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FROM DIASPORA TO DIASPORA: THE IMMIGRATION OF JEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO CANADA

By examining what it meant to Jews in the period from 1970 to 1990 to move from one diaspora—the Jewish Community of South Africa—to another—the Jewish community of Canada, we get a detailed case study of a much larger phenomenon: the way in which transnational cultural and social networks affect group identification. How do people who think of themselves as part of a diaspora explain why they have chosen not to go to a homeland that wants them but to go to another diaspora country? How do they understand their relationship to those in the diaspora that they have left and to those in the diaspora they have entered? How do they explain their relationship to the “homeland” and its people and to the diaspora as a global transnational network?

A Diaspora Perspective on Immigrants and Their Descendants

Over the past two decades, the language of globalization has been associated with the reconceptualization of population diversity within nation states. The language used to describe diversity has moved away from concepts of ethnic groups, minority groups, national minorities, and, to some extent even, racial groups. These concepts often imply the taken-for-granted context of a world divided into national societies. The shift to a global perspective suggests reconceptualizing ethnic groups, minority groups, national minorities, and racial groups

as diasporas—transnationally dispersed groups that share common historical memories and, usually, cultural practices and social networks (Brubaker 2005, Cohen, 1997, 2004, Safran 1991, 2005a).

Even at the height of nationalism, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, national projects of assimilating minorities had something of an artificial quality about them. Colonialism brought new populations under the control of competing nations, but these national metropolises had no real intention of integrating their peripheral, colonial, native populations into “the nation.” Industrialization created a demand for cheap factory labor, drawing migrants from eastern and southern Europe to western Europe, the United States, and Canada. Their reception was varied. They experienced religious discrimination, racism, and blocked opportunities for social mobility. Nevertheless, their migration was considered permanent. Public schools brought their children into a shared national culture. A growing, changing economy provided opportunities for economic mobility. Electoral politics made their votes valuable and hastened their incorporation into the national body politic.

Migrant generation members of these “racial and ethnic minorities” maintained ties with relatives, friends, and business associates outside the new country, but such ties were seen as residual and past-oriented, and not future-oriented. The adaptation to the new land’s culture of consumption by the immigrants’ children has been documented by sociologists and contrasted with the culture of scarcity that their parents had left. By the third generation, the ancestral language was almost always gone, ethnic neighbourhoods were disappearing, and ethnically homogeneous extended families were becoming less common. Discrimination against racial minorities was vigorously attacked and made illegal. In its place, programs of affirmative action and multiculturalism promoted the inclusion of all ethnic groups and races into the economic and cultural standards of the nation. It could be argued, that the “new world” societies were

moving towards realizing the promise of a progressive, more inclusive nationalism. Especially in North America, the old identities were seen as fading parts of history.

The revival of global social networks, however, has opened both new doors and old wounds (Troper and Weinfeld, 1988). For reasons which are now often cited—the expanding transnational reach of global business and trade relations, large scale population movements, the massive export of American popular culture and commodity preferences to the rest of the world, and the importation into the West, through a fragmented mass communications system, of non-western Western cultural products, the borders of the nation state no longer frame people's awareness of important social connections. For some people, transnational ties have become a valuable resource rather than a sign of incomplete assimilation. For others, the new awareness of the smallness and interdependence of the globe meant that family histories of group grievances and conflicts beyond the borders of the country of residence remained salient.

Within social science discourse, the concept of “diaspora,” commonly used with reference to the dispersion of the Jews, was applied to other groups (Dubnow, 1937, Safran, 2005). The Jewish experience became something of a metaphor paradigm for a new awareness of internal diversity in nation-states. African, Asian, Greek and other ethnoracial minority groups were in some ways like Jews, that is, people with distinctive historical memories beyond those of the national history, with common cultural affiliations, even if much attenuated, and with an emotional commitment to a shared fate. In fact, as a concept that ideologically constructs what it defines, “diaspora” was already in use as part of a vocabulary of social mobilization (the African or Black diaspora, the Greek diaspora) before being taken up in the social sciences (Schoenfeld, forthcoming).

Jewish migration from South Africa to Canada raises questions central to diaspora research: What is the meaning of common identity as a dispersed people? How significant is identification with the homeland? How significant is identification

with other dispersed diaspora communities? Schoenfeld, Shaffir and Weinfeld (2006) give an overview of these issues for Jews in Canada. This article examines in depth one group of Jewish immigrants to Canada.

There have been two major waves of Jewish migration out of South Africa, one in the 1970s and another in the 1980s. While about a third of the migrants went to Israel, just over ten percent came to Canada. Interviews with 243 migrants to Canada from South Africa elucidate the meaning of the choice to go from one diaspora to another rather than to the Jewish homeland. Almost all the migrants interviewed came to Canada as adults and had been in the country for over ten years when they were interviewed. Most reported that they had come with their children. Before examining the interviews, however, it is helpful to examine briefly the Jewish community of South Africa as a diaspora community. Although geographically remote from the rest of world Jewry, the South-African Jewish community historically has had strong networks of relationships to Jewish life outside its borders.

The Jewish Diaspora of South Africa

The group that left South Africa from the 1970s through the 1990s was less than a hundred years removed from the large wave of migration from eastern Europe that had given the Jewish communities of the United States, Britain, and Canada their distinctive features. Most Jews in all these diasporas have great-grandparents whose lives were similar, and they share a historical memory of that similarity. Religiously, economically and socially the Jewish communities in various parts of the English-speaking world over this period of less than one hundred years have had not only broad similarities but also continuing transnational ties.

