of emigrants than other research sources (ibid.:120). Presenting a higher emigration rate can legitimize state policy for bringing people back and create a discourse that can mobilize Israeli citizens (convincing individuals not to emigrate/convincing individuals who have emigrated to return). This was the case with the number presented by the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption in 2003 (750,000). The Zionist anxiety regarding the numbers of emigrants is not a recent phenomenon, and Cohen shows similar examples of exaggeration in numbers as early as the 1970s

(ibid.). Debates about the size of the Israeli emigrant population tend to be more pervasive and heated than those linked with other national migrant groups, due to the involvement of Zionist ideology (Gold, 2002:23). Several studies have shown that academics, journalists, and activists affiliated with Israel commonly claim that the numbers of Israeli emigrants are three to four times larger than the data indicated by census or survey-based tabulations (Herman et al., 1983).

I am far less interested in the "accurate" number of contemporary Israeli emigrants than in the discourse that surrounds and structures the conceptualization of "accuracy" regarding numbers, as well as the meaning attributed to higher/lower emigration rates within this discourse. It is important to clarify that the ideological aspect of calculating the numbers of Israeli outbound migration may sometimes contradict itself. As I show in detail in what follows, public discourse regarding emigration tends to downplay the numbers—as if to dismiss any "public anxiety" about emigration becoming a national problem. However, when organizations or government offices wish to enlarge their budget or financial support from the state of Israel or Jewish philanthropists, the numbers will be exaggerated. This is what I term "emigration anxiety"—a social discourse that has schizophrenic characteristics.

The Case of Cuba: A Comparison

Israel is, of course, not unique in having a complicated attitude toward emigration, and it is not the only state that has had restrictive travel policies. In his dissertation, Patrick O'Shea discusses the complex relationship between Cubans who stayed in the homeland and their family members who left, in light of a public discourse loaded against the emigrants (O'Shea, 2013). Following the 1959 revolution in Cuba and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, Fidel Castro officially suspended any transport between Cuba and the United States, which effectively ended legal Cuban emigration to the United States (O'Shea, 2013:32). In 1965, Castro announced that anyone who wished to leave the island was free to do so. From 1959 to 1973, approximately 630,000 Cubans emigrated in special flights jointly organized by Cuba and the United States. However, until 1978 these emigrants were not allowed to return to Cuba (ibid.:32–34). Thus, emigration meant losing Cuban citizenship and being prevented from returning even for a visit. While in Israel, citizens who wished to emigrate had to apply for a permit, appeal to court, or change their

religion, Cubans had to try to leave Cuba illegally by sea, risking their lives. Finally, in January 2013 the Cuban government approved a reform to the country's migration laws that eliminated the need for permission to leave Cuba for those who wished to travel abroad.

The case of Cuba is similar in the negative beliefs structured around the image of the emigrant. Since the revolution in 1959, those leaving Cuba suffered greatly from denigration both from civil society and from the government. From 1959 until the early 1980s, strong social codes of ideological rejection toward emigration and those who emigrated prevailed in Cuba (ibid.:34).

In Israel, though emigration was perceived as a national problem, emigrants were (and still are) constantly pursued by the government to return by various means. Now they are promised financial benefits upon their return, which include, mainly, tax-free electronic products, unemployment benefits in the first months, and scholarships for studying in higher education institutions. In addition, Israeli citizens are encouraged to pressure their family members abroad to return. A campaign by the Israeli Ministry of Absorption (Ministry of Absorption, 2011), which is directed at families in Israel who are encouraged to convince their family members who have left the county to return, shows this well. In one video, an Israeli emigrant is watching an Israeli memorial service on her computer, and her American partner does not understand what she is doing. The subtitles say: "They will always remain Israelis. Their partners may not understand what it means. Help us bring them home" (see figures 1.6 and 1.7).

