

Effect of the Zionist Youth Movement on South African Jewry

Negotiating a South African, Jewish, and Zionist Identity in the mid-20th Century

[image removed to comply with copyright]

Terry Kegel

History Thesis

Haverford College

May 2003

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements -----	3
Glossary -----	4
Introduction -----	5
I. Towards a South African Jewish Identity -----	10
II. South African Zionism -----	25
III. Ideological and Vicarious Zionism -----	36
IV. South African Zionist Youth Movement: Habonim -----	42
V. Effects on the Individual Identity -----	53
Conclusion -----	79
Appendix -----	82
Bibliography -----	89

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my thesis advisor, Professor Kitroeff, my second reader, Professor Gerstein, and Professor Jefferson, for their patient guidance; to my two favorite librarians, Rob Haley at Haverford and Lesley Hart in South Africa, who made sure I always had more reading to do; to my international email support team, especially Saul Issroff and Doddie Gordon, who always went out of their way to help me; and to Vivian Klaff for lending me his manuscript about Habonim.

A special thank you to all my interviewees, who patiently sat through my meticulous barrage of questioning. I am so grateful for your willingness to share your experiences with me. Hearing your stories is what made this project so much fun.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family, first of all, for being such interesting subjects to study, but especially, for your patient and endless support. This work is a reflection of all the opportunities you have given me and everything that you have taught me. Appropriately, my formal education culminates with this quest for discovery of identity in my family and myself. Therefore, I dedicate this to you.

Glossary

Aliyah – Immigration to Israel

Barmitzvah – Jewish ceremony for boy becoming a man.

Chalutz(im) – Pioneer(s)

Chaverim – Friends, Members

Cheder – Hebrew word for “room”. Afternoon Hebrew school.

Diaspora – Jews outside Israel

Hityashvut haovedet – Cooperative settlement movement

Kashrut – Keeping kosher (a dietary custom)

Kibbutz(im) – communal settlement

Landsmanshaftn – immigrant society

Madrach(im) – leader(s)

Shabbat – The Sabbath, starts Friday night

Shilat hagolah – Negation of the Diaspora

Shtetl – a Jewish village in Eastern Europe

Yom Haatzmaut – Israeli Independence Day

Introduction

As youth mature into young adults, they begin to make independent decisions regarding identity and actions of identification. For South African Jews growing up in the mid-20th century, this maturation process was no different. They became aware of how various groups had influenced their own identity development throughout childhood. They had to make their own decisions about whether the identities of those groups truly resonated within them. They were forced to take action regarding their religious, political, national, and personal future. Their actions of identification indicated those influences to which they had been exposed and those that they had chosen to embrace. These actions, then, were a reflection of their identity.

This thesis investigates individual differences in identity development and actions of identification amongst a generation of South African Jewish youth in the mid-20th century. Specifically, it examines the effect of one's exposure to and acceptance of the Zionist youth movement in South Africa and its ideology of *aliyah*, immigration to Israel. Considering a range of individual relationships with the movement, from the unattached to the fully engaged, it gauges the influence of this ideology on the construction of and negotiation amongst one's South African, Jewish, and Zionist identities.

The constant regeneration of a strong Jewish identity is the primary concern of those with an interest in the survival of the Jewish people. This task is particularly challenging in the Jewish communities in Diaspora, such as in South Africa. Because of their minority status, these Diaspora Jews are susceptible to the threats of anti-Semitism and the pressures and temptations of assimilation. For this reason, Zionist leaders advocated for *shilat hagolah*, the negation of the Diaspora, and the return of all Jews to

their homeland, Israel. Only through the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of the Zionist ideology, aliyah, could the survival of one's individual Jewish identity and that of the Jewish people truly be ensured.¹ Thus, the Zionist movement was born.

While in theory the movement in South Africa aspired to develop true Zionists willing to make aliyah, in reality it influenced a range of Zionism, muddling the definition. Who is a Zionist? Is it someone who has pride in Israel? Is it someone who lends financial support to Israel? Or, is it someone who immigrates to Israel? As South African Jews were exposed to the movement's ideology, they were forced to make decisions about their own Zionist identity and their relationship with Israel. In doing so, first, they had to determine the importance of their individual Jewish identity. Then, balancing their Jewish identity with the other important factors in their lives, they had to choose between a future in Diaspora or a future in Israel. The movement instructed them that their true place was in Israel, but ultimately, they had to decide what would be best for them. And finally, they had to consider how these decisions affected their South African identity.

Thus, the South African Jew had to negotiate amongst his South African, Jewish, and Zionist identities, asking difficult self-evaluative questions. In relation to one another, how important is each of my identities? Comparing individual responses to that question, we can then ask: how does involvement in the Zionist youth movement affect the relative importance of each identity? How did the varying degrees of importance of those identities influence decisions individuals made regarding their future religiously,

¹ Carol Diament (ed.), *Zionism: The Sequel*, [New York: Hadassah, 1998], Gideon Shimoni, "The Zionist Idea since the Establishment of the State of Israel", 8.

nationally, politically, or otherwise? And finally, how did those decisions shape the course of the South African, Jewish, and Israeli peoples?