In 1880, approximately 4,000 Jews resided in the territories that were to become South Africa. Between 1880 and 1910, another 40,000 Jews immigrated. By 1910, seventy percent of the South-African Jewish population was comprised of Jews

from Lithuania and its environs (Saron, Shain and Saks, 2007, p. 42). Jewish immigration to South Africa was modest in size compared to the hundreds of thousands who sought refuge in western Europe and the millions who were drawn to the western hemisphere. It was even smaller than the modest number of Jews who pioneered new settlements in the economically and politically unpromising and physically harsh conditions of the Palestinian province of the Turkish Empire.

As in other places, the Jews of South Africa founded a large variety of organizations. In the period of immigration from eastern Europe, *landmannschaften* (self help and social associations of immigrants who originated in the same locations in Europe) were important, as they were to the immigrant generation of Jews in the United States and Canada. The South-African Jewish Board of Deputies (est. 1912) acts as the representative of the Jewish community, its name and function patterned after the British Board of Deputies. Its parallel in Canada is the Canadian Jewish Congress. As the Jewish population became more affluent, the structure of educational organizations changed. Individual congregations sponsored the earliest Jewish schools, which met after state school hours. The first Jewish all-day school opened in 1948, and by the late 1960s, approximately 30 percent of Jewish students were enrolled in such schools (Saron, p.14). As in other diasporas, the percentages enrolled in day schools continued to rise; in 1991, about 60 percent of Jewish children were enrolled in the King David Schools affiliated with the South-African Board of Jewish Education (Shain 1996, p.18). Although part of a worldwide shift in enrolment patterns in Jewish education, Jewish day school enrolment has been exceptionally high in South Africa.

Many Jewish organizations in South Africa were both local and transnational in orientation. While locally established and maintained, congregations joined together in federations with transnational ties. The substantial majority of congregations were founded as Orthodox. While some provision was made for local training of religious functionaries, Orthodox

Judaism in South Africa established numerous ties to Orthodox Judaism elsewhere. Similarly, those who established the small number of Reform congregations followed precedents set elsewhere in the English-speaking world and affiliated with that broader network. As well, B'nai B'rith lodges are branches of that worldwide Jewish service organization.

The Zionist movement was especially active in South Africa (see Shimoni, 1980). Zionist organizations were founded there early in the period of immigration from Lithuania, even before the first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897. Individual Zionist groups joined together to form the South-African Zionist Federation early in the twentieth century; it was the first all-national Jewish group (Saron, 2001, pp. 75-89). Zionism had had a popular following in Lithuania and was the basis of much organizational activity in South Africa. As in Israel and elsewhere in the Diaspora, South-African Zionists were divided ideologically, and each faction had its own structure. The youth movements of these factions, which functioned as social clubs, were given high priority in South Africa, and membership in Zionist youth groups became a common part of growing up Jewish there. The Women's Zionist Organization of South Africa, like Hadassah in the United States, became a mass membership organization, active in fund raising for institutions serving women and children in the land of Israel. The United Israel Appeal was founded to raise funds in support of Zionist work. In the years after Israel attained independence, other organizations were established to support specific institutions there, to promote tourism, and to encourage *aliyah* (immigration to Israel).

Compared to other diasporas, South-African Jews were distinctive by the extent to which they created and made use of Jewish institutions. Their Zionist involvement was higher; their Jewish education was more intensive; their affiliation with Orthodoxy was more common. Their religious, Zionist, and social networks inside South Africa also connected them to the religious, Zionist, and social networks of world Jewry.

The larger social context, however, distinguished the Jews of South Africa from those of other English-speaking diasporas. In the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, overt racial ideologies were marginalized in public life after World War II, and legislation outlawing discrimination was passed. In South Africa, in contrast, the election of the National Party in 1948 intensified segregation, developing it into a policy of apartheid. As other parts of the English-speaking world where Jews lived were moving away from racism, it was becoming more entrenched in South Africa.

Emigration

In the first twenty years after its founding, the state of Israel attracted a larger percentage of Jews from South Africa than from other English-speaking countries. Saron has estimated that by 1969, over 6,000 former South Africans had settled in Israel (1996, p. 10). Shimoni (1980, pp. 259-60) cites two 1972 estimates of former South-African Jews living in Israel, one of 7,000 persons, the other of 5,500. Migration to Israel was part of a broader trend. According to Dubb, "During the 1960s and early 1970s . . . as confidence in the future of the country waned and political conditions worsened, there was a greater awareness of Jews emigrating. Thus in 1974, the South African Jewish Population Study found that 19 percent of "children who had left the parental household were living abroad" (1994, p. 11).

In 1976, civil uprisings began in Soweto, spread to other Black townships, and went on for months, marking a new intensity in the struggle against apartheid. Soweto and other similar settlements had been developed on the outskirts of major cities for Black migrant laborers residing "temporarily" outside of their "homelands." The transformation of these townships into populous centers of Black resistance indicated the government's weakness in controlling urbanized Blacks and dramatized the continuing dependence of White South Africa on Black labour, as well as the hollowness of the policy of separate development.

Following the unrest in the townships, Jewish out-migration from South Africa increased and continued through the 1980s. Table 1 shows Jewish emigration from South Africa for the period from 1970 to 1991, a period during which almost 40,000 Jews left South Africa, although the Jewish population did not fall by that much. From a 1970 figure of about 118,000, it fell to somewhere between 92,000 and 106,000 in 1991 (Kosmin et. al., p. 6. The 1991 population estimate was done by Allie Dubb, as new census procedures, which made answering the question on religion optional, did not produce statistics comparable to earlier census data.)