In Cuba, on the other hand, the ones who left were forever doomed as traitors of the revolution. They were not allowed to return to their homeland, and their citizenship was denied.[4] In Israel, emigration was not viewed by the state as a political act, but a mere economic decision. In Cuba, in contrast, emigration was considered highly political until very recently. Unlike in Israel, the Cuban families who stayed were supposed to terminate their relationships with their family members who left.

The case of Cuba is interesting in relation to the Israeli case, as both states are founded on new ideological projects. In Israel, it was the establishment of a completely new state based on Zionist ideology, and in Cuba it was the refounding of a new society, a socialist Cuba. These two new regimes had to insure constantly the success of their ideological projects and the satisfaction of their people. Protecting and showcasing the ideology require demonstrating that "the people" are happy, which in turn is necessary to demonstrate the legitimacy of the state. This implies

Figure 1.6. "They will Always Remain Israelis. Their Partners May Not Always Understand What It Means." Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwXpkYQZHlo.

Figure 1.7. "They will Always Remain Israelis. Their Partners May Not Always Understand What It Means." Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwXpkYQZHlo.

that the state must demonstrate that it is indeed providing a "meaningful life" to its citizens, in order to legitimate its existence and the restrictions and burdens that it imposes on those citizens (the new economic order in Cuba, and in Israel, economic hardships, along with security threats and wars). Emigration, which can suggest unhappiness or dissatisfaction with the state, can undermine these efforts and therefore must be controlled or stopped. In this sense, Israel and Cuba are not particularly exceptional: many new states do this, but perhaps new states founded or refounded on the basis of new ideologies are particularly prone to doing so.

The cases of Cuba and Israel also suggest that, while Cuba had cut off any connection with its emigrants, Israel continued to improve ways to maintain a connection between the emigrants and the homeland. This, again, can point to emigration anxiety. Israel's revolutionary project was inherently connected to the number of Jewish citizens within the territory. Cuba was not trying to attract new immigrants during the years of the revolution, but Israel did (and still does). This ideological difference can explain the Israeli need to preserve its image as a country that offers its citizens not only well-being but also the meaning of being part of a bigger project—the Jewish state. Thus, even though people were (and are) constantly emigrating, the state preserves constant immigration. With this, the image created is of a modern democratic state that allows emigration without consequences (unlike the Cuban regime) and promotes itself as a good immigration destination, for new arrivals and for return migration as well.

Emigration Anxiety in Public Discourse

> The Yordim reaffirm the survival of the "virus" and "neurosis" of Jewish diaspora existence.
>
> —Yehoshua, 1980

Gur Alroey's work from 2003 on early 20th-century Jewish emigration from Palestine is concluded by the simple observation that he failed to find any moral significance to the emigration: "They were not judged and doomed traitors who were abandoning the *Yishuv* in its time of trouble. The word *Yerida* was not there, but *ozvim* (leaving) or *yotzim* (going out)" (Alroey, 2003:129–30).

Interestingly, I found traces of this discourse in a novel published in 1920 in Palestine, describing the lives of a young European immigrant

to the Yishuv. *Shkhol vekishalon* (Bereavement and failure) was written by Josef Hayyim Brenner, a Jew who immigrated to Palestine in 1909. The novel tells the story of Yechezkel Chefetz, a young European Jew who immigrated to Palestine. Early in the novel, the protagonist is hospitalized in a mental institution. Upon his release, he returns to Europe, but after a few years, he immigrates to Israel again, doing his second *aliyah*. His second pilgrimage is unsuccessful, and as the name of the novel suggests, the ending marks not only the failure of Chefetz's individual journey, but also the failure of the Jewish settlement in Palestine in general. The novel itself is filled with characters who criticize not only the Yishuv and the economic situation, but also the phenomenon of Jewish inhabitants who are leaving Palestine. As early as the fourth page of the novel, the narrator tells the readers about Chefetz's feelings regarding his return to Europe:

> His sense of respect had started as well to affect him, as he, in great shame, is exiting the country. Even though then, as always, there were more of those departing than those who were arriving and staying, people would still resent those who were "embezzling the national mission," abandoning the ship. (Brenner, 1920 [2006: 3–5])[5]

While some of the characters see emigration from Israel in a negative light, the narrator reflects differently on the topic:

> One must be truly happy of this wonderful vision, of the youngsters, those still with power and energy, will finally stop doing nothing in this pit of trash and laziness, called Jerusalem, let them be free and become of benefit to themselves and their society. (Ibid.:76–77)

Already in the early 1910s, those who departed were considered to be abandoning the national mission. In this respect, Brenner's novel offers a very interesting and somewhat radical criticism of the Zionist project. Staying in Zion, the novel suggests, is actually the weak, lazy, meaningless act. While Alroey did not find evidence of negative perception of the emigrants during the period of the Yishuv, Brenner's novel reflects that it did exist.[6]

In 1951, Ben-Gurion declared that increasing the Jewish population in Israel was an important national goal. From this year onward we can

detail a persistent discouragement of Jewish emigration, done primarily by exerting moral and ideological pressure (Cohen, 2011:45). One of the most obvious aspects of these moral judgments can be seen in the value-laden Hebrew terms given to immigration and emigration, which were starting to appear. The emigrants, the *yordim*, suffered from derogatory descriptions, and emigration, referred to as *yerida,* was perceived as a national problem that threatened the existence of the Jewish state (Mayers, 2001:75–76). What follows are a few interesting examples of this discourse chosen from Israeli newspapers, mentioned in chronological order. More recent manifestations of the discourse, from the 1990s, will be examined at the last part of this chapter.

In 1959, we learn from an article in *Herut*, a daily right-wing news-paper, that a heated discussion about emigration was held in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). The article, titled "Every Yored Frightens 10 Jews," discussed around 110,000 emigrants who had left Israel since the estab-lishment of the state, a problem identified as "shocking" (Every yored, 1959). At the end of the Knesset discussion, the government was encour-aged to establish a committee to deal with this problem (a suggestion that would be repeated again even as late as 2011). Emigration, accord-ing to the writer, was regarded as a "faulty and criminal phenomenon made possible by the public atmosphere—an atmosphere of moral decay, renunciation of ideals, and renunciation of Zionism."

In an article from January 1967, six months before the Six Day War, a journalist who interviewed emigrants to the United States, wrote: "There is a kind of *yerida* which has a little bit of logic into it: the lack of abilities to find a job in Israel, or the persistent pleading of family members to reunite with them overseas." However, he continued and addressed some of the emigrants he interviewed as infected with a certain psychosis: "But there are Israelis here that the *dybbuk*[7] of *yerida* caught them one sunny day in the tufts of their heads, confused their brains, affected their discre-tion and swung them to America, without any need, without a practical motive, simply against any reasonable thought" (*The Dybbuk*, 1967).

In an article titled "The Yerida," published in 1976 in *Maʾaraiv*, a popular daily newspaper, Shlomo Avineri, a highly respected academic, wrote these sentences while he was the chief executive of the Israeli Office of Foreign Affairs: "The great majority of the *yordim* went to New York during 1967–1973 in search for the American dream. They went there because they were haunted by the greedy dream of a quick fortune to be made, a dream nourished in Israel during the years of prosperity" (Avi-

neri, 1976). The accusation of materialism returns in another article by a known and respected journalist, Yehoshua Bar-Yosef, in the notable literary journal *Maznaim*: "The *yored* is a miserable figure, a one-dimensional man or even less, uprooted from everything that binds a human being to his geographical, social, and cultural environment" (Bar-Yosef, 1976:84).