In order to answer these questions, I have focused my investigation on a sampling of nineteen Jews who mostly grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa. The majority of these individuals were involved with *Habonim*, the most important Zionist youth movement in South Africa.² However, I also included in my sample two people who were not at all or very minimally involved with a youth movement. After researching the ideology of the movement, I conducted extensive interviews with each of these individuals about their experiences in Habonim and its effect on their South African, Jewish, and Zionist identities. Specifically, I evaluated the effect the Zionist movement had on the development and negotiation of identity by looking at the individuals' decisions regarding emigration. Based on their responses, I divided my interviewees into three categories: Detached, Affiliated, and Ideological.

Detached youth were those who were not at all or very minimally involved in a youth movement and, therefore, were not exposed to the structured ideology of aliyah. I have categorized two of my interviewees as Detached, K.A. and G.K., both of whose stories I feature. Affiliated youth were those who were involved, to varying degrees, in a youth movement. While they were exposed to the ideology of aliyah, they ultimately ignored the call to immigrate to Israel. I have categorized eleven of my interviewees as Affiliated and I feature the stories of B.K., M.C., and J.J. Ideological youth were those

² Though several of the individuals in this study participated in different youth movements, most often *Bnei Zion*, I will consider their involvement in such groups as identical to involvement in Habonim. Because of the similarities of the movements regarding the themes this thesis is investigating, particularly the fundamental ideology of aliyah, I am confident that this is an appropriate simplification that allows me to incorporate more perspectives without compromising my argument. In fact, Bnei Zion merged with Habonim in 1961. So, throughout the thesis, though there may be times when I refer to an individual's involvement in a different movement, it can be assumed that that individual was effectively involved in Habonim and exposed to the same ideology of aliyah.

who were involved in a youth movement, exposed to the ideology of aliyah, and, for various reasons, enacted this ideology by immigrating to Israel. I have categorized six of my interviewees as Ideological and I feature the stories of D.A., V.K., and R.S. While I have chosen eight individuals to feature, I will be using examples and quotes from other interviewees throughout the thesis.

Of course it would be naive to believe that these nineteen individuals are representative of the greater South African Jewish population of the mid-20th century. Due to a variety of limiting factors, this sampling is small and probably biased. Therefore, my primary focus is not to make conclusive generalizations about South African Jewry. Rather, it is to explore the effect of the Zionist youth movement on the individualized process of identity construction and negotiation. At the end of my analysis of these individual cases, however, I will offer some theories on how representative they might be of the greater population. I will suggest that through their exposure to the Zionist youth movement, this generation of South African Jewry, while generally ignoring the call for personal aliyah, used Israel as a means for strengthening their Jewish identity. Thus, while mostly unsuccessful in its ideological goal of recruiting immigrants to Israel, the movement's effect was still relatively positive for the survival of the Jewish people.

This thesis is divided into five sections. The first three sections describe the history of Jewish identification and the Zionist movement in South Africa, setting the scene in which the youth movement is operating. Section I provides a general history of South African Jewry and highlights several important modes of Jewish identification for youth. Section II explores the history of a particularly important mode of Jewish

identification: Zionism. It outlines the history of the Zionist movement internationally and in South Africa. Section III examines the ambiguity of South African Zionism and the Israel vs. South Africa debate, an important dilemma facing South African Jews and Zionists, which affected their decisions about identification.

The final two sections focus on a particular Zionist youth movement, Habonim, and its effect on the identity construction and negotiation of South African Jewish youth. Section IV presents the ideology and role of Habonim as its leaders define it, showing the intended effect on identity development. Section V shows the actual effect of the movement on identity development, through the analysis of interviews.

In these five sections I hope to give the reader a sense of the Jewish environment and the Zionist youth movement and their effect on individual identity and the South African community.

I. Towards a South African Jewish Identity

A Brief History of South African Jewry

The first significant influx of Jewish immigration to South Africa occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Individual Jews, mostly from England and Germany, had already been living on white settlements for two centuries and started to form their own communities in the mid-1800s. But South African Jewry, as a nation-wide community, only began to take shape with the arrival of these late-19th century immigrants. From 1880 to 1910, 40,000 Jews immigrated to South Africa, the majority from Lithuania.³

Starting in 1881 and continuing off and on over the next few decades, a wave of horrifying pogroms swept across Eastern Europe where Jews had lived for centuries. Relatives and friends murdered, homes ruined, these Jews began to look abroad for a safe environment away from persecution where they could earn good lives for themselves. Most chose America and some went to Palestine, but, among Lithuanians especially, many immigrated to South Africa. South Africa was such a popular destination for these Lithuanians, or “Litvaks”, that it is often described as “a colony of Lithuanian Jewry”.⁴

Early immigrants often ended up in South Africa by chance. Throughout the emigration process, a variety of factors could have determined one’s final destination: what ship company was advertising in your town, what time of year you were traveling, who you met along the way, what restrictions or quotas you encountered. Those

³ Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: the South African Experience (1910-1967)* [Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980], 5. By Lithuania, it is meant the area within the boundaries of the pre-1917 Czarist Russian provinces of Kovno, Vilna, Grodno, Northern Suwalki, Vitebsk, Minsk, and Mogilev.

