



# **The Israeli Diaspora as a Catalyst for Jewish Peoplehood**

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**An Emerging Opportunity within the Changing  
Relationship between Israel and the Jewish world**

**Conceptual Framework**

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## The team

### **The team that worked on this project includes:**

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**Roy Keidar** is the CEO of the Reut Institute. Prior to joining Reut, he served as a senior member of the National Security Council of the Prime Minister's Office. Roy has dealt with some of the most delicate issues of national security such as the UN report on the Gaza flotilla, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Disengagement plan and the security barrier. Roy is a lawyer by training. He received his bachelor and master degrees in law (LLB and LLM) from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a Master in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government as a Wexner Israel Fellow.

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**Talia Gorodess** holds an M.A. degree in Security Policy from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (2010). Prior to that, she worked as a research associate for the President at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., focusing on the Muslim world. She earned her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Chicago (with honors) in 2006. Born and raised in Israel, Talia spent seven years living in the U.S. Talia was a prominent activist during the social protest of summer 2011, and she continues to be part of the movement calling for social justice in Israel. In addition, she is a regular contributor to "[Toshav Hozer](#)" (Returning Citizen), a radio show in Galey Tzahal (IDF radio station) about culture and current Israeli affairs.

**Alissa Littmann** holds an M.A. in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Monash University, Melbourne, with a research focus on the institutionalization of ethnic division in post-war Bosnia Herzegovina and a B.A. in History and Jewish Civilizations. In addition to her academic pursuits, Alissa worked as the Director of Israel Programs at the Zionist Federation of Australia and as the Federal Chairperson of Habonim Dror, Australia. Born and raised in Melbourne, Alissa made *aliyah* in 2010.

## Executive summary

### The changing paradigm in Israel and Jewish world relations

1. **This report offers a conceptual framework for understanding the place and potential role of the Israeli Diaspora** within the changing paradigm between Israel and the Jewish world.
2. While the 'old relationship' between Israel and world Jewry was based upon an unwritten covenant grounded in classical Zionism, **the emerging paradigm is shaped by partnership and mutuality, with the notion of Jewish Peoplehood taking center stage. This changing dynamic presents an opportunity for the Jewish people.**

### The changing nature of the Israeli Diaspora

3. **The Israeli Diaspora** as a distinct entity with its own unique added value to the Jewish people **has yet to realize its potential within the 'new paradigm'.**
4. Classical Zionism was based on the negation of the Diaspora and a strong moral and ideological call for the imperative of *aliyah*. **Hence, within this framework, the traditional view of the Israeli Diaspora was characterized by the following working assumptions and patterns of behavior:**
  - **Local Jewish community viewed Israeli immigrants as 'outsiders'** – A lack of clear policy together with ideological and cultural factors resulted in an inability and unwillingness to engage Israelis in organized Jewish life;
  - **Israeli immigrants generally felt alienated from local Jewish communal life** – Many new Israeli immigrants and even 'veteran' Israeli families see themselves as culturally different from local Jewish families, and find little or no areas of overlap;
  - **Israelis tend to be a collection of individuals with little communal DNA** - Israeli immigrants tend to spend time in their informal social circles, and generally do not see value in investing in or establishing formal communal institutions;
  - **There is little sense of 'culture of involvement' among Israelis** – Israelis tend to be accustomed to a weak Israeli philanthropic culture as well as a self-perception as aid recipients rather than providers;
  - **Israelis have little or no connection to Jewish life** – A distinction between Jewish and Israelis identities makes it difficult for Israelis in North America to relate to an organized and active Jewish life;
  - **First generation Israelis view Hebrew as the most important component of childhood education** – The ability to communicate, read, and write in Hebrew is seen as a guarantee that their children's 'Israeliness' will be preserved;

- **Those who left Israel were viewed as a liability to *aliyah*.**
- 5. **This mindset is beginning to erode in light of a series of recent trends.** Our research identified the following emerging trends both within and outside of the Israeli community itself:
  - **From *aliyah/yerida* to 'life of fluid movement'** - The dichotomous relationship between *aliyah* and *yerida* is changing: an increasing number of Israelis are choosing to build a life in more than one Jewish community;
  - **Local Jewish communities are beginning to engage Israelis** - In recent years, Jewish institutions such as Federations, Jewish day schools and Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) have begun to invest resources in reaching out to the Israelis within their community;
  - **Israelis are increasingly seeking to be part of the community** - Recent years have seen a surge in the involvement of Israelis in organized Jewish life including in synagogues, Jewish day schools and even membership on the board of local JCCs;
  - **Israelis are beginning to self-organize as a community** - Local Israeli community organizations have begun to blossom in recent years, showing a thirst for a vibrant Israeli life;
  - **Israelis are beginning to develop a culture of giving** - More Israeli immigrants are beginning to see value and assume responsibility towards their community, as expressed in investment of both time and resources;
  - **Israelis are realizing that 'Israeliness' is not enough** - In the absence of a strong form of connection to Jewish culture and heritage, many Israelis are beginning to realize that the Israeli national 'container' may not be enough to ensure a resilient Jewish-Israeli identity;
  - **Jewish education is offering one possible answer to receding Israeli identity** - Many first generation Israeli parents are beginning to understand that Hebrew-language instruction is only *one* component of maintaining a Jewish-Israeli identity;
  - **From an *aliyah* liability to an asset for the state of Israel** - While in the past, Israeli immigrants were perceived as a liability to *aliyah*, today we are seeing signs of interest that go beyond attempts to bring them back to Israel.

These nascent trends are at varied stages of their emergence, and naturally their manifestation differs from community to community.

## **The Israeli Diaspora as a catalyst for Jewish Peoplehood**

- 6. **The major conceptual shift is that the Israeli Diaspora has ceased to function as a source of shame to the Zionist project, and is now beginning to be courted as a political, economic, social and cultural asset to the State of Israel.**

7. **However, within this mindset shift lays an even greater opportunity that may far exceed the borders of the State of Israel, and can in fact serve the Jewish *people* on a global scale.**
8. **This opportunity lies in the emergence of a newly formed identity constellation – the North American Jewish Sabra – that includes a combination of North American, Jewish and Israeli components.**
9. **The ‘N.A. Jewish Sabra’ includes any Israeli who identifies (whether consciously or subconsciously) as an Israeli-North American Jew.**
10. **There is no formal definition of the nascent ‘N.A. Jewish Sabra,’ however, this individual tends to possess the following characteristics:**
  - Spent at least a decade in North America;
  - No longer 'living from their suitcases';
  - Willingness to invest resources into the community;
  - Represents a new wave of Israeli immigration;
  - Self-identifies as Israeli-American-Jewish.
11. **By virtue of this tri-dentity, the 'N.A. Jewish Sabra' is able to leverage the unique added value of each of the three identities, as well as play a role in bringing all corners of the Israeli Diaspora into conversation with one another, thus serving as a catalyst toward Jewish Peoplehood.**

### **Building and supporting thriving Israeli Diaspora communities**

12. **Recent trends together with the emergence of the N.A. Jewish Sabra provide fertile soil for building thriving Israeli Diaspora communities.**
13. **The importance of a thriving Israeli Diaspora community lies in its ability to understand and respond to the needs and challenges of its members. This requires a significant effort on the part of three key players - the Government of Israel, the local Jewish communities and the N.A. Jewish Sabra.**

#### **The role of the Government of Israel**

14. **In an effort to build thriving Israeli communities, the Government of Israel, should undertake to engage Israelis living abroad as a viable Diaspora rather than a moral liability.**
15. **This effort to engage Israelis living abroad requires cohesive government policy.** Currently, there are a number of government departments that serve Israelis living abroad, each working according to its own internal organizing logic. A coordinated approach involving the relevant government bodies will ensure maximum effectiveness and is important in avoiding mixed-messages.
16. **A thorough evaluation of policies that pose hurdles to a strong and empowered relationship between Israel and Israelis living abroad is required.** These policies include (among others):

- **'Brain drain' to 'brain circulation'** –The government can begin to engage the Israeli Diaspora as an opportunity for 'brain circulation,' rather than treat them as examples of a 'brain drain' threat;
- **Israeli Diaspora rights and responsibilities** – An assessment of the rights and responsibilities of Israelis living abroad can include an evaluation of a wide range of policies, including Israeli Diaspora voting rights and army conscription laws;
- ***Bayit HaIsraeli* (Israeli House) as an Israeli Goethe-Institut** - The Goethe-Institut model could serve as an Israeli cultural institution for fostering knowledge and providing information on Israel's language, culture, society and politics, hence serving to re-enforce the cultural ties between Israel and the Israeli Diaspora.