An even more striking accusation appeared in the same year in *Davar,* a daily newspaper affiliated with the liberal party. The editor, Yehuda Gothalf, a Zionist pioneer who had immigrated to Israel, wrote: "*Yerida* is not much different from the cowardly flight from the battlefield. If *yordim* are not completely deprived of human and national feeling they will suffer for the rest of their life from a sense of guilt and from inferiority complex. They shall be cast out by their children and friends" (1976:19). The homeland in this quote is referred to as a battlefield, and the entire population of Israel is conceived to be soldiers of an imagined Jewish army, which is supposed to protect the Jewish state. Those who emigrate simply desert the battlefield.

It is important to notice how this negative sentiment toward emigration is widely shared across the political spectrum; this can be understood by the writers themselves, as well as the platforms for which they write. While *Ma'ariv* was a daily newspaper, not connected with any party, *Davar* and *Herut* belonged to two oppositional political camps, and *Maznaim* is a literary magazine, whose readers belong to a very specific community, upper-class academics.

The institutionalization of this discourse in its most widespread national form can be credited to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who in a television interview in 1976 on Israeli Independence Day called *yordim* "the leftovers of weaklings" (*nefolet shel nemushot*) (Shokeid, 1988:6). A slightly later condemnation of the *yordim* was made by A.B Yehoshua, one of the best known Israeli writers today and then, who wrote in 1980 that "the *yordim* reaffirm the survival of the virus and neurosis of Jewish diaspora existence" (Yehoshua, 1980:72). More than 30 years later, Yehoshua is still obsessed with the phenomenon of *yerida*: "There are 500,000 Israelis in the diaspora [. . .] there is almost no house there without a Cabriolet outside, I know these houses. They sit there pretty easily, why? They don't have a job here? The Swiss also don't have the High-Tech jobs like they want, but you won't see that many Swiss sitting in the US" (Yehoshua, 2012). He also criticizes diasporic Jews for not making *aliyah*: "They are incomplete Jews while I am a complete Jew. . .We are total and they are partial, we're Israelis and they are Jewish" (ibid.).

The discourse of *yerida* in contemporary Israel is certainly different than it used to be in 1976. Israel, since 1961, is no different than any other country with an unexceptional flow of inbound and outbound migration, a "normal" entity that is taking part in globalization and geographical mobility processes. Israel wishes to portray itself as a modern democratic state with an emigration rate that is not exceptional in comparison with any Western country (DellaPergola, 2012; Cohen, 2011). Policy, however, suggests that the state of Israel is still as obsessed with the numbers of emigrants and immigrants as it was in the 1950s and the 1970s. The discourse that sees emigrants in a negative light has not disappeared but was transformed in a way that serves the ideology of the contemporary Zionist project. Mainly, the emigrants started to be invited to take part in presenting the good sides of Israel. If in 1976 they were conceived as those who abandoned ship, in the 2000s they are invited to return to their position as "soldiers" under the Zionist regime, only now their reserve service is performed abroad, as ambassadors of the state.

More and more Zionists and public figures see the importance of keeping emigrants in good relations with Israel.[8] Daniel Taub, the Israeli ambassador in the UK said in an interview in 2013: "If they are already there we might as well use them" (Chodrov, 2013). He was referring to the Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda), which asks Israelis abroad to represent Israeli and Zionist ideas.[9]

In an article published in *Globes*, one of the two leading economic newspapers, Lyon Roth, who used to be the rector of the Hebrew University, called to put an end to the stigmatizing of the *yordim* in order to "harness their potential":

> Many see this as a net-loss to Israel. I see it as an incredibly *fertile ambassadorial corps* that should be cultivated and nourished. I see it as a means for Israelis to perform voluntary, constructive *reserve duty while living abroad*. Moreover, someone else is paying their salaries. Without a doubt, the closer our diaspora colleagues feel to Israel, the more enthusiastic and effective they'll be in representing the country. (Roth, 2010, emphsis mine)

The militaristic Zionist discourse is well apparent in this text, suggesting using those who are no longer serving in the actual reserve force as