⁴ Sander Gilman and Milton Shain (eds.), *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict*, [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999], Gideon Shimoni, “From One Frontier to Another: Jewish Identity and Political Orientation in Lithuania and South Africa, 1890-1939”, 129.

immigrants then wrote home reporting on their experiences in the new country. In the case of South Africa, the reports were mostly glowing. They raved of this new land of wealth. Immigrants sent proof of their newfound success to their relatives back home in the form of money for tickets to join them. Word spread that South Africa was another popular destination, in addition to the United States, and sometimes, whole towns relocated there.

South Africa offered a favorable economic situation for Eastern European Jewish immigrants, which enabled them to adjust relatively comfortably. Unlike the U.S. and England, but similar to Lithuania, South Africa at this time was not too industrialized and commercialized. Immigrants were not forced to take awful jobs in sweatshops upon arrival and, rather, could use the skills they learned in their professions in the Old Country to find work in their new home. “To a much greater extent than in the United States and Britain, which already had highly developed economies, South Africa was a land of opportunity for immigrants.”⁵ If they had enough money and connections to start a business, they could easily find cheap labor amongst the Blacks and Coloreds. The Lithuanian and South African societies were also similar in their ethnic polarization, where Jews in Lithuania looked down upon Lithuanian peasants as many South Africans did with blacks.

By 1911, the Jewish population was 46,926.⁶ Immigrants continued to arrive and by 1926 the population had reached 71,816.⁷ However, the rise in population was

⁵ Sergio DellaPergola and Allie Dubb, “South African Jewry: A Sociodemographic Profile”, *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 88, 1988, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 91.

⁶ Gustav Saron, The Jews of South Africa: An Illustrated History to 1953, with an Epilogue to 1975, [Johannesburg: Scarecrow Books, 2001], 91.

⁷ Marcus Arkin, South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey, [Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1984], 25.

seriously stunted with the passage of the Immigration Quota Act in 1930, which purposely limited the flood of Jewish Eastern Europeans into the country. Along with this restriction on Jewish immigration, in the years leading up to the Second World War, important political figures were openly anti-Semitic. There was increased tension against the Jewish immigrants for taking jobs away from Afrikaners.⁸ After the War however, such noticeable political anti-Semitism had diminished.

Immigration continued, albeit at a slower rate. As the years passed, the rise in Jewish population was increasingly attributable to those early immigrants having children in South Africa. By 1936 78% of all Jews under 30 were South African born.⁹ By 1946, the Jewish population was 104,156, which was 4.39% of the total White population. In 1960, the population had risen to just under 115,000. A decade later, the South African Jews numbered 118,200, which was approximately the peak of their growth. In recent decades, the population has decreased due to emigration.

Development of a Unique South African Jewish Community

As immigrants poured into South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the Jewish population rose dramatically, the Jews developed a sense of a greater community. These were formative years on their path towards a South African Jewish identity. In addition to the major institutions that were founded at this time, particular circumstances of South African society also shaped this developing identity.

One such circumstance was the coincidental founding of Johannesburg during the wave of Jewish immigration. With the discovery of gold in 1886, immigrants, including

⁸ Shimoni, 121.

⁹ Ibid, 59.

Jews, flocked to this city, which would later become one of the capitals of South Africa. As a result of Jews being present at the birth of the city, they had a part in founding it, which made their experience different than Jewish immigrants in most cities that had already been established:

“Jews were present in Johannesburg at its birth and never looked upon themselves as immigrants having to overcome the obstacles of arriving in an established community...Elsewhere, they might have tended to be almost apologetic about their identity, but in Johannesburg they felt self-confidence not only in being Jewish, but in being part of the town’s varied and wider community.”¹⁰

Johannesburg became the most populous and influential city of the Jewish community, so the favorable circumstances enjoyed there in maintaining the Jewish identity were characteristic of much of the South African community.

Another identity-forming factor, perhaps the most unique to South Africa, was its ethnic, religious, and racial pluralism and segregation. Not only did this have a great influence on South African history in general, but also it was important for the development of the Jewish community.

The South African population was composed of Blacks, Coloreds, Asiatics, and Whites, each with its own set of institutions. Within each of these broad ethnicities, there were many subdivisions. The Whites could generally be divided into two groups: the Afrikaans and the English communities. As far as the development of the Jewish community is concerned, it is the dualism within the White population that was most significant. The Afrikaners were the more dominant force amongst the Whites. Not only did they have a greater population, but they also succeeded in achieving a national consciousness. The English, on the other hand, never developed a national identity.

¹⁰ Mendel Kaplan and Marian Robertson (eds.), Founders and Followers: Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915, [Goodwood, South Africa: National Book Printers, 1991], 17-18.