Table 2 (on next page), shows the country of residence in 1991 of those who had emigrated between 1970 and 1991 by country of destination. It makes clear the extent to which migrants remained in the countries to which they originally went. The emigrants to Israel augmented the number that had made *aliyah* before 1970. Arkin (1984, p. 88) gives a figure of about 14,000 former South Africans living in Israel in 1983. This figure may be compared with the census count of over

TABLE 1. COUNTRY OF DESTINATION,
BY YEAR OF EMIGRATION (FROM DUBB- 1994, P. 20)

YEAR	TOTAL	U. K.	ISRAEL	U. S.	CANADA	AUSTR.	OTHER
1970-91 no.	38,964	5,604	11,944	9,800	4,238	6,785	593
1970-79 no.	21,041	3,190	7,893	4,979	1,988	2,717	279
1970-6 %	49.6	54.3	45.8	60.6	34.1	42.1	87.8
1977 %	50.4	45.7	54.2	39.4	65.9	57.9	12.2
1980-91 no.	17,923	2,414	4,051	4,821	2,250	4,073	314
1980-2 %	18.5	13.7	27.3	18.1	22.3	9.0	31.5
1983-4 %	8.7	3.2	5.7	15.4	6.9	7.4	31.5
1985-6 %	21.9	17.6	21.5	30.4	10.3	21.1	0.0
1987 %	17.5	8.7	21.9	30.4	10.3	21.1	0.0
1988 %	13.9	14.3	11.9	11.0	11.9	19.4	31.5
1989 %	12.6	22.3	10.3	11.5	3.0	17.4	5.5
1990-1 %	6.9	20.2	1.4	3.0	21.8	2.2	0.0

TABLE 2. EMIGRANTS FROM 1970-1991, BY COUNTRY OF DESTINATION AND COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE IN 1991 (FROM DUBB, P. 21)

Country of Destination	1991 COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE								
	Total	South Africa	United Kingdom	Israel	United States	Canada	Australia	Other	Deceased
Total	38,964	4,403	4,664	7,461	9,971	4,100	6,423	606	1,336
U. K.	5,604	350	4,414	0	560	0	140	70	70
Israel	11,944	2,514	189	7,355	503	126	189	126	943
U. S.	9,800	670	61	61	8,764	122	61	0	61
Canada	4,238	144	0	0	144	3,806	72	0	72
Australia	6,785	634	0	0	0	0	5,961	0	190
Other	593	91	0	46	0	46	0	410	0

119,000 Jews in South Africa in 1980 (Dubb, 1984, p. 32). With such a high number of former South-African Jews living in Israel, compared to the South-African Jewish population, South-African Jews are very likely to have family or acquaintances in Israel.

As can be seen, there was some return migration to South Africa and some movement from one country of destination to a different country by 1991. In total, 11.3 percent of emigrants were again living in South Africa in 1991. Return migration was most common from Israel (21 percent) and least common from Canada (3.4 percent). Those who went to Canada, the United States, and Australia were very likely to stay there (89.9 percent, 89.4 percent, and 87.9 percent respectively). Very small percentages of those who went to Canada went on to other places—the United States (3.4 percent), Australia (1.7 percent), and elsewhere (1.7 percent) (Dubb, p. 23). The small

migrations out of Canada were almost matched by those who had first migrated elsewhere (Israel, the United States, or other unidentified countries) but then moved to Canada.

The Toronto Respondents Before and After Emigration

The characteristics and experiences of the Toronto respondents are consistent with the population profile of the Jews of South Africa. Nine out of ten had been born in South Africa. The other ten percent had been born in other parts of Africa or in Europe. Growing up in South Africa, most attended state schools from the primary grades through high school. Informal social networks, formal organizational affiliation, and distinctive ritual practices shaped their understanding of themselves as members of a distinct diaspora community. Data on neighbourhood concentration, in-group marriage, synagogue affiliation, ritual practices, Zionist and communal organizational affiliations, formal educational experiences, Jewish youth groups, and adult friendships indicate the communal distinctiveness of their lives in South Africa.

Residential concentration in Toronto of Jews from South Africa is high. About 80 percent reported that they live in areas of the city that are largely Jewish or that have a considerable Jewish population. About two-thirds of the respondents were former residents of Johannesburg. Another group of about 20 percent had lived in Cape Town, with the rest elsewhere. Endogamy is very high. Fewer than two percent of the married Toronto respondents reported having a spouse who is not Jewish.

Fewer than ten percent of the Toronto sample, mostly women, reported that they had had no Jewish education. Enrolment in Jewish schools in South Africa for a period of six to eight years was most common, but many had more years of schooling and many had fewer. More than half had studied in Jewish schools that met after public school or on Sunday. Over 20 percent had been enrolled in all-day Jewish schools, and almost fifteen percent reported having had private tutoring for Jewish subjects.

In South Africa, as noted earlier, formal Jewish education was usually followed (or supplemented) by adolescent youth group membership. Over three-quarters of the respondents reported that they had belonged to a youth group. Of these, 80 percent reported belonging only to a Jewish youth group. In state high schools, students did have one opportunity for formal Jewish study. Entry into university in South Africa depended upon matriculation exams taken at the end of high school. Hebrew was one of the languages in which a student was permitted to take a qualifying exam, and about 20 percent of respondents had done so.