#### **The Role of the Local Jewish Community**

17. At the same time, **the local Jewish community has a role to play in engaging Israelis with organized Jewish life.** This involves recognizing and facilitating the needs of the local Israeli community. This role can be guided by two key principles:
  - **Engaging Israelis on their own terms** – This may include investing resources into understanding and engaging the local Israeli community and assuming a coordinated approach to integrating Israelis into their leadership structures;
  - **Shifting from service provider to service enabler** - This may include calling on Jewish institutions to begin directing funds and other forms of support for programs that are initiated by Israelis themselves.

#### **The role of the N.A. Jewish Sabra**

18. **In the effort to cultivate a thriving Israeli Diaspora, the N.A. Jewish Sabra is tasked with first building and then connecting Israeli communities.**
19. In order to build the community **the N.A. Jewish Sabra needs to provide infrastructure, programming and services** in the following five domains:
  - **Jewish education and Hebrew** – Formal and informal educational structures and content that enrich Jewish and Israeli identity, as well as Hebrew-language fluency;
  - **Community services** - Initiatives or support that aim to meet the basic needs of community members;
  - **Integration into the local Jewish community** - Involves integration into leadership structures, membership and general participation;
  - **Communal and cultural programming** - Includes programming targeted specifically to members of the Israeli community, such as *shira betzibur*;
  - **Connection to Israel** - Harnessing the Israeli community toward strengthening and advancing Israel as well as facilitating a sustained personal connection.



20. **The success of an organized and prosperous Israeli Diaspora rests on the degree to which Israeli communities are connected** with one another as well as with the local Jewish community and with Israel. Two examples of potential initiatives aimed at connecting communities can include:

- **An Israeli-North American leadership forum** - Increased communication among the leadership of the various Israeli communities is central to connecting these communities into an organized network;
- **A mass technological platform for community-to-community connection** - A technological platform geared toward increasing communication between communities will strengthen relationships between individuals and communities on a grassroots level.

## **Conclusion**

21. **The leadership potential of the Israeli Diaspora presents Jewish leadership, throughout the world, with an important opportunity that should not be missed.** The Reut Institute is dedicated to working with Jewish leaders and organizations to seize these opportunities.

## Guidelines for quick reading

This document can be skimmed by reading the bolded phrases. Each paragraph contains only one idea, captured in the bolded sentences. Footnotes do *not* contain new ideas, but examples, sources, and references.

## Background

1. **The chief mission of the Reut Institute's taskforce on Israel's relations with the Jewish world is to promote Jewish Peoplehood.** We work with Jewish organizations and Israeli government ministries in order to reorganize the Jewish world in a way that addresses the challenges of our time. These efforts are guided by the taskforce's conceptual framework titled: ['A new relationship between Israel and the Jewish world.'](#)
2. **The first stage of our impact strategy is titled 'One Hub at a Time,'** and is designed to trigger change within the main hubs across the Jewish world. **The second stage, 'Platform to Platform' (P2P),** is designed to connect the hubs, thus increasing the ripple effects across the ecosystem manifold. In this context, we work with leading organizations in the Jewish world including the JCC Association, Hillel, Birthright, Partnership2Gether of the Jewish Agency and many others.
3. **In recent months, our team has focused its efforts on studying the unique characteristics of the Israeli Diaspora within the broader context of Israel's relationship with the Jewish world.** This report, focused on the Israeli Diaspora, attempts to shed light on the unique opportunity this community represents for Jewish Peoplehood.

## Chapter 1: Changing paradigm in Israel-Jewish world relations

4. **The major changes taking place within the Jewish world, and in particular within the Israeli Diaspora, form the backdrop of this report.** This report offers a conceptual framework for the leadership role of the Israeli Diaspora in North America within the broader context of the changing paradigm in the relations between Israel and the Jewish world.
5. **This chapter outlines the traditional relationship between Israel and world Jewry** through its ethos and historical foundations, and analyzes the changing reality that has led to a growing rift between the two communities. **The chapter concludes with principles for a new relationship** that require an ideological evolution on the part of Zionism and a refocusing of the relationship on issues that represent an opportunity for meaningful and synergetic partnership.
6. **The urgency of this topic derives from the large gaps in expectations between Israel and Jewish communities outside of Israel, of which Israelis living abroad**

**are an organic part.** This gap often causes tension and friction; increasing financial, structural and political difficulties of many Jewish institutions in Israel and overseas; difficulties in engaging the younger generation with Israel; and a relationship between Israeli communities, organized Jewish life and the State of Israel that can be characterized by confusion, suspicion, a sense of guilt and blame on the part of all the parties involved. **This reality is the result of an irrelevant mindset within both communities, which, to a large extent, reflects the old relationship between Israel and world Jewry.**

### The 'old relationship' between Israel and the Jewish world

7. **For years, the relationship between Israel and world Jewry has been based upon an unwritten 'covenant' that stemmed from Classical Zionism** and was shaped by the Holocaust and the miracle of the rebirth of the State of Israel. This covenant generated values, priorities, working assumptions, patterns of behavior and institutions that have dominated the relationship for decades.
8. **However, over the past years, it has become clear that powerful trends have been undermining this 'covenant' to the point of rendering it irrelevant.**
9. **Trends in North America that challenge this old relationship include:** (1) growing interest in direct relationships that do not necessarily require existing communal institutions; (2) rise of Tikkun Olam as a mobilizing cause; (3) American Jewry finds it increasingly difficult to speak with one voice, as it is turning into a multitude of communities, each interpreting Jewish life in its own way; (4) Israel has turned from a uniting issue to a source of tension and a divisive issue for many Jewish communities; (5) in a similar vein, the notion of unqualified support for Israel is on the decline, and organizations that are both Zionist and critical of Israel at the same time are gaining momentum<sup>1</sup>; and (6) the changing balance of power in the global arena is affecting American Jewry, which may, over time cease to be the 'Jewish world superpower' and become one of many Jewish power-centers across the world.
10. **At the same time, Israeli society has been transforming as well:** (1) Israel has become relatively prosperous; (2) the influence of Israel's central government, which is subject to a prolonged crisis of governance, is in decline and NGO's, philanthropists, municipalities, and other actors are rising in its place; (3) community life in Israel is surging, and more Israelis are engaging with their Jewish heritage; (4) Israelis are increasingly interested in universal socio-economic issues such as education, health, and housing in Israel – rather than in traditional security and foreign policy issues; and (5) many Israelis live abroad for varying periods for education and work, and an Israeli Diaspora seems to be permanent in the foreseeable future.

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1 Examples of such organizations include: [J-Street](#), [Ameinu](#), [Partners for Progressive Israel](#), [Jewish Alliance for Change](#), and [JSpaceCanada](#) among others.