They were however, numerous enough to counteract the Afrikaner and create an overall ambiguity of self-definition amongst South Africans.¹¹

The pluralism, or the lack of a dominant national identity, of South African society, enabled the Jewish community a certain amount of freedom in establishing its own identity, which strengthened its sense of community, separate from the general population. If Jews were slower to assimilate in South Africa compared to the U.S. or England, it was due to this ambiguous South African nationality:

“Because Afrikaners and English shared hardly any common national symbols, there was, in fact, no agreed South African national identity equivalent to that provided by the notions either of being ‘British’ or of being ‘American’...This cultural duality and inchoate national identity was of far-reaching significance not only in preserving Jewish identity but also in endowing it with an ethnic-national dimension of its own, which...found expression in Zionism.”¹²

Pluralism was the result of a changing philosophy in South Africa at the time on the question of assimilation. In contrast to the “amalgamationist” politics of the 19th century, which called for the civilization and assimilation of different peoples (in this case, this refers to Africans), a new ideology emerged around the turn of the century, which favored the preservation of diversity:

“A new ideology of segregation had gained ascendancy in which Africans were rather to develop along their own lines. A new sense of cultural difference (in today’s parlance ‘multiculturalism’) was emerging in which ethnic or, in the case of Jews, religious differences were fully accepted.”¹³

This ideology of segregation was most harshly realized with the system of Apartheid. While racial segregation always existed in South Africa, it was politically systematized in

¹¹ Shimoni, 3.

¹² Ibid, 4.

¹³ Milton Shain, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa [Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994], 69.

1948 when the Afrikaner National Party came to power. Apartheid reinforced segregation and blatantly discriminated against Blacks and other non-Whites.

“At its crudest level [*apartheid*] meant simply the preservation of White domination (*baasskap*) in all aspects of South African society. At its most refined level, it postulated a regulated system of race relations in order to guarantee White self-preservation while at the same time providing parallel ‘separate development’ for all of the racial groups comprising South African society...As a programme of action, *apartheid* meant reinforcement of White domination of the political and economic life of the country. It also meant systematization of social separation between the various racial groups and the gradual provision of frameworks, institutional and territorial, for the proposed separate development of each racial group.”¹⁴

Jews, lumped into the White group, benefited from this system of apartheid. First of all, along with the other Whites, they had much greater educational and economic opportunities. Black labor was cheap, so they were able to maintain a comfortable lifestyle. Secondly, the Whites’ paranoia about the “Black problem” distracted them from worrying about the “Jewish problem.” They saw the Blacks, who greatly outnumbered them, as a bigger threat, so, for the most part, they left the Jews alone. Thirdly, this racial segregation further reinforced the general segregation of South African society, which allowed the Jewish community to develop independently.

Add to this segregated tendency of the South African political system, the Afrikaner and the Shtetl mentalities to maintain exclusive, insulated communities, and the result was an extremely polarized society. The Afrikaner mentality called on Afrikaners to band together to protect themselves from hostile natives in this African colony. Similarly, the Shtetl mentality motivated Jews to remain within an exclusively Jewish community so as to protect against external anti-Semitic threats.¹⁵ Allowed by the political system to develop independently and motivated by its own insular tendencies,

¹⁴ Shimoni, 224-5.

¹⁵ D.A., Interview, Seattle, 1-5-03, 1-8-03. These are D.A.’s definitions of Afrikaner and Shtetl mentalities.

South African society was segregated and polarized. This was a favorable coincidence for the South African Jewish community; South African Jews were able to maintain a tight community, which created amongst themselves a strong Jewish identity.

While free to maintain an insular community with its own organizational institutions, there was still some pressure from the government that the Jews assimilate with one of the two dominant White groups.¹⁶ The Jews, for a variety of reasons, chose to associate more with the English than the Afrikaners. Many of the earlier Jewish immigrants to South Africa in the 19th century came from England so the founders of the Jewish community had cultural ties with the English. While the Afrikaners remained a primarily farming people, the English and the Jews were mostly urban and interacted more frequently through business. The Jews also found a greater ease in upward economic mobility through assimilation into the English community. Despite this tendency among Jews to assimilate into the English community, the parallel existence of the Afrikaner community created enough competition and ambiguity, which still enabled the Jews to guard their own identity, more so than their contemporaries in the U.S. or England.¹⁷

Allowed the responsibility of developing their own institutions, South African Jewry formed a well-organized community, which created a simple and productive system of opportunities for Jewish identification. The South African Jews, whose population was growing rapidly at the time, took charge of establishing a national Jewish community in the late 19th century. The institutions they founded in these early years would shape the future of the South African Jewish identity. Two of the most influential organizations they founded were the Zionist Federation, which will be discussed in the

¹⁶ Shimoni, 2-3.