The youth groups which respondents reported having belonged to were most often Zionist. Habonim (Labour Zionist), Betar (Revisionist), and B'nei Akivah (Orthodox Zionist) were the most frequently mentioned. Most of those in the Toronto sample who reported themselves to be Zionists looked back on these youth groups as having been important in their formative years. Others in the Toronto sample, who did not consider themselves to be Zionists, however, also looked back at these groups as important in their youth.

Almost 85 percent reported having had synagogue affiliation in South Africa. Most (over 70 percent) had been affiliated with Orthodox synagogues, and just ten percent with Reform congregations. Only about 30 percent of the respondents, however, reported that they had attended synagogue services in South Africa as often as once a month. About 20 percent had been almost totally unobservant of religious rituals, and about ten percent reported having been very observant. The large majority of respondents ranked themselves as having been moderately observant. This designation refers to combining such observances as attending a Passover seder, fasting on Yom Kippur, lighting Hanukkah candles in the home, having a mezuzah on the entrance to the home, lighting Sabbath candles in the home, and having a special family meal on Friday evening, but attending synagogue only on special occasions, using electricity and handling money on the Sabbath, eating out

in a non-kosher restaurant, not keeping separate dishes for milk and meat, and not buying kosher meat.

Moderate Jewish observance has been interpreted by sociologists as having an emphasis on home-based and child-oriented activities, on the one hand, while minimizing ritual behaviours which make the adherent conspicuously different in public (food taboos or unusual clothing, for example). It is also possible to see an emphasis on Jewish collective memory in the practices that are highlighted by moderate observance. Passover commemorates freedom from Egyptian slavery, the central historical memory of Jewish tradition, for example. Hanukah has as much significance as a historical celebration as a religious one. Shabbat and High Holiday observance (synagogue attendance and fasting on Yom Kippur) have meaning as traditions hallowed by age, historical continuity, and near universality. Through ritual practices highlighting collective memory, South African Jews affirmed their participation in the historical memories of the millions of Jews worldwide and throughout the ages.

About 40 percent reported having held membership in sports, cultural, or social clubs in South Africa. Of these, most had been members of clubs with only Jewish or mostly Jewish members. About 25 percent reported that they had been very active or quite active as volunteers in the Jewish community. A smaller number, fewer than 20 percent, reported similar levels of activity in synagogues or as volunteers in the non-Jewish community. Most reported having made regular charitable donations, in the main to Jewish charities, with only about 20 percent giving about the same to Jewish and non-Jewish charities. As with the youth groups, links to the state of Israel were an important focus of social and charitable activities in South Africa.

Over 90 percent of the respondents reported that more of their closest friends in South Africa had been Jewish than in Toronto. The percent reporting that most of their friends, in general, had been Jewish was almost as high. About half reported that most or all of their business colleagues had been Jews, as well.

In addition to these overtly Jewish associations, the Toronto sample reported educational attainment and occupational concentrations common to diaspora Jews. Both men and women were very likely to be university graduates, with many having advanced degrees of one kind or another - professional training, technical certificates, Masters, and PhDs. The large majority of the men (almost 80 percent) and a substantial minority of the women (almost 40 percent) were employed in managerial and professional jobs.

Almost half of the respondents replied that they had considered themselves Zionists in South Africa and expressed their Zionism there through a wide range of activities. Most mentioned donations to a Zionist or Israeli organization, contributions that are a normal part of Jewish life in most prosperous communities of the Jewish Diaspora. In the early 1980s, Arkin wrote that the United Israel Appeal "campaigns [in South Africa] reach out to approximately 90 per cent of the community" (1984, p. 82). Some respondents, who did not consider themselves Zionists, volunteered the information that they also made donations in support of Israel. In virtually all cases, the respondents report continuing routine contributions now that they live in Toronto.

Some Zionist respondents mentioned active involvement in Zionist or Israel-support organizations, sometimes at a very high level, although many of these were organizations involved in fund raising. Some made reference to their membership and active involvement in Zionist youth groups. Others had visited Israel, and some had lived there. A few explained their Zionism as a philosophy or an outlook. Only one made an explicit connection between Zionism and religious commitment. This absence indicates that Judaism and Zionism, while seen as mutually supportive by many respondents, are also seen as conceptually distinct.

Fewer than half the respondents had not considered themselves Zionists when living in South Africa (including, as noted above, many who were members of Zionist youth

groups). A few in the Toronto sample answered neither “yes” nor “no” to the question about being a Zionist. These few differentiated between being “pro-Israel” or making *aliyah* from being a Zionist, spoke of being a “private” or “latent” Zionist, or reported “not especially,” “somewhat,” “don’t know,” “my spouse is” or a change from having been a Zionist when younger.

In summary, the Jews who emigrated, even though almost all were native-born South Africans, were very much a part of a diaspora community. Residence, education, family and social, occupational and religious practice helped to preserve a strong, overlapping set of social networks. Common ritual practices cultivated a transnational collective memory. Charitable, religious, educational, and social groups prominently featured links to Israel and to diaspora-wide transnational organizational networks. In these characteristics, those who emigrated to Toronto were similar to the South-African Jewish population as a whole.

The Respondents’ Understandings of Their Relationship to South Africa and Their Decisions to Leave

Toronto respondents almost always expressed reasons for emigration in a family context. Not surprisingly, they most commonly referred to the political situation when asked about their reasons for emigration, and some elaborated on what they meant. Some explained that they did not want to live in an apartheid system. Two respondents, one a refugee from Nazi Germany, said that their families had been discussing emigration since the National Party came to power in 1948. Others reported thinking about emigration since childhood.