## A new relationship: Jewish Peoplehood is taking center-stage

11. As a consequence of the above, we have seen a number of ideological, conceptual and practical developments that have altered the relationship. Classical Zionism is morphing into a new 21<sup>st</sup> century Zionism, which includes the concept of Peoplehood, and views the mission of Israel in a broader, more nuanced context of the Jewish people.
12. Some expressions of this phenomenon include a growing understanding that a vibrant Diaspora is an imperative for a thriving global Jewish collective; an acknowledgment of 'lifecycles of movement' to and from Israel, rather than a call for *aliyah*<sup>2</sup>; a changed perception from Israel as the 'poor nephew' of the wealthy Jewish Diaspora; and countless direct relationships between individuals, communities and philanthropists in many cases replacing traditional actors such as the Government of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Israel or other major institutions. **Finally, if in the past the main project of the Jewish people was building the State of Israel, the focus today is on building Jewish communities – both within and outside of Israel.**

### Taking action on the six pillars of the new relationship

13. **The above discussion indicates that the Jewish world is transitioning from relationships centered on institutions to relationships focused around issues or ideas.** In this context, there are six major issues that will capture the bulk of attention, energy and resources of the Jewish world in the coming decades. **Each issue is essential for the security and prosperity of our people.** These issues include: (1) **building a global network of prosperous and resilient Jewish communities;** (2) **Tikkun Olam as the mission of our people;** (3) **Hebrew as our global language;** (4) **strengthening an Israel that is prosperous, secure, democratic, and provides a unique Jewish experience;** (5) **enriching our Jewish culture and tradition;** and finally, (6) **fighting anti-Semitism and the fundamental delegitimization of Israel.**
14. **The 'six pillars' are designed to promote Jewish Peoplehood among various Jewish communities across the world, where each**

**The idea of Peoplehood emphasizes the sense of the Jewish people as a 'large family' that shares history, stories, memories, fate, destiny, and the desire to promote its well-being. It cherishes and seeks to preserve the great geographic, ethnic, ritual and cultural diversity of our people through collaborations and relationships, while devoting significantly less attention to differences of faith, observance or nationality. Its constituency includes all those who feel a part of the Jewish people and are committed to living in Jewish households and raising Jewish children.**

2 The term '*aliyah*' (literally, ascending) refers to Jewish immigration to Israel.

community/organization/individual tailors the six pillars and adapts them to their own particular needs and unique added values.

15. **The Jewish world is comprised of a multitude of 'Jewishly' distinct groups, which may differ from one another based on geography, language, culture or other parameters.** The next chapter will focus on the case of the Israeli Diaspora in North America, in the context of the changing paradigm between Israel and the Jewish world and the shift towards Jewish Peoplehood.

## Chapter 2: The changing nature of the Israeli Diaspora

16. As stated in the previous chapter, **it has been widely acknowledged in recent years that the 'old paradigm' that used to characterize the relations between Israel and the Jewish world is no longer relevant.** One example of this growing acknowledgment is that the Jewish Agency for Israel, which viewed *aliyah* as one of its core missions, has substituted stand-alone traditional *aliyah* marketing in its new Strategic Plan for Israel experiences and social activism.<sup>3</sup> However, the Israeli government, most of the Israeli public and large sections of the Jewish world continue to engage with the Israeli Diaspora from a position within the 'old paradigm' within which the Jewish world was centered on nationalism and the building of the State of Israel.
17. With Jewish Peoplehood at the center of this new relationship, the nature and potential of the Israeli Diaspora is changing. In this context, the **Israeli Diaspora as a distinct entity has still not found its proper place within the 'new paradigm.'**

### The current mindset vis-à-vis the Israeli Diaspora

18. Classical Zionism was based on the negation of the Diaspora and a strong moral and ideological call for the imperative of *aliyah*. **The old view of the Israeli Diaspora was characterized by the following working assumptions and patterns of behavior:**
  - **Local Jewish communities view Israeli immigrants as 'outsiders'** – Local Jewish communities have found it difficult to engage the Israeli Diaspora in organized Jewish life and institutions, such as within Federations and JCCs. This is the outcome of a variety of factors, including a lack of financial investment, an impression created by the Israeli community that their presence is only temporary, a lack of clarity as to whether the local Jewish establishment should support the immigration of Israelis and an absence of an institutionalized point of contact within the Israeli Diaspora;<sup>4</sup>
  - **Israeli immigrants feel alienated from local Jewish communal life** – By and large, new Israeli immigrants and even 'veteran' Israeli families see themselves as culturally different from local Jewish families, and find narrow or no areas of overlap. For example, Israeli immigrants often find it 'unnatural' to attend synagogue which is the prevailing form of communal interaction in local Jewish communities;<sup>5</sup>

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3 [Letter by JAFI's Director General Alan Hoffmann to members of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors](#), January 10th, 2011; ['Securing the Future: Forging the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Jewish People'](#), The Jewish Agency's New Strategic Directions, Executive Summary of JAFI's Revised Strategic Plan, January 2011.

4 Steven J. Gold, [The Israeli Diaspora](#), University of Washington Press, Seattle; 2002, pp. 152-162.

5 Sergio DellaPergola, ['Jewish Demographic Policies: Migration from Israel'](#), *The Jewish People Policy Institute Report*, pp.154-155; Rebecca Spence, ['Wanting to Connect: Israelis Find Religion'](#), *The Jewish Daily Forward*, April 24, 2008 in issue May 2, 2008.

- **Collection of individuals with little communal DNA** – Compared with North American Jewish communities, which are accustomed to self-organizing, Israeli immigrants tend to spend time in their informal social circles, and generally do not see value in investing in or establishing formal communal institutions;
- **Little sense of 'culture of involvement' among Israelis** – In Israeli society, philanthropy is not highly emphasized, especially when compared to North American Jewish culture. Moreover, Israelis are accustomed to seeing themselves as aid recipients from the Jewish world, and not necessarily as those responsible for providing aid to others;<sup>6</sup>
- **Israelis have little or no connection to Jewish life** – The establishment of the State of Israel and the accompanying emphasis on the "national home" caused many Israelis to create a mental separation between their Israeli and Jewish identities. In fact, most Israelis first define themselves according to their nationality, and only then according to their religion. For example, they find it difficult to relate to the synagogue, while North American Jews are stunned by the complete withdrawal of Israelis from organized Jewish life and tradition;<sup>7</sup>
- **First-generation Israelis view Hebrew as the most important component of childhood education** – The ability to communicate, read and write in Hebrew is seen as important as both a way for parents to feel comfortable at home with their children, and as a buffer or guarantee that their children's 'Israeliness' will be preserved;<sup>8</sup>
- **Those who left Israel were viewed as 'nefolet shel nemushot' ('weaklings')** – This famous phrase, coined by former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1976, describes those who had left Israel as having betrayed the Zionist dream and as a liability to *aliyah*.

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6 Professor Steven M. Cohen and Dr. Judith Veinstein, 'Israeli Jews in Greater New York: Their Numbers, Characteristics, and Patterns of Jewish Engagement', *A UJA-Federation of New York Report, March 2009*, pp., 42-43; World Council of Israelis Abroad, Minutes from Meeting at 1st Conference for Israelis Living Abroad: ['Business, Social and Professional Involvement in Israel'](#), Toronto, Canada; January 19, 2001, p.3; David Yaari in a presentation at the Dor Chadash Board Retreat, 2006, describes this mindset: "I spent three years of my life giving to this country- don't ask me to be involved with charity organizations."

7 Moshe Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances: Israeli Emigrants in New York*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London; 1988.

8 Cohen and Veinstein, 'Israeli Jews in Greater New York', pp.31-32; Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, 'Hebrew in America: Final Report', Submitted to UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey, 2009.



## The changing reality vis-à-vis the Israeli Diaspora

19. **Reut's research has shown that significant trends taking place in the Jewish world have eroded many of the above assumptions and patterns of behavior, and powerful new trends are increasingly taking their place.<sup>9</sup>**
20. **The following statements represent nascent trends that have emerged to varying degrees depending on the area.** Our research indicates that these trends will increase in intensity and prevalence in the coming years.
21. It is also important to note that **the composition of Israeli communities in North America differs from one place to the other**, and one should not expect to witness identical processes in different geographic locations.<sup>10</sup>
22. Bearing these qualifications in mind, **the following trends can be seen in the way Israeli immigrants relate to themselves individually and as a group, and in the way they are viewed by outside parties**, i.e., Federations, the Government of Israel etc.:
  - **From *aliyah/yerida*<sup>11</sup> to 'life of fluid movement'** – The dichotomous relationship between *aliyah* and *yerida* is changing: an increasing number of Israelis are choosing to build a life in more than one Jewish community, sometimes even holding homes and businesses in more than one community simultaneously;<sup>12</sup>
  - **Local Jewish communities are beginning to engage Israelis** – In recent years, Jewish institutions such as Federations, Jewish day schools and JCCs have begun to invest resources in reaching out to the Israeli community. This can be seen in the increased number of programs in Hebrew and Israeli cultural events;<sup>13</sup>
  - **Israelis are increasingly seeking to be part of the Jewish community** – Whereas in the past most Israelis felt alienated by Jewish institutions, recent years have seen a surge in the number of Israelis who attend synagogues, send their children to Jewish day schools or even sit on the board of local JCCs. As many Israeli immigrants put it, "we are an integral part of the Jewish community here",<sup>14</sup>

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9 Reut Institute, ['A new relationship between Israel and the Jewish world.'](#)

10 Cohen and Veinstein, 'Israeli Jews in Greater New York.'

11 The term '*yerida*' (literally, descending) refers to the emigration from Israel.

12 Ted Sokolsy, president and CEO of the UJA Federation of Toronto, in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, claimed, the newer members of the Israeli Diaspora "do not see themselves as *yordim*, but as Israelis working and living abroad". Quoted in Rhonda Spivak, ['World Council of Israelis Abroad gets down to business.'](#) *Jerusalem Post Online*, January 31, 2011.