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

next section, and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD). Founded in 1903, SAJBOD later officially defined its role as follows:

“(1) it is the representative body of the Jewish community and its spokesman; (2) its main purpose is to safeguard the religious and civic rights of the Jewish population; and (3) it endeavours to contribute to the strengthening and enrichment of Jewish communal life and to improved communal planning.”¹⁸

Along with the Zionist Federation, SAJBOD was responsible for overseeing most of the Jewish organizational activities in South Africa. The existence and acceptance of these two controlling powers from an early stage was key to the unity of the South African Jewish community.

Another characteristic of South African Jewry that made its community especially tight and effective was its relatively small size and its homogeneity, both in origins and in religious affiliations. First, compared to the approximate American Jewish population of five million¹⁹ in the 1950s and 60s, South Africa’s approximately 115,000 Jews had a significantly easier time maintaining a close-knit and organized community. Second, as mentioned earlier, the majority of South African Jews came from Eastern Europe, particularly, Lithuania. Therefore, the immigrants naturally had a lot of cultural similarities, which encouraged their social interaction. Religiously, the vast majority of South African Jews were affiliated with Orthodox synagogues. Religious activity was not nearly as divided as it was in the U.S. There were only two options: Orthodox or Reform, although, in some smaller cities, Reform was not even an option. Therefore, since the majority of South African Jews attended synagogues of similar religious

¹⁸ Gustav Saron, The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, its role and development: an analytical review on its 70th Anniversary, [Johannesburg: South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1973], 2.

¹⁹ Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, <www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/usjewpop1.html>, 4-15-03.

ideology, religion was rarely grounds for division within the Jewish community, as has been the case in other countries.

All of these factors of the Jewish community and of South African society in general made South African Jewry a strongly identifying ethnic minority group. They were always aware of their label as Jews and the fact that they were different. They were proud of that difference. In fact, for many, their Jewish identity superseded their South African identity. A popular phrase used by many of my interviewees to describe this fact was that they identified as “Jewish first, then South African.” Clearly, Jewish identity in South Africa was strong.

Modes of non-Zionist Jewish Identification for Youth

a. Religious

The religious experience of Jewish immigrants was less traditional than it had been in the Old Country. Due to the demands of reestablishing and maintaining one’s economic stability in this new, competitive environment, Jews were not as observant of the Sabbath for example. “[Circumstances in South Africa] had the effect of carrying the bulk of the community away from the synagogue, reducing the synagogue’s influence on their daily life.”²⁰ The synagogue did not dominate the Jewish community’s identity as it had in the shtetls of Europe. South African Jews still lived a generally Jewish lifestyle, but they were less interested in Judaism as an ideological belief.²¹ Religion became more of a means of ethnic identity.

²⁰ Edgar Bernstein, *South African Jewry*, [1944], 51.

²¹ Vivian Klaff, “An Exploratory Study of the South African Youth Movement, Habonim. Its Structure, Ideology and Conflicts.” [Honours Thesis for the Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Natal, Durban. 1965], 8-9.

Compared to the U.S., where many synagogues form their own youth groups that involve members in various cultural and social activities, the synagogue in South Africa provided little structure for non-religious Jewish socialization and identification. The South African synagogue was a place to pray, have a Barmitzvah, and get married. It was responsible for very few, if any, non-religious community activities.

As the lifestyle of the South African Jew became increasingly secularized and the synagogue played a less important role in community activities, Jews looked elsewhere for a structure of Jewish identification. Nevertheless, in whichever Jewish-identifying structures they participated, the religious aspect continued to influence those activities, marking their ethnic distinction as the Jewish people. The religious factor, therefore, remained a strong mode of Jewish identification indirectly, while its direct influence diminished.

b. Educational

There were two non-Zionist educational structures of Jewish identification: Cheder, the afternoon Hebrew school, and the Jewish day school. In Cheder, an export that came with the immigrants from Eastern Europe, children learned Hebrew, Jewish customs, and Biblical history. There was, in some cases, a slight Zionist influence, but the focus was on giving the kids a general Jewish education. Every afternoon after school, many of the Jewish kids in a particular neighborhood would congregate for Cheder. According to a 1974 survey, 70% of all South African Jews over 15 had received Jewish education in Cheder.²² Almost all of my interviewees described Cheder as dreadful. Not only did it cut off afternoon social opportunities that the Christian kids enjoyed, but also it was painfully boring. Only the rare child gets excited about sitting

²² DellaPergola, 99.

through another two hours of lectures after a full day of secular school. The teacher and students could hardly relate to one another. “*Cheder* teachers were often poorly-qualified while their ‘foreignness’ created a gap between themselves and the rapidly acculturating children they had to teach.”²³ However, despite all their complaining, many look back on Cheder as one of the most important defining modes of identification. Unlike their Christian classmates, they went to Cheder. They were different: they were Jewish. Cheder exposed children to a Jewish lifestyle and beliefs. However, few young Jews continued to attend Cheder after reaching the age of Barmitzvah. In 1974, only 17% continued Cheder after Barmitzvah age.²⁴

The second educational structure, the Jewish day school, was a complete substitute for secular school. In the Jewish day school, kids learned all the normal material that they would have learned in a non-Jewish school and, in addition, they studied Hebrew, Jewish customs, Biblical stories, and the history of the Jewish people. The South African Board of Jewish Education was formed in 1928. Jewish day schools became especially popular after 1948. New schools were created throughout South Africa. By 1961, 1,250 pupils attended primary school at one of the two branches of the King David Jewish day schools in Johannesburg and 629 attended the high school.²⁵ While this only accounted for a small minority of the total Jewish population, it is still relatively impressive. Compared to other Diaspora communities, the numbers of Jewish day school students, along with those of Cheder students, were relatively high. In fact,

²³ Allie Dubb, Jewish South Africans: A Sociological View of the Johannesburg Community, Grahamstown, [South Africa: Rhodes University, 1977], 88.