For most respondents, the political issues were more complex and related to family. Many spoke of concerns for their children. Statements such as, “I didn’t want my children to grow up in an immoral country which practices racial discrimination,” or, “I wanted my children to live in a democracy,” were common. Even more common were references to army service, such as, “My son was approaching the age of army service. We

didn't want him to fight for a system we abhorred." The South-African invasion of Angola in 1976 was seen by some as a sign of extensive regional warfare to come. Others saw the imposition of press censorship as a movement towards more internal repression. The rejection of apartheid was sometimes accompanied by a more general fear of continuing political unrest, a fear, as one respondent put it, that "It would get worse before it got better." The Toronto respondents rejected the apartheid regime, but some were also explicitly pessimistic about the political alternatives.

The responses to the question about their participation in politics while in South Africa help in clarifying how the Toronto respondents understood where Jews fit into the politics of their native country. Almost 80 percent reported that they had not participated in any politically oriented party or non-party activities. The 20 percent that reported political activity most commonly had worked for the Progressive Party, and almost as frequently participated in university anti-government protests. The Progressive Party, later the Progressive Reform Party and then the Progressive Federal Party, was founded in 1959. It constituted the small opposition in the Whites-only House of Assembly. Jews were strong supporters of the party, consistently giving it over half their votes (Shain, 1996; Shimoni, 2003, pp. 125-33). While a voice of conscience in the Whites-only parliament, its political impact was marginal. The preference of most Jews to vote for a "liberal" opposition continued in the "new South Africa." Kosmin et al (1999, p. 23) estimate that the opposition Democratic Party, the successor to the Progressive Federal Party, received 80 percent of the Jewish vote in post-apartheid elections. The low level of activity in South-African politics reported by the Toronto respondents contrasts with the high degree of involvement of South-African Jews in their own communal organizations. It also contrasts with the high level of political participation of Jews in Europe and North America in the politics of the countries in which they live.

Most Jews in the sample thought of themselves as a group with negligible political influence on South-African racial policy. (See Shimoni, 2003, for a full account of Jewish involvement in South-African politics.) The isolation of the Progressive Party was a constant reminder of marginality. The South-African Jewish Board of Deputies took the position that political activities were a personal choice that communal organizations could not control (Shimoni, 2003, p. 312 and passim; Shimoni, 1980, p. 273 and passim.). The Board, however, distinguished between political and moral positions. A resolution passed at the 1955 congress of the Board of Deputies asserted support for “the enjoyment of freedom and justice by all” and called for “the elimination of intergroup conflict and the abatement of racial prejudice.” (quoted in Shimoni, 2003, p. 32, Shimoni, 1980, p. 275). Some Jews were active in the anti-apartheid struggle (Shain et al, 2001). As the crisis intensified, communal policy shifted towards a more overt anti-apartheid stance (Shimoni, 2003, p. 133 and passim), and anti-apartheid activity became more noticeable in Jewish organizations (Shimoni, 2003, pp. 139, 180-200).

Most Jews and Jewish organizations, however, remained publicly non-political until White public opinion, in general, had begun to move away from support for apartheid. While a highly visible minority were radical anti-apartheid activists, most politically engaged Jews continued to support the Progressive Party and associated themselves with anti-apartheid principles. Apprehension about the opponents of apartheid was also common. Many South-African Jews were fearful of the violent revolution advocated by the South-African Communist Party, the armed insurrection of the African National Congress and other Black nationalist groups, the violence of the uprisings in the townships, and the ties between the African National Congress and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The most common response to this dilemma had been to object to apartheid while avoiding a direct confrontation with the Afrikaaner-based government, and to cultivate personal relationships with Black

and Coloured South Africans. For some, this meant involvement in social welfare activities in Black townships, such as those conducted by the South-African Union of Jewish Women. For many, “involvement” meant treating their Black employees in a “humane” way. At one point, the Jewish Board of Deputies “appealed to its 330 affiliated bodies and to Jewish industrialists and businessmen to improve wages and living conditions for their Black employees. It sought to set an example for the community by doing so itself and ‘by abolishing as far as the law allows, discriminatory practices.’” (Shimoni, 1980, p. 36)

By the late 1970s, however, it was more difficult to foresee a continuation of racial privileges, to refer to political marginality as the reason for accepting apartheid, or to accept that it was morally sufficient to soften apartheid through personal gestures. The Toronto respondents had expected the transition to be difficult and uncertain, that life would get “harder” in South Africa. A number of them reported worries about the future in South Africa because of the political and economic records of post-colonial regimes in other parts of Africa.

How the Decision to Come to Canada was Made

Among our sample, there were two waves of immigration of South African Jews to Toronto with modest but continuing immigration in other periods. The first and larger wave took place from 1975 to 1982, peaking in 1977, the year after the Soweto uprising. The second occurred from 1986 to 1988. These figures contrast with those given above by Dubb, who shows a slightly larger number coming in the 1980s than in the 1970s (1994, p. 20).

Most of the Toronto respondents left South Africa as families with children, most often young children. Emigration came in mid-career, and concerns for their children were a primary motivator. Other Toronto respondents came early in their careers with fewer responsibilities, a less established life style, and fewer children. Some of the latter group spoke about their move to Canada as an adventure. A few respondents

were older, coming ahead of their adult children or moving with them.

The migrants to Toronto spoke about their decision to emigrate in practical terms. They reported a process of investigation and deliberation in their families, weighing the pros and cons of alternative destinations. Some reported visiting potential destinations before making the decision. Two respondents, for example, went to Australia, another common destination for South-African Jewish emigrants and decided it was “too far.” In this context, “too far” seems to mean too isolated from other large Jewish populations.