13 Sam Greenberg, ['NY Israelis have high level of Jewish involvement.'](#) *Jerusalem Post Online*, May 3, 2009; Among others, the establishment of 'Israeliness' at 92ndY in Manhattan, and the UJA Federation of New York's taskforce on the Israeli community of New York are examples of recent efforts.

14 For more on this trend, see: Sam Greenberg, 'NY Israelis have high level of Jewish involvement' and Sara Dobner, ['Transformation of Identity: The Israeli-Jewish Dilemma.'](#) Speech delivered at the 1st



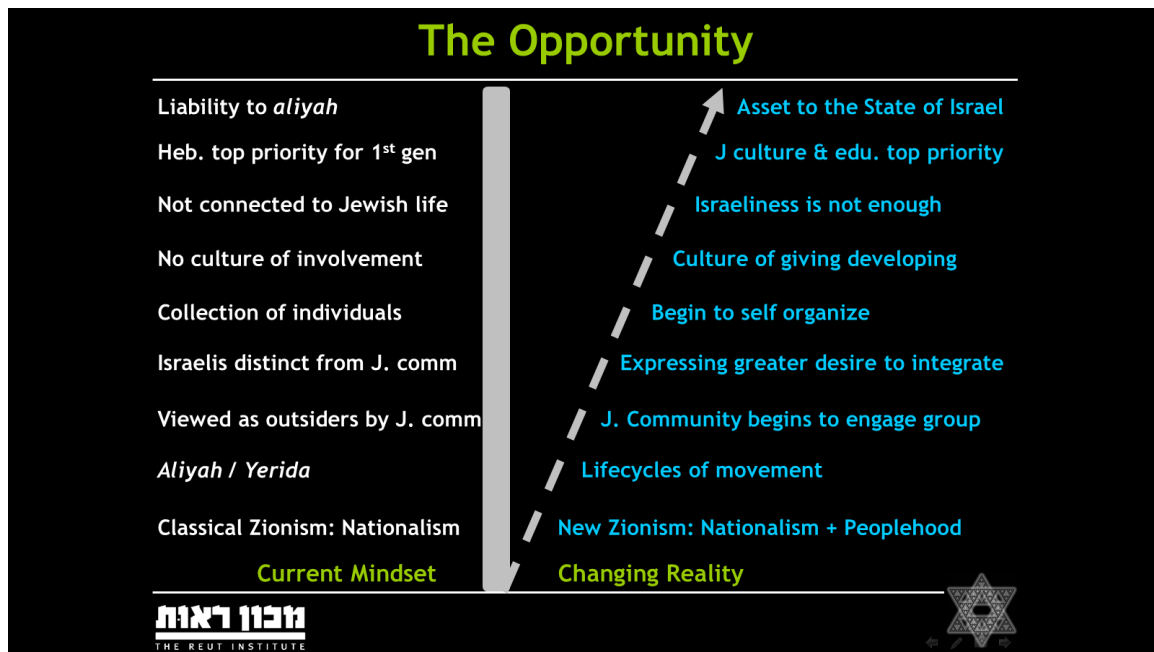
- **Israelis are beginning to self-organize as a community** – Local Israeli community organizations have begun to blossom in recent years, showing a thirst for a vibrant Israeli life. Examples include the Israel Leadership Council (ILC) in Los Angeles and the Israeli Cultural Connection (ICC) in Palo Alto;<sup>15</sup>
- **Israelis are beginning to develop a culture of giving** – More Israeli immigrants, especially those who are no longer ‘living out of their suitcases,’ are starting to assume responsibility towards their community and are developing a culture of giving;
- **Israelis are realizing that ‘Israeliness’ is not enough** – More Israeli immigrants seek a connection to Judaism on their own terms, realizing that in the absence of some form of connection to Jewish culture and heritage, the Israeli national ‘container’ may not be enough and its resilience may be compromised;<sup>16</sup>
- **Jewish education is offering one possible answer to receding Israeli identity** – Many-first generation Israeli parents are beginning to understand that Hebrew-language instruction is no guarantee for sustaining a strong connection to Israeli culture or the Jewish people. Accordingly, the Hebrew language is increasingly seen as only *one* component of maintaining these vital connections;<sup>17</sup>
- **From an *aliyah* liability to an asset for the state of Israel** - While in the past, Israeli immigrants were perceived as ‘*nefolet shel nemushot*’ and Jewish Federations and Israeli Consulates received formal orders from the Government of Israel to refrain from engaging this group, today we are seeing signs of interest that go beyond attempts to bring them back to Israel. These revolve around issues such proposed voting rights, *hasbara* efforts abroad, harnessing the scientific and technological successes of the Israeli Diaspora and others;<sup>18</sup>

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Conference for Israelis Living Abroad, World Council of Israelis Abroad, Toronto, Canada; January 18-20, 2011. David Yaari, founder of Dor Chadash New York, described a trend among Israelis living in New York, aged between 25 and 45: While in the past many Israelis have wanted little involvement in organized Jewish or Israeli life in New York, many now “visit Israel often and want to participate in Israeli organizations and cultural events,” and are becoming increasingly interested in involvement in wider Jewish life.

- 15 See: [ILC](#); [ICC](#); There are a number of other organizations that support this trend, including: [Dor Chadash New York](#), [Bina in Los Angeles](#), [Tarbuton San Diego](#) [Yisraelink Chicago](#), and [Israelis in Brooklyn](#).
- 16 Dobner, ‘Transformation of Identity.’
- 17 Cohen and Veinstein, ‘Israeli Jews in Greater New York,’ pp.53-56; Dobner, ‘Transformation of Identity.’
- 18 Gold, [The Israeli Diaspora](#), pp. 149-152; DellaPergola, ‘Jewish Demographic Policies,’ pp.156-157; The recently established Knesset sub-committee ‘[For the relations of Israel with world Jewish communities](#),’ headed by MK Einat Wilf, established as a key focus, the engagement of Israelis in North America, who have been successful in the fields of science and technology.

23. In other words, the major conceptual shift is that the Israeli Diaspora has ceased to function as a source of shame to the Zionist project, and is now beginning to be courted as a political, economic, social and cultural asset to the State of Israel.<sup>19</sup>



24. However, within this shift of mindset lies an even greater opportunity that may far exceed the borders of the State of Israel, and can in fact serve the Jewish people on a global scale.
25. This opportunity lies in the emergence of a new type of Israeli identity that dwells within a newly formed Israeli social space. The next chapter outlines this development and its potential towards Jewish Peoplehood.