²⁴ DellaPergola, 99.

²⁵ Saron, 253.

according to one source, “South African Jewry [boasted] the highest percentage of children receiving Jewish education outside of Israel.”²⁶

These educational structures for Jewish identification were important in exposing young South Africans to the Jewish way of life and encouraging them to embrace their Jewish identity. For certain youth, Cheder and Jewish day school were successful in promoting Jewish identification. However, most of those who were positively influenced in this way, only realized that retrospectively. At the time, they did not enjoy Jewish education because they did not feel like they were in control of it. Teachers of their parents’ generation taught them the dry facts about Judaism and their people’s history. There was little opportunity to get excited about the material. They did not take pride in their class. They did not actively engage in their education. Their parents usually pressured them to attend, so it was not a voluntary act of identification. The weaknesses of these educational structures were reversed in the Zionist youth movement, which allowed participants to define their own curriculum, feel a sense of belonging, and take pride in an ideology. Furthermore, these educational structures offered little more than education; they did not concentrate on creating social opportunities. Therefore, as adolescents matured and were exposed to other social forums, most dropped out of these schools. The youth movements, on the other hand, were more successful at sustaining the interest of adolescents by capitalizing on their natural desire for socialization.

c. Familial

Many of my interviewees claim that they owe much of their Jewish identity to familial influence. Parents, especially those who had immigrated more recently,

²⁶ Golden Jubilee, 1928-1978: Report to the 18th National Education Conference, Johannesburg: South African Board of Jewish Education, 1978, 11.

attempted to reestablish a strong Jewish lifestyle in their own families and homes. This parental influence manifested itself in a variety of ways: some parents kept *kashrut* in the house, some observed Shabbat with a festive dinner on Friday nights, some took their children to the synagogue for services. There were a variety of degrees and methods of this familial influence, but fundamentally, it exposed children to a Jewish way of life and therefore encouraged them to realize how much their Jewish identity was, and should continue to be, a part of them, their family, and their future.

Perhaps the most important factor in defining Jewish identity attributable to familial influence, was the pressure on the youth to maintain an insulated Jewish social life. Often, parents pressured their children to only socialize with Jews. One of my interviewees, B.K., remembers her parents forbidding her to spend time with her best friend because she was not Jewish. Even if the casual friendship was occasionally allowed, romantic relationships with non-Jews was an obvious no-no. Above all, they had to marry a Jew. Apparently, if intermarriage statistics are taken as any indication of this pressure against social assimilation, this familial influence was effective. In 1974, in the major Jewish communities only 1.3 percent of Jews had married a non-Jew.²⁷ In that same year, in the exceedingly Jewish area of New York City 30 percent of Jews had married non-Jews.²⁸

Interestingly, while parents thought it extremely important that their children's generation retain the same Jewish identity that they felt, they did not always realize how or make a conscious effort to pass on their Jewishness. In fact, many just expected their kids to embrace Jewish identity instinctively. They did not understand the assimilationist

²⁷ DellaPergola, 85.

²⁸ Arkin, 86.

pressures for the next generation in South African society. An example of this generational gap in the continuity of modes of Jewish identification can be seen in the decline of *landmanshaftn* in the mid-20th century.

“*Landmanshaftn*”, scattered throughout the Diaspora outside of Eastern Europe, are friendly societies of immigrants from the same town or region in Eastern Europe. These societies provide a system of mutual support. They were especially helpful for immigrants to South Africa in finding accommodation and work for the newcomers. Eventually, these *landmanshaftn* transformed themselves into sick benefit societies. The primary focus of these societies was aid to those fellow countrymen in need. However, a by-product of their activities was the reinforcement of Jewish identity reminiscent of Eastern European *shtetls*. By gathering regularly with friends from the Old Country, immigrants kept the memory of their old community alive. There was, however, according to my interviewees, no effort made to involve the younger, South-African born generations in these societies. Therefore, as the immigrant generations died out, so too, did most of the *landmanshaftn*. A mode of Jewish identification, an opportunity for the younger generation to get in touch with its Jewish heritage, was wasted. While a traditional Jewish family life exposed the youth to their Jewishness through “osmosis”, as one interviewee, B.K., described it, there was still an ambiguity and a lack of structure for the retention of this mode of Jewish identification.

While all three of these factors, religious, educational, and familial, were influential in passing on a sense of Jewishness to the younger generation, there was still a lack of structure for the young to proudly identify on their own terms as a Jewish people. This void was filled by the Zionist youth movement.