With the exception of Israel, the Toronto respondents only considered going to English-speaking countries. They considered work opportunities, including the general state of the economy and whether their professional credentials would be recognized. A few had worked in Canada previously. A number of respondents said that the best offers for work in their occupation came from Canada, and these offers made the difference. Many of the Toronto respondents considered the size and institutions of the local Jewish community. Toronto contains a substantial Jewish community (about 110,000 in 1971; 165,000 in 1991) concentrated in Jewish neighbourhoods, with a rich network of synagogues, schools, and community organizations. Toronto’s Jewish community is also one of the most traditional in North America, less different from that of South Africa than most North-American Jewish communities. The combination of the English language, economic opportunity, and a strong Jewish community was very attractive. (For comparisons of Canada with other Jewish communities, see Schoenfeld, 1999; 1978; Brown, 1986; 1982).

Family ties were often important in the choice of Canada and were mentioned more often than any other factor. Some respondents had Canadian relatives, either through extended family or through marriage. Many had close relatives who had already immigrated to Canada—parents, siblings, or children. No one reported any organized promotion of migration to Toronto,

but the chain migration of family members commonly found in immigrant groups was part of this group's experience also.

Canada was not always the first choice. Almost fifteen percent of the respondents had moved elsewhere before coming to Canada, about five percent to Israel and a somewhat larger number to England. A small group reported a first preference for the United States. Some had not been successful in applying to immigrate there; others followed openings. As one said, "I always thought we'd end up in California, but we had opportunity here." A few went to the U.S. first and then came to Canada. A few almost went to Australia. One flipped a coin; another had a two-year wait for admission to Australia; the others, as noted above, decided it was "too far."

Why Canada and Not Israel

As noted earlier, more than half of the Toronto respondents considered themselves to be Zionists. Among those who left South Africa in the 1970s, Israel was by far the most common destination; for those who left in the 1980s, it remained a common destination (see Table 2 above). Support for Zionism had been a core value of organized Jewish life in South Africa since the turn of the twentieth century. As also noted earlier, financial support, visits to Israel, and participation in Zionist youth movements were not at all unusual for South-African Jews. By the beginning of the large scale emigration, a network of former South-African Jews was already living in Israel and constituted a support group available for later settlers. (See Shimoni, 1980, pp. 257-64.)

Those in the Toronto sample who had lived previously in Israel almost always explained their original choice of a new location in Zionist terms. They had accepted the value of living in Israel, but their experiences there were like those of many migrants from English-speaking countries. They found living in Hebrew difficult, the standard of living lower, and the divisiveness and segmentation of Israeli politics undermining of their idealism. As Table 2 indicates, over 60 percent of the immi-

grants from South Africa have remained in Israel, but others have returned to their place of origin. The respondents who moved on to Canada from Israel gave the same reasons for the move to North America as those who went directly there. And of those who went directly to Toronto, many had considered moving to Israel. The practical difficulties noted above were mentioned as disincentives.

While those who had lived in Israel continued to think of themselves as Zionists, they also spoke of the disappointment of expecting to feel a sense of belonging in the homeland and not finding it, and of the constant tension of a state of war. Others remembered loving the years spent there, spoke of returning to retire and of ties with family and friends. In these ties, they were not alone, as other Toronto respondents felt close to family and friends in Israel, as noted above.

Of those who said they had been Zionists in South Africa, over 80 percent claimed their feelings about Israel had not changed. Some who had visited or lived in Israel before coming to Canada added that they continued to hope either to return to Israel or to retire there. Others commented that they had family in Israel, or their children had visited, and that their children were attending Jewish schools in Canada, which reinforce the connection with the state of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. Respondents continued to support fund raising for Israel in the Jewish community of Canada, as they had in South Africa.

Fewer than ten percent of those who had been Zionists in South Africa indicated that they had developed a more critical attitude towards Israel since coming to Canada, while about the same percentage reported becoming Zionists after coming to Canada. Negative feelings about Israel were often qualified by differentiating between the government and the country. As one respondent expressed the views of this small group, "In South Africa there was total devotion [to Israel] in any circumstances. In Canada, one examines more the approach to Israel. In terms of support and love, there is no change." Among those who had been Zionists in South Africa and reported even stronger Zionist

sentiment in Canada, there was no common thread. One respondent commented, "Since meeting Holocaust survivors in Canada, I've become even more [certain of the need] for the existence of Israel." This comment is consistent with the answers of the respondents as a group to a question on the meaning of the Holocaust. Over half strongly agreed with the statement, "All Jews everywhere should see themselves as if they had survived the Holocaust." (Fifty-five percent scored eight or over on a ten-point scale.)

Some respondents who identified as Zionists in South Africa explained the nuances of their relationship to Israel. The following comments should not be seen as statistically representative, but they do show various ways in which the relationship to Israel was formulated. Some stressed a continuing connection: "I still feel very involved in Israel and very Zionist but I have no desire to live there. I think it's because I find Israel a very difficult place to live and I don't feel any immediate or future threat to my safety as I did in S[outh] A[frica]." "My feelings have changed only to the extent of being older. I can appreciate more what's going on there."

Others were self-conscious about changes of heart: "My feelings about Israel changed as a result of being in Israel. I expected to have a feeling of belonging, but I never quite got the feeling that I belonged while I was living there." "I've come to the realization that South Africa's problems will be Israel's concerns; i.e., Israel must share power." "I used to feel that Israel was the only place to live, but Canada exposed me to more of the realities about Israel." "I can see that there is a place for a Jewish way of life in the Galut. But we have Israel, and Israel needs us as well. After so many years away from Israel, I wonder if I could live there again." One respondent simply said, "I think I've been too focused about surviving in Canada to think about it [Israel] much."