19 Dobner, 'Transformation of Identity.'

## Chapter 3: The opportunity: The Israeli Diaspora as a catalyst for Jewish Peoplehood

### Emergence of an Israeli Social Space

26. **Against the backdrop of the changing trends detailed above, recent years have seen the emergence of an 'Israeli Social Space,'<sup>20</sup> within which Israelis living in North America tend to interact with one another. This social space provides a fruitful meeting point for three powerful identities: Israeli, American and Jewish.** This section will describe the development and function of this Israeli Social Space and the formation of a new form of Israeli identity in recent years.
27. **Historically, on arrival, an Israeli immigrant tended to gravitate toward a 'pure Israeli' space in which life felt most familiar.** Generally, after a decade or so, and especially members of the second generation, gained an understanding of the limitations of a 'pure Israeli' identity in North America. They then tended to gravitate toward two additional identity-cultivating spaces – the organized Jewish community or 'all-American' society. Below is an outline of each of these seemingly distinct identity spaces;<sup>21</sup>

- **Option I: Remain in 'Pure Israeli Ghetto' –** An Israeli immigrant 'fresh off the boat' who naturally associates with fellow Israelis, speaks Hebrew and consumes Israeli media. Even after ten and twenty years in North America, this 'pure Israeli' forms or joins Israeli 'ghettos' and often distinguishes himself from the local Jewish population and fears his children may 'assimilate' and become North American Jews. The ability to speak Hebrew, stay connected to Israeli current affairs and be surrounded by a circle of Israeli friends ranks high in importance. In short, **the 'pure Israeli' is still within the purely nationalist mindset, or the 'old paradigm';<sup>22</sup>**

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20 The concept of 'social space' is widely used in sociological discourse to refer to a physical, virtual or conceptual space within which there is interaction between one's personal and collective identity. For a general definition, [click here](#); For a more detailed and specific discussion, see: Ronald R. Sundstrom, 'Race and place: social space in the production of human kinds,' *Philosophy & Geography*, vol.6, no.1, 2003; Dr. Lilach Lev Ari, '[Social identification among Israeli migrants' descendants in North America: Is it diasporic, assimilative or transnational?](#)' Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988; Anne Buttner, 'Social Space in Interdisciplinary Perspective,' *Geographical Review*, no.59, 1969; among others.

21 While this report is concerned only with trends and processes among the Israeli Diaspora, a broader understanding of identification processes among other immigrant groups provides an important context. For some insight into this broader context see, for example: Dr. Lev Ari, 'Social identification among Israeli migrants' descendants in North America'; Kara Somerville, 'Transnational Belonging among Second Generation Youth: Identity in a Globalized World,' *Journal of Social Sciences: Interdisciplinary Reflection on Contemporary Society*, no.10, 2008.

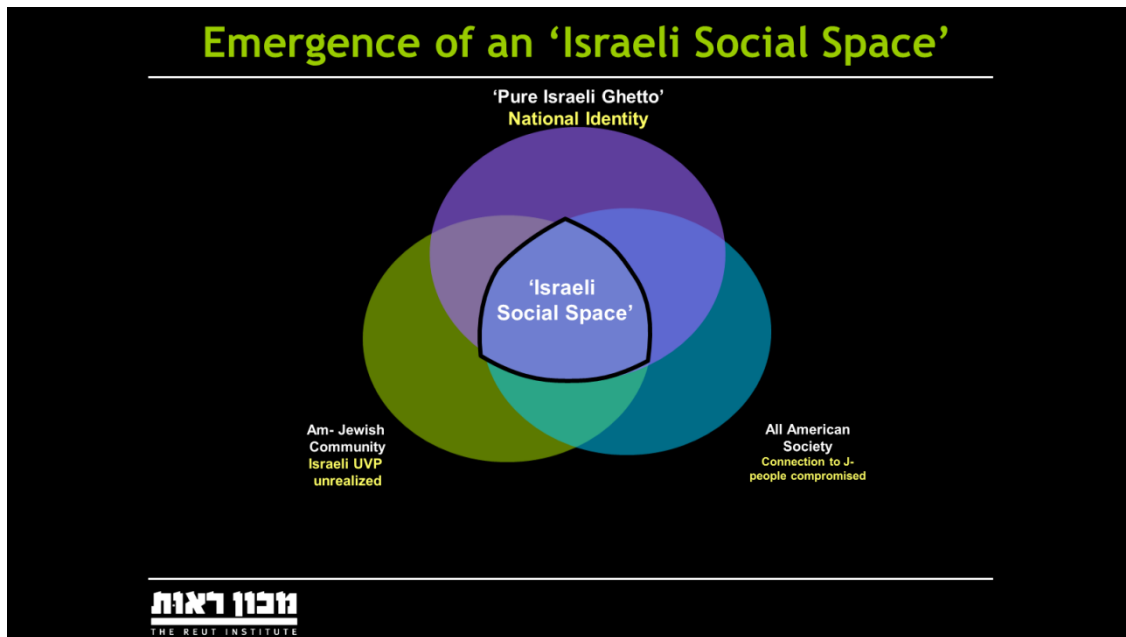
22 Dr Lilach Ben Ari, '[First and Second Generation Emigrants and their Perception of Local Jewish Communities](#),' Speech delivered at the 1st Conference for Israelis Living Abroad, World Council of Israelis Abroad, Toronto, Canada; January 18-20, 2011; Dobner, 'Transformation of Identity'; Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora*.

- **Option II – Completely integrate into the local organized Jewish community** – This option appears to be less common, but there are nevertheless Israelis who – in an effort to live an active Jewish life and in the absence of Israeli state institutions – attend the local synagogue, the local JCC or acquire North American Jewish friends. Overtime, these Israelis will retain some portion of their ‘Israeliness’ (expressed mainly in their use of the Hebrew language), but will overall belong to Jewish American institutions and raise their children in an American-Jewish way. By completely integrating into the North American Jewish community, the **unique added value as an Israeli, as expressed through cultural, linguistic and other parameters, is lost. Therefore, the potential for enriching Jewish Peoplehood is compromised;**<sup>23</sup>
- **Option III – Assimilate into ‘all-American’ society**– Many studies have shown that Israeli immigrants tend to do well economically in North America compared with other immigrant groups.<sup>24</sup> Reasons include the Americanization of Israeli culture, and the fact that many Israelis have relatives in North America who make the adjustment period easier. The ‘all American’ Israelis see themselves first and foremost as Americans; their Israeli identity usually comes second. The ‘all-American’ Israeli has few Israelis in his immediate social circle and associates mainly with his neighborhood, workplace, and American culture, while retaining some Israeli characteristics. The Israeli–American who gravitates toward assimilation into all-American society is therefore identifying within a national identity prism. **The Israeli who gravitates toward the ‘all-American’ sphere is opting out of playing an active role in the global Jewish community as his identity is almost exclusively national in character.**

28. Naturally, there has always been considerable interaction between the seemingly distinct identity blocs. However, until relatively recently, one's identity was contained and sustained within one of the three above-described spheres. **In recent years, these points of interaction have increased to form a social space within which these three spheres are in vibrant conversation and one's identity can be developed and sustained.**

29. **Below is a diagram depicting this emerging social space:**

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- 23 Dobner, ‘Transformation of Identity’; Cohen and Veinstein, ‘Israeli Jews in Greater New York,’ pp.57-59.
  - 24 Uzi Rebhun, ‘Israeli Jewish Diaspora in the United States: Socio-cultural Mobility and Attachment to Homeland’, in Eliezer ben-Rafael and Yitshak Strenberg (eds), Transnationalism: Diasporas and the Advent of a New (dis)Order., Boston, Brill; 2009, p.318; DellaPergola, ‘Jewish Demographic Policies.’



30. This Israeli social space has emerged as an outcome of, and within the context of, two powerful trends that are shaping the changing relationship between Israel and the Jewish world:

- **External cause: Peoplehood is taking center-stage** – The discourse of Jewish Peoplehood tolerates and even welcomes the idea of 'lifecycles of movement,' in contrast to the 'old paradigm' between Israel and the Jewish world, which did not allow room for 'yordim.' This trend is affecting how Israeli immigrants view themselves, how the local Jewish community views them and finally, how Israelis residing in Israel view them. The idea of Jewish Peoplehood emphasizes the role and importance of building and sustaining strong Jewish communities throughout the world, as opposed to building of the State of Israel as the main project of the Jewish people. As a result, more Israeli immigrants are beginning to feel that their life outside of Israel is legitimate, and this brings a growing sense of responsibility toward the local Jewish community;<sup>25</sup>
- **Internal cause: Changes in composition of the Israeli North American immigrant population** – By and large, those who immigrated to the North America during the first decades of Israel's existence immigrated for different reasons than those who immigrated during the past two decades or so. Many of those who immigrated to the North America after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 felt shaken and disillusioned, worrying about their future security in Israel. Many of these immigrants did not successfully integrate into Israeli

25 There are a multitude of initiatives - projects and organizations - throughout the Jewish world that focus on the centrality of Jewish Peoplehood. See, for example, Nathan Jeffay, ['No Longer in Exile: Overhaul of Diaspora Museum reflects a New Zionist Narrative.'](#) *Jewish Daily Forward*, July 8, 2009 in edition July 17, 2009.

society.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, during the 1980s and 1990s, Israel produced more qualified and educated workers than there were skilled positions, and so many Israelis felt they had no choice but to seek better financial and/or academic prospects elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> **In short, the more recent wave of immigration comprises relatively educated immigrants who are fully integrated into Israeli society, but chose to further improve their living standards by seeking new opportunities for personal advancement.**<sup>28</sup>

31. **The external and internal dynamics are feeding off one another** – The growing centrality of Jewish Peoplehood as an organizing logic for the Jewish People in the 21<sup>st</sup> century removes much of the tension previously associated with life in the Diaspora, making it easier for Israeli immigrants to stay abroad and still retain a strong connection to Israel. At the same time, the new composition of Israeli immigrants, in its turn, is facilitating a smoother integration into the local Jewish community.

## What is this Israeli Social Space?

32. **The Israeli Social Space is a nurturing ground for a tri-dentity in which the unique added value of each identity sphere is maintained. The following principles characterize the Israeli Social Space:**
  - **Tri-dentity is more than the sum of its parts** - As described above, the Israeli Social Space is home to three identities: Jewish, Israeli and American. However, it does not merely represent the sum of its parts but rather constitutes a space that is 'between and beyond' the three distinct identity routes. That is, the Israeli Social Space provides the framework and soil upon which the three identity constellations can engage with one another to produce something with great unrealized potential;
  - **The unique value proposition of each identity must be acknowledged** – Naturally, each identity brings with it its unique set of cultural, historical, linguistic and religious characteristics. The uniqueness and potential of this social space rests on its ability to allow for and sustain the uniqueness of each of the identity routes (or spheres, as they appear in the above diagram);
  - **There are many ways to dwell in the Israeli Social Space** – By definition, the Israeli Social Space is a *space* and not a point. In other words, there are many ways in which one can be part of this new space.

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26 Jean-Christophe Dumont and Georges Lemaître, 'Counting Immigrants and Expatriates in OECD Countries: A New Perspective', Organization for Economic Co-ordination and Development.

27 Yinon Cohen, 'Socioeconomic Dualism: The Case of Israeli-born Immigrants in the United States', International Migration Review, vol.23, pp. 267-88.

28 In many cases, these immigrants make their way to the U.S. in a professional capacity, as their Israeli employer is setting up or running operations in the U.S.; Sue Fishkoff, ['Israeli Population in the US Surges, but Exact Figures Hard to Determine.'](#) JTA: The Global News Service of the Jewish People, December 22, 2010.



33. **The fabric of the Israeli Social Space, as described above, together with the context within which it has emerged, provides fertile ground for the surfacing of a new identity constellation - the 'North American Jewish Sabra' (herein, the N.A. Jewish Sabra) - that includes a combination of Israeli, and American and Jewish components.**

### **The emergence of the North American Jewish Sabra**

34. **The N.A. Jewish Sabra includes any Israeli who identifies (whether consciously or subconsciously) as an Israeli-American Jew, thus opting for a hybrid tri-dentity rather than one of the three identities historically available.** This emerging identity constellation, increasingly prevalent among members of the Israeli Diaspora, is comprised of Israeli cultural elements as well as a Jewish DNA. The N.A. Jewish Sabra understands the importance of his/her connection to the Jewish people as a whole, rather than to Israeli nationals exclusively; still cares deeply about his home country, even if he is critical of government policies; and finally, has successfully integrated into American professional, academic and/or cultural life.
35. Therefore, while the Israeli Social Space is occupied by a diverse array of Israelis, the N.A. Jewish Sabra is the manifestation of a tri-dentity construction. **In this way, the N.A. Jewish Sabra is best suited to serve as its leadership.**

### **Who is the North American Jewish Sabra?**

36. **The N.A. Jewish Sabra is not yet an established phenomenon and its numbers are presently very small. However, Reut predicts that the intensity and prevalence of the trends affecting the Israeli community described above will only increase in the coming years.** The following characteristics provide general contours of the N.A. Jewish Sabra:
- **Spent at least a decade in North America** – Newly arrived immigrants tend to be mainly preoccupied with day-to-day concerns, and have little time to worry about the broader community, let alone identity construction. Those who have spent at least a decade in North America tend to be more engaged with questions of identity, education and community involvement;
  - **No longer 'living from suitcases'** – Many Israeli immigrants, including those who have raised their children in the North America, see their life in the Diaspora as transitional, a quality not conducive to fostering a feeling of long-term responsibility towards one's community. The N.A. Jewish Sabra, in contrast, understands he is not going back to Israel, and is therefore committed to the long-term well-being of his community;
  - **Willingness to invest resources into the community** – The N.A. Jewish Sabra is often willing to invest a considerable amount of his professional and/or financial resources for the benefit of the community, having over time developed a culture of giving;

- **Understanding that Israeliness is not enough** – In early phases of immigration, many Israelis rely on the 'Israeli' identity component to maintain their children's connection to being Jewish and Israeli. The N.A. Jewish Sabra understands that this container is insufficient and begins to search for alternative components with which to enrich their children's identity;
- **Beginning to self-organize** – While Israeli migrants may often choose to congregate in geographic clusters, the N.A. Jewish Sabra sees the value in, and takes responsibility for, the transition from constituting a collection of individuals to a self-organized community.
- **Self-identifies as Israeli-American-Jewish** – The N.A. Jewish Sabra often defines himself first foremost as an Israeli, but will express feelings of appreciation and even patriotism towards his adopted country. At the same time, he seeks meaningful ways to connect to his Jewish identity, albeit on his own terms.

## Leadership potential of the N.A. Jewish Sabra to advance Jewish Peoplehood

37. **The N.A. Jewish Sabra is distinctly positioned to serve in a leadership position, as he possesses a unique set of qualities that no 'pure Israeli,' American-Jew, or Israeli-American has.** Hence, the N.A. Jewish Sabra stands out as a distinct type of Jew within the global Jewish tapestry, with a unique ability to bring value to the Jewish people in several ways.

- **The N.A. Jewish Sabra can enrich North American Jewish life by:**
  - **Embodying a nuanced connection with the State of Israel** – By virtue of the personal connections Israeli's living in North America maintain with Israel, the N.A. Jewish Sabra can demonstrate a 'shades of gray' relationship with Israel: a deep love and connection to the Jewish state that also encompasses the incumbent complexities and challenges. This nuanced relationship with Israel can provide other North American Jews a window into the range of ways through which to connect to Israel;
  - **Aiding in *hasbara* and efforts to combat the assault on Israel's legitimacy** – With a close relationship and understanding of Israel, the N.A. Jewish Sabra can bring new perspectives and energy to Jewish and Israeli *hasbara* efforts;
  - **Providing a live example of modern Hebrew-language usage as the language of the Jewish people** – Hebrew-language fluency can serve to encourage other N.A. Jews to engage with the Hebrew language as central communication tool in a globalized Jewish world;
  - **Adding an Israeli cultural component** – Having been exposed to the richness of Jewish life in Israel as well as Israeli culture at large, the



N.A. Jewish Sabra can help to infuse North American Jewish life with additional cultural elements;

- **Contributing a quality of 'proud tribalism' or 'stick togetherness'**<sup>29</sup>  
– The strong sense of fraternity that characterizes Israeli society can serve to enrich the social dynamic within the wider Jewish community of North America;
- **Contributing 'Israeli' creative energy and spirit of innovation;**
- **Providing a deeper connection to Israeli national holidays such as Yom Ha'Zikaron (Israeli Remembrance Day) and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day).**
- **The N.A. Jewish Sabra can bring Israelis in Israel closer to the idea of Jewish Peoplehood by:**
  - **Helping bridge cultural gaps between Israeli and North American Jews** – By being familiar with and understanding the cultural norms of both Israeli and N.A. Jews, the N.A. Jewish Sabra can serve to minimize the gaps and help each community better understand one another;
  - **Promoting greater tolerance for the idea of 'lifecycles of movement'** and demonstrating that the dichotomous relationship between *aliyah/yerida* is increasingly obsolete;
  - **Showing that alternative support for Israel is possible**, beyond the contribution made by living in the country;
  - **Serving as role models for an Israeli culture of giving;**
  - **Demonstrating the value of a rich community life** – Having understood the importance of communal DNA, the N.A. Jewish Sabra can play a role in infusing Israeli society with a value for an active communal life and sense of responsibility.
- **The N.A. Jewish Sabra can connect unaffiliated Israelis to one another and to Jewish life:**
  - **Promoting a connection with Judaism** that can serve as a buffer to assimilation;
  - **Facilitating a conversation with an active Jewish life.**

38. **Hence, it is time for leaders of the Jewish world to acknowledge the untapped potential of the N.A. Jewish Sabra and subsequently devise strategies to foster its growth as a culturally distinct group within the Jewish community. This**

29 Cohen and Veinstein, 'Israeli Jews in Greater New York,' pp.37-38.

**would allow the unique assets of the N.A. Jewish Sabra to be realized not only vis-à-vis the local community or even the State of Israel, but also to strengthen global Jewish society.**

39. The next chapter of this report is a continuation of the above analysis into policy recommendations that can be undertaken by the Government of Israel, Jewish communities across North America and finally, by the Israeli immigrant communities themselves.

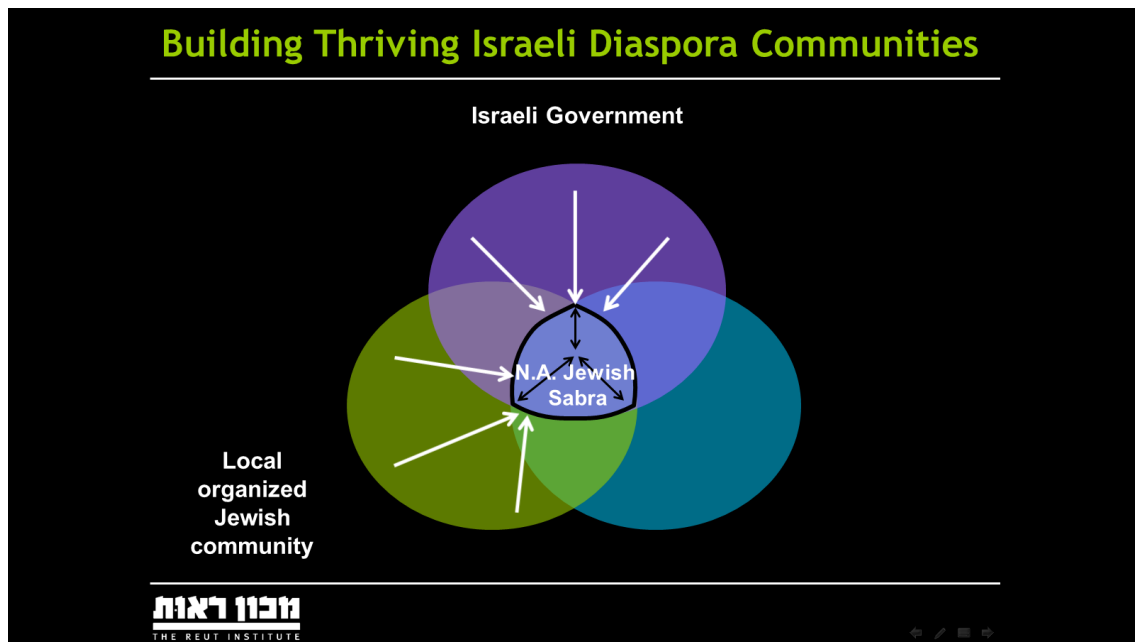
## Chapter 4: Building and supporting thriving Israeli Diaspora communities

### Cultivating the new Israeli Social Space to catalyze Jewish Peoplehood

40. **This section will detail a recommended approach for building and supporting thriving Israeli communities.** A thriving Israeli community will provide the necessary infrastructure and support for the N.A. Jewish Sabra to realize its potential as a catalyst to promote Jewish Peoplehood. This chapter will provide a general framework for a suggested approach as well as outline the roles of each of the three key players in its establishment: the Government of Israel, local Jewish communities and the local Israeli leadership.

### What does it mean to build and support thriving Israeli Diaspora communities? Why is it important?

41. **The emergence of a new Israeli Social Space** within the fabric of North American Jewish life **presents the Jewish world with an opportunity to advance Jewish Peoplehood and provides fertile soil for building Israeli Diaspora communities.**
42. **A thriving Israeli Diaspora community will be positioned to understand and respond to the needs and challenges of Israelis living abroad,** in their connection to the State of Israel, the local Jewish community and internal communal life. A supported and thriving community is a vital pre-condition to an active Jewish Israeli life in North America, in which the unique assets of the N.A. Jewish Sabra are expressed.
43. **Building and supporting thriving Israeli Diaspora communities requires a significant effort on the part of three key players -** the Government of Israel, the local Jewish communities and the N.A. Jewish Sabra.



## The role of the Government of Israel

### Government of Israel: confer legitimacy on an engaged Diaspora<sup>30</sup>

44. **In an effort to support the building of thriving Israeli communities, the Government of Israel, on its part, should undertake to engage Israelis living abroad as a viable Diaspora rather than a moral liability.**
45. **This effort to engage Israelis living abroad requires cohesive government policy.** Currently, there are a number of government departments that serve Israelis living abroad, each working according to its own internal organizing logic. These include, among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Ministry of Education.<sup>31</sup> This independent and uncoordinated approach to policy often leads to mixed-messaging and miscommunications. A coordinated approach involving the relevant government bodies will ensure maximum effectiveness and is important in avoiding mixed-messages being projected from the state toward

30 For a broad discussion on engaging diasporas, with specific reference to south central Europe see, Francesco Ragazzi and Kristina Balalovska, '[Diaspora Politics and Post-Territorial Citizenship in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia](#)', The University of Edinburgh, Working Paper 2011/18; The concept, '[Kin-state Activism](#)' refers to the different ways in which a Kin-State tries to preserve ties with its 'diaspora' which resides as distinct communities in other states, hence offering a broader perspective on diaspora engagement.

31 For further information on these government departments, see: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs; Ministry of Immigrant Absorption; Ministry of Education.](#)

Israelis living abroad.<sup>32</sup>

46. **There are a number of policies that pose hurdles to a strong and empowered relationship between Israel and Israelis living abroad. In order to develop a cohesive government approach, a thorough evaluation of these policies and their implications should be considered.** Specifically, shifts should be considered in the following areas (among others):
- **'Brain drain' to 'brain circulation'** - The government can begin to engage the Israeli Diaspora as an opportunity for 'brain circulation' rather than 'brain drain'.<sup>33</sup> Life-cycles of movement, as described in previous chapters, underlie a paradigm of 'brain circulation,' in which an educated and skilled Israeli may find a home in multiple Jewish communities throughout his lifetime, or even simultaneously. By engaging this phenomenon, the Israeli government can both reap direct benefit as well as strengthen its relationship with communities in the Jewish world;
  - **Israeli Diaspora rights and responsibilities** – An assessment of the rights and responsibilities of Israelis living abroad can include an evaluation of a wide range of policies, including Israeli Diaspora voting rights<sup>34</sup> and army conscription laws;
  - **Israeli House (*Bayit HaIsraeli*) as an Israeli Goethe-Institut<sup>35</sup>** - While the 'Israeli Houses' project is focused on bringing Israelis abroad back to Israel, the Goethe-Institut model could serve as an Israeli cultural institution focused

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- 32 The recent Ministry of Immigrant Absorption advertisement campaign to bring Israelis in North America back to Israel attracted widespread attention and controversy, including tensions within government departments. Israel's Foreign Ministry is reported as claiming, "the campaign was not done in co-ordination and without consultation with us." See: Tal Shalev, 'American Jews against the Ministry of Absorption: Aren't we Jewish enough?' [Hebrew] *Walla*, December 02, 2011; Barak Ravid, '[American Jews outraged: Ministry of Absorption is demeaning](#)' [Hebrew], *Haaretz*, December 01, 2011; Barak Ravid, '[Netanyahu orders campaign warning Israelis against assimilation to be stopped](#)' [Hebrew], *Haaretz*, December 02, 2011; Edna Past, '[Why we decided to return](#)' [Hebrew], *Haaretz*, December 20, 2011.
- 33 Mercy Brown, '[Using the Intellectual Diaspora to Reverse the Brain Drain: Some Useful Examples](#)', University of Cape Town, South Africa; Amos Shapira, '[The threat of "brain drain"](#)' [Hebrew], *Globes*, October 18, 2009; For a general discussion on the notion and value of brain circulation see 'Is the U.S. still a 'Land of Opportunity'?', *The New York Times*, January 08, 2012; AnnaLee Saxenian, 'From Brain Drain to Brain Circulation: Transnational Communities and Regional Upgrading in India and China', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Fall 2005.
- 34 The issue of voting rights for Diaspora communities, including the Israeli Diaspora, has attracted considerable public attention as displayed in the following articles: Yuval Karni, 'Lieberman, Netanyahu wants Israelis abroad to vote', *Ynet*, August 03, 2009; Ivana Duric, 'The Croatian Diaspora in North America: Identity, Ethnic Solidarity and the Formation of a "Transnational National Community"', *Spaces of Identity*, no.3, 2001; Yaron Gottlieb, '[A uniqueness that justifies voting rights](#)', *Haaretz*, February 14, 2010; Francesco Ragazzi and Kristina Balalovska, 'Diaspora Politics and Post-Territorial Citizenship in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia'.
- 35 For an explanation of the 'Israeli Houses' project, [click here](#); To better understand the German Goethe-Institute model [click here](#).

on fostering knowledge and providing information on Israel's language, culture, society and politics. In this way, the Government of Israel can assume an active role in re-enforcing the cultural ties between Israel and the Israeli Diaspora.

## The role of the local Jewish community

**Local organized Jewish community: recognizing and facilitating the needs of the local Israeli community**

47. **The approach of local Jewish communal institutions and organizations in fulfilling their part in building a thriving Israeli community should be guided by two key principles:**
  - **Engaging the Israelis on their own terms** - This may require the establishment of a commission dedicated to developing:
    - A coordinated approach to understanding and engaging the local Israeli community;
    - A coordinated approach to integrating Israelis into the Jewish organizational leadership structure, i.e. schools boards, etc.
  - **Shifting from service provider to service enabler** - This may include Jewish institutions channeling funds and other forms of support to enable initiatives advanced by the Israelis themselves. Such support could come in the form of micro-grants, empowerment of grassroots initiatives or provision of a physical space that allows for Israeli self-organization.

## The role of the N.A. Jewish Sabra

**N.A. Jewish Sabra: building and connecting Israeli communities within the new Israeli social space**

48. **Developing the new social space into a network of thriving Israeli communities is a two-stage process comprised of building followed by connecting communities to one another other.**
49. **N.A. Jewish Sabra institutions – a manifestation of becoming self-organized – provide the infrastructure necessary for achieving community building.** These organizations and institutions, initiated and led by N.A. Jewish Sabras, exist in a number of forms throughout North America, and new ones continue to be born.<sup>36</sup>

Stage 1- Building:

50. **A thriving Israeli community will offer its members the infrastructure, programming and services needed in order to support an active and fruitful Israeli-Jewish life in North America.** This will ensure a strong connection to being Jewish, Israeli and North American and can therefore be a catalyst for Jewish

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36 Examples of these institutions include, [ILC](#), [ICC](#), [Dor Chadash](#); [Bina in LA](#), [Israeliness at 92Y](#), and [HES in Brooklyn](#) among others.

Peoplehood. The N.A. Jewish Sabra, in the capacity of catalyst and leader of the new Israeli Social Space, is positioned to assume the responsibility of building this community.

51. **The task of the N.A. Jewish Sabra is to build the necessary infrastructure, programming and services** in the following five domains:
  - **Jewish education and Hebrew:** Formal and informal educational structures and content that can provide a rich Jewish and Israeli identity, and Hebrew-language fluency. Examples could include providing enrichment programs in public schools or providing awareness and support for Jewish day school membership;
  - **Community services:** Initiatives or support that aim to meet the needs of community members, at large. By facilitating a community-services function, N.A. Jewish Sabra organizations can remain relevant and central to all members of their respective communities. Examples could include support for young immigrant families or assistance in setting up a new business;
  - **Integration into the local Jewish community,** involving integration into leadership structures, membership and general participation. Examples could include members of the Israeli community assuming leadership positions within a Jewish day school or working with the local community to offer a *Yom Ha'atzmaut* celebration that is relevant to all members of the wider Jewish community;
  - **Communal and cultural programming** targeted specifically to members of the Israeli community. Examples could include Hebrew-language learning groups or public singing events (*shira betzibur*);
  - **Connection to Israel:** harnessing the Israeli community toward strengthening and advancing Israel as well as facilitating a sustained personal connection. Examples could include offering programming consistent with the Israeli calendar and enabling community members to act as 'good will' ambassadors for Israel in their day-to-day interactions with members of the wider community.
52. **In order to cultivate a new Israeli Social Space, a comprehensive mapping of existing plenums and vacuums in these five domains is required.** This will provide the N.A. Jewish Sabra leadership a clear picture of the needs of their respective communities, including those adequately addressed and those still lacking. In this way, a thorough information bank will exist within each local community, upon which the endeavor to build a prosperous community can be based.
53. **With this mapping, the N.A. Jewish Sabra will be positioned to develop the necessary infrastructure for assisting community members in building their**

**respective 'tri-identity bundle.'**<sup>37</sup> The diverse nature of the new Israeli Social Space demands the N.A. Jewish Sabra assist its community members with building their 'tri-identity bundle' so as to ensure that each community member has the opportunity to make choices that reflect all three elements of the new social space - Jewish, Israeli and local.

54. **The N.A. Jewish Sabra can fulfill its role in building the 'tri-identity bundle' by acting as a 'concierge'-** To provide the relevant information, **'connector'-** to connect community members to existing programs/institutions and/or **'catalyst'** – to initiate programs and institutions where they do not exist.

Stage 2 - Connecting:

55. **The second stage of the process requires the N.A. Jewish Sabra to connect these thriving Israeli communities with one another as well as with Israel, the local Jewish community and with wider North American society.** This network of thriving Israeli communities throughout North America and the world will constitute the organized Israeli Diaspora and spearhead a strengthened relationship between Israel and Jewish world. Examples of ways in which to achieve this connected network include:

- **Establishing an Israeli North American leadership forum** - Increased communication among the leadership of the various Israeli communities is central to connecting these communities into an organized network. Therefore, a forum for N.A. Jewish Sabra leadership throughout North America would **provide the leadership an opportunity to learn from one another's successes and mistakes as well as to plan new initiatives together;**
- **Mass technological platform for community-to-community connection** - The establishment of a technological platform geared toward increasing communication between communities can enhance the exchange of ideas and information.<sup>38</sup> This will **allow for strengthened relationships between individuals and communities on a grassroots level.**

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37 A 'tri-identity bundle' refers to the collection of values, information, education, experiences, etc, needed to live a full life that encompasses all three identity components: Jewish, Israel and North American.

38 While websites such as <http://www.israelim.com/> are currently addressing elements of this need, this initiative refers to a broader and more comprehensive platform.



## Conclusion

As a new paradigm emerges in the relationship between Israel and the Jewish world, exciting opportunities for strengthening the global Jewish collective are surfacing. **The leadership potential of the Israeli Diaspora presents Jewish leadership, throughout the world, with an important opportunity that should not be missed.** The Reut Institute is dedicated to working with Jewish leaders and organizations to seize these opportunities.

End.

## Appendix

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