With the massive influx of East European Jewish immigrants to South Africa starting in 1881, the nation-wide South African Jewish community was born. In the first few decades of its history, the community founded several important institutions, such as the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Jewish day schools, Cheder, landsmanshaftn and other welfare societies, and of course, synagogues. These organizations reinforced a sense of Jewish community and identity, at least for the immigrant generation. However, there was one organization, which will be discussed in the next section, that was most influential in building Jewish identity in South Africa: the Zionist Federation. Zionism was the motto around which this community really came together. Most importantly, it resolved the dilemma of how to pass on the Jewish identity to the younger, South African-born generations. It involved the youth as no other organization attempted to do or succeeded in doing. Zionism was the defining characteristic of the South African Jewish identity.

II. South African Zionism

History of Zionism in South Africa and Worldwide

The roots of the modern Zionist movement can be traced back to late 19th century Eastern Europe. In the 1880s in Russia, *Chibbat Zion* (“Love of Zion”) societies began to appear. These societies proposed immigration to Palestine as a real and immediate solution to the turmoil Jews were experiencing in Eastern Europe. As masses of Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe, some did, in fact, make aliyah, while most found refuge in other countries. Between 1881 and 1914, 65,000 Eastern European Jews immigrated to Palestine. The rest of the emigrants, who totaled well over 2 million, chose to remain in Diaspora.²⁹ The overwhelming majority went to the U.S. Those that continued their journey in Diaspora carried with them a strong Zionist sentiment. Thus, that same impulse to organize Zionist societies in Europe was transferred to South Africa along with the rest of an immigrant’s luggage. In the late 1890s, groups such as the Chovevi Zion Society, began to appear in South Africa.

Worldwide, Zionism was becoming increasingly popular. In 1896, Theodor Herzl, a writer and journalist from Hungary who is commonly considered the father of modern Zionism, published *Der Judenstaat* (“The Jewish State”). In this famous book, Herzl outlines the Jewish question, or the Jewish problem, whereby Jews throughout the world are never comfortably at home because they do not have their own nation:

“[The Jewish question] is a national question, and to solve it we must first of all establish it as an international political problem which will have to be settled by the civilized nations of the world in council. We are a people, *one* people. Everywhere we have sincerely endeavored to merge with the national communities surrounding us and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so.”

²⁹ Eli Barnavi (ed.), A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present, [Torino, Italy: G. Canale & C. S.p.A., 1992], 194.

Herzl argued that wherever Jews live in significant numbers, they are not allowed to live safely as Jews. They are forced to give up their Jewish way of life and assimilate or they face anti-Semitism. As a solution to this Jewish question, Herzl argued for the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine and called upon all Diaspora communities to work towards the building of such a Jewish state. Herzl organized the first Zionist Congress in Switzerland in 1897, where the Basle Declaration was written. That important document firmly set the goal of the Zionist movement: “Zionism seeks to secure for the Jewish people a publicly recognised, legally secured home in Palestine” through the settlement of Palestine, the unification of world Jewry, the strengthening of Jewish national consciousness, and international political negotiations.³⁰

As the movement began to organize itself on the international scale, the Zionist societies in South Africa also collaborated to found the South African Zionist Federation on December 11, 1898. Most of the Zionist societies then became affiliated with the Federation. Not only was this an important moment in the development of the Zionist movement in South Africa, but perhaps more importantly, the birth of this Federation unified and empowered the South African Jewish community in general. This was the first Jewish countrywide organization. Individual Jewish communities and societies were then aware that they were part of a much larger South African Jewish community, which solidified their place in the country as a strong minority group.

With the establishment of the Federation, the Zionist movement grew rapidly. In 1903, the first Zionist hall was opened in Johannesburg. In the next couple years, Youth and Women’s Zionist societies, independent of the adult male groups, began appearing.

³⁰ Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism, [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972] 106.

In 1905, the first South African Zionist Conference was held. The Federation began publication of the “Zionist Record”, its official organ, in 1908. By 1910, there were already 60 separate bodies affiliated to the Zionist Federation. By 1948 this number had grown to 347. In 1932, the South African Women’s Zionist Council was founded.

Meanwhile, the international Zionist movement had been making progress as well. On November 2, 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration committing itself to the establishment of a Jewish homeland: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object...”³¹ Over the next few decades, continued immigration to Jewish settlements in Palestine made the dream of a Jewish homeland seem practically real. After the Holocaust, the ultimate example of the horrific results of the anti-Semitic threat in Diaspora, there was an even greater sense of urgency to create a Jewish State.

Finally, the Zionist dream was realized in 1948. The Jewish settlers of Palestine along with volunteers from all over the Diaspora, including 700 South Africans, successfully defended their claim to the territory in the War of Independence. On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion, who subsequently became Prime-Minister, declared the establishment of the Jewish State, Israel. Ten days later South Africa became one of the first countries to officially recognize the new state. Jews ran through the streets in South Africa in celebration of the realization of the Zionist goal and the return of the land, after centuries of separation, to the Jewish people.