Of those who reported that they had not considered themselves Zionists in South Africa, over 80 percent reported no change in their feelings towards Israel. Other comments

made by non-Zionists indicate thoughts and feelings more complex than a simple dichotomy of Zionist/non-Zionist. The following responses illustrate that complexity: One self-described “non-Zionist” said, “I’ve been to visit Israel since coming here, and some of my close friends and relatives have emigrated there. My concern for them extends to the country. If we were to leave Canada, Israel would be a first alternative.” Another “non-Zionist” commented that feelings about Israel after moving to Canada were “the same. Canadians and South Africans are both very pro-Israel.” Even negative feelings were typically qualified. For example: “I still support them in spite of everything. We have to have a homeland, but I couldn’t live there.”

These responses indicate the importance of recognizing a distinction between being “pro-Israel” and being “Zionist.” “Zionist” may be given a narrow interpretation by Jews raised in South Africa, where the idea of *aliyah* was strongly present in the Zionist movement. Among many Jews who left South Africa, the identification as Zionists seems restricted to a clear commitment to moving to Israel or to formal membership in a Zionist organization. The label of “pro-Israel” is broader but also meaningful. In this sense, one can feel that the state of Israel is important for world Jewry without claiming or accepting the label of “Zionist.” The “non-Zionist” respondents quoted above have personal ties with Israel and feelings of shared fate and obligation.

Only two respondents reported, without elaboration, becoming more negative towards Israel after migrating to Canada. A large number, about ten percent of those who reported not having been Zionists in South Africa, reported becoming more positive towards Israel since coming to Canada. This shift was explained as a consequence of visiting Israel, becoming more mature, becoming more informed, or coming to understand the importance of a homeland.

In all the responses—positive, negative, and ambivalent - there is no questioning of the legitimacy of the state of Israel,

of its importance to the Jewish people, or of the importance of the relationship between Jews living in the Diaspora and Jews living in Israel. Clearly, the movement from South Africa to Canada rather than Israel was not a rejection of the legitimacy of Israel or of personal commitments and ties to Israel. The following long response to the question on feelings about Israel expresses a pessimism uncharacteristic among the respondents, but also points to the connections that bind self-identified “Zionists” and “non-Zionists” of South Africa to Israel:

I always thought I'd live in Israel. I've been back to visit and I would like to live there today. I always thought it would be a nice place to retire. I would have loved to send my kids to a kibbutz for a year, but after Lebanon, I don't like what's happening there. I don't believe every Jew should live in Israel. I think Jews would never survive if they hadn't lived all over the world. We support Israel but I'm not hopeful it's going to be around.

Among the Toronto respondents, Zionist or not, there was very strong agreement with the statement: “Jews, regardless of where they live, have a special obligation for the welfare of the state of Israel.” (Almost 70 percent gave responses of eight or over on a ten-point scale.)

Conclusions

The interviews with former South-African Jews now living in Toronto clearly indicate that their decision about where to move was more than a simple choice of Canada over Israel. For the most part, they express carefully refined, strong practical and emotional connections to Israel. The respondents live in Canada, but they have family in Israel; they visit; they call; they send their children to visit and study. They accept that the homeland makes legitimate claims on them; they give financial support; some even made *aliyah* before migrating to Canada, and some consider settling in Israel eventually. They identify

with the pro-Israel consensus of the Toronto Jewish community. More have acquired more favourable attitudes towards Israel since coming to Canada than have altered their views negatively. In this, the new Canadians manifest sentiments and behaviours characteristic of the community from which they come, which are also values and commitments shared by most Canadian Jews.

These findings can be placed in context, if we return to some of the considerations raised at the beginning of this article about the changing nature of contemporary diasporas. In particular, two themes can be helpful in interpreting the findings. First, to be in the Diaspora - or to be a Zionist - did not mean the same thing at the end of the twentieth century as it did a hundred years earlier. Second, the relationship of diaspora communities to each other has changed; this is easily seen in a “world-city,” diaspora community like Toronto.

South African Jews and the Meaning of the Jewish Diaspora

The migrations that established the Jewish communities of Toronto and of South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century were two currents of the same massive wave that swept millions of Jews out of eastern and central Europe. These wandering Jews were fleeing from intensifying antisemitism in Europe—the pogroms in the Russian Empire, the organization of blatantly antisemitic political parties in central Europe, the riots and slanders of the French anti-Dreyfusards—and, even more, grinding poverty in eastern Europe that seemed to be worsening. Most migrating Jews were not prepared personally to risk the harsh physical conditions, corrupt politics, and privation that faced the Jewish pioneers in the Ottoman province of Palestine (Southern Syria), but many were sympathetic to the plan to rescue the vulnerable Jewish masses of Europe by establishing a Jewish state there. The Zionist movement, dramatically coalescing in 1897, transformed the dream of the return to Zion, a central tenet of Judaism for over 2000 years,

into a practical programme responding to contemporary realities and opportunities.

The Zionist movement swept much of the Jewish Diaspora. Even as migrating Jews were integrating into their new societies, building their economies, learning their languages, exploring their cultures, and participating in their politics, large numbers continued to believe in the necessity of a Jewish state. In some places in the Diaspora, the United States and Germany, for example, the supporters of Zionism were locked in a struggle with those advocating more complete integration into the nation-state. In other places, like Canada, there was a strong Zionist consensus. In a few places, like South Africa and Canada, Zionist organizations were the strongest organizations in the Jewish community.