³¹ Marcia Gitlin, The Vision Amazing: The Story of South African Zionism, [Johannesburg: The Menorah Book Club, 1950], 187.

After the establishment of the state of Israel, there was an increase in interest of making aliyah. Between 1924 and 1948, a total of only 265 South African Jews had immigrated to Palestine.³² But with the declaration of Israel's independence in 1948, there was an immediate increase in this statistic. In only the first 19 months following Independence Day, 406 went on aliyah. Relative to other Western Diaspora communities, there was a lot of interest amongst South African Jews in making aliyah. From 1948 to 1960, approximately 1,514 South African Jews settled in Israel, representing about 1% of the South African Jewish community. During that same period, only 6,600 American Jews settled in Israel, representing 0.1% of the American Jewish population.³³ Between 1960 and 1974, the period during which most of my interviewees were making decisions about emigration, 6,035 South African Jews immigrated to Israel, an average of about 402 per year.³⁴ Although the vast majority of South African Jews chose not to immigrate there, they continued to support Israel in a variety of ways.

An interesting complication of the Zionist movement in South Africa, and worldwide, was its politicization. In the 1940s in South Africa, the movement split into several different political factions, aligned with an Israeli political party, such as the Socialists or the Revisionists. Each faction had its own youth movement, which propagated that party's particular brand of Zionism. This permanently altered the development of the Zionist movement. From this point on, a Zionist group's political affiliation was arguably as important a part of its character as was its general Zionist goals. At times, political differences became grounds for intense antagonism between

³² DellaPergola, 67.

³³ Arkin, 122. Jewish Virtual Library.

³⁴ DellaPergola, 108.

groups, which perhaps negatively affected their success as part of a general Zionist movement.

Despite these divisions, the Zionist movement was a very powerful force in the Jewish community and constantly reinforced a pro-Israel attitude amongst South African Jews. After the establishment of the state of Israel, nearly everyone seemed to jump on the Israel bandwagon. “There is no longer any distinction between Zionists and non-Zionists in South Africa. Jews in almost every ideological camp now work for Israel.”³⁵ While they all had different definitions of what it meant to be a Zionist, as a community, South African Jewry was practically unanimous in its support for Israel.

Particularities of South African Zionism

South Africa’s unique geography, culture, government, and Jewish community affected the development of the Zionist movement there, mostly positively. First of all, the Zionist movement in South Africa owes much of its success to the pluralistic and segregated nature of South African society. As discussed in the previous section, this pluralism enabled the Jewish community to develop its own national identity and Zionist pride in Israel: “South Africa’s peculiar inter-colour pluralism and intra-white dualism was conducive to the cultivation of a national mode of identification for Jews.”³⁶ This was a unique and fortunate situation where Jews felt free to celebrate their national, as well as, or even instead of, their religious identity:

“Whereas in [other English-speaking countries] Jews normatively perceived themselves as members of a religious group and only with reservations, if at all, as members of a

³⁵ Marcia Gitlin, The Vision Amazing: The Story of South African Zionism, [Johannesburg: The Menorah Book Club, 1950], 356.

³⁶ Shimoni, 27.

distinctive national group, it was wholly normative for South African Jews to perceive themselves at least as much in terms of national belonging as of religious belonging.”³⁷

While immigrants lost touch with the traditionally religious lifestyle of the Old World, many were able to continue to feel Jewish through their national identity and pride in Israel. Thus, the Jewish community, insulated within a pluralistic society, developed a strong group identity through a powerful Zionist movement. Furthermore, South African Jews were able to remain relatively isolated as a community and hence avoided the temptations of assimilation to a greater degree than, for example, their American contemporaries. Less assimilated into the host country, South African Jews did not hesitate to take pride in a separate national identity: Israel.

Not only was the nature of the South African society conducive to a successful Zionist movement, but also the support given to the movement by non-Jews at critical times was crucial to its development: “South Africa as a whole has remained sympathetic towards Zionism. During almost every crisis in Zionist history powerful non-Jewish voices have been raised on its behalf...and valuable assistance has been given.”³⁸

Afrikaners, in particular, have generally been supportive of the concept of Zionism. Even if they cannot stand interacting with the Jews in South Africa, their strong religious background supports a belief in the return of the Jewish people to their natural homeland. At times this would create a bizarre duality where people would openly dislike Jews, but would support Israel and the Zionist aims. Nevertheless, this support was key in the success of the movement.

³⁷ Shimoni, 31.

³⁸ Gitlin, 301.

One of the non-Jewish political voices that was very important in the movement's development was Jan Smuts, an Afrikaner who served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1915 to 1921:

“[Smuts] epitomized the peculiar conduciveness of South African society to the cultivation of Zionism among Jews. The sympathetic participation of South Africa's outstanding figure of international repute provided a source of gentile sanction for Zionism enjoyed by few, if any, other Jewish communities in the world.”³⁹

Indeed, this sanction for Zionism was unique. American Zionists