By the 1960s, what it meant to live in the Diaspora, but also what it meant to be a Zionist, had changed. The Diaspora was no longer composed almost entirely of the poverty-stricken and politically powerless. Particularly in the English-speaking communities, which in the 1960s accounted for almost half of world Jewry, native-born Jews were in the process of becoming, as a group, extraordinarily well educated and affluent. These comfortable, acculturated communities were increasingly haunted by the mass murder during World War II of the largest, culturally most vibrant, and seemingly well rooted Jewry. The survivors went in large numbers to Israel, although substantial numbers chose other countries. Oppressed Jewish communities remained in the Diaspora—the largest in the Soviet Union—but their living conditions, relative to most diaspora Jewish communities, were now exceptional.

In the Diaspora, the fight over Zionism was over. Israel was no longer a utopian ideal, but a real country. The defence of Israel was not now an ideological position, but the expression of the traditional responsibility of one Jewish community for another. The Zionist movement of the Diaspora was transforming itself from an ideological current in Jewish life to the embodiment of a broad, consensus. Not surprisingly, concrete

ties have intensified over the past few decades. International travel and communications have been simplified and have become routine for many affluent families. Jews in the Diaspora can (and do) send emails to Israel, read Israeli news on the internet, invest in Israeli companies, participate in joint business ventures, spend part of their university careers in overseas study in Israel. They also send their children on Zionist tours to Israel, celebrate becoming a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah in Israel, and more.

By the 1970s, Israeli migrants had become a normal part of diaspora communities. Initially stigmatized as *yordim* [those who descended], both the Israeli government and local Jewish communities have become accustomed to overseas Israelis. Like other economic migrants, they often maintain personal and economic ties with the homeland. Although they had left Israel, moreover, they did not stop being Israeli in the Diaspora. They have come to play a role as resources linking the Diaspora and Israel. Estimates of overseas Israelis go as high as 500,000 (out of an Israeli Jewish population of about six million). When the large migration out of South Africa began, there were already an estimated 2,000 Israelis in South Africa. A 1999 source estimates about 6,000 (Kosmin et al, p.6).

The decision to migrate to Canada while maintaining emotional and practical ties to Israel may be seen in the context of these changed understandings of what it means to live in the Diaspora, to be a Zionist, and to be an Israeli. The South-African Jewish immigrants to Canada have, like other diaspora Jews, moved beyond the Zionist dream to the Israeli reality. They have not rejected the idea of returning to Zion. In Canada, most of them attend synagogues where they join the congregation in reciting the ancient prayers for the return to Zion. Many of them consider *aliyah*, if not for themselves then for their children. The choice to live in Canada is not a choice to cut ties to Israel, but to express them through means other than residence. The dream is deferred, not rejected. They are pragmatists, holding on to the long tradition of moving from one diaspora to another.

Toronto Jewry as a Diaspora

As a group, the former South-African Jews now living in Toronto fit well into the Jewish community that they joined. Their social, economic and cultural characteristics are similar to those of other Toronto Jews. Their patterns of synagogue life, Jewish communal organization, residential choice, work opportunities, and education are all familiar to one acquainted with Toronto Jews.

Yet, to speak of the Jews living in Toronto as a homogeneous group into which the South African migrants moved is misleading. Toronto is one of the emerging cosmopolitan world-cities, a magnet for migration from around the globe (Siemiatycki and Isin, 1998). Toronto's Jewish population rose from about 80,000 in 1950 to almost 200,000 in 2000, much more from migration than from natural increase. In addition to the Jews from South Africa, Jews have migrated to Toronto from at least a score of other places: eastern, western, and central Europe; Israel, North Africa, the United States, India, Latin America, and elsewhere. Toronto's Jews also include many who have relocated there from other regions, especially Quebec. Many Jewish subgroups have established their own social networks and, to some degree, their own institutional frameworks in Toronto.

Clearly and significantly, the migrants do not share the common childhood memories of that minority of native-born Toronto Jews, nor the social networks based on those childhood experiences. The majority of Toronto's Jews know themselves as wandering Jews. Even as they put down roots (Abella, 1990; Speisman, 1979; Tulchinsky, 1992, 1998), they know migration as something more than a theoretical possibility. They have biographies, organizational ties, and personal relationships connecting them to people outside of Toronto.

The subcommunities among Toronto Jews are linked to Jewish subcommunities around the world. Their organizational and personal networks also link them to specific groups in Israel: Canadian Jews from South Africa to Israelis from South Africa; Canadian Sephardim to Israeli Sephardim; Canadian Jews from Russia to Israeli Jews from Russia; etc. Friendship

and marriage ties among Jews in Toronto from different places extend the individual networks and transform the network structure. The networks themselves serve as the structural linkages of a global society. Because Toronto is a magnet for migrants, those who have moved there are likely to stay, although, of course, that may change in the next generation. Greater opportunities may develop in other places, and their global networks are resources their children may use to move.

The South-African Jewish immigrants to Toronto with their cosmopolitan outlook seem to be like other Jewish migrants to Toronto and like other recent non-Jewish immigrants to Canada. Despite their Zionism, and their obvious affection for Canada, this is not a population that believes that only nationalism gives meaning to life. Like most new Canadians, they did not come to participate in a nation-building project. They came seeking low levels of day-to-day violence, an orderly administration of justice which protects individual rights, a government which is responsive to the will of the people, and economic opportunity. As much as anything, they have come seeking a country in which they could live as a Jewish diaspora without apology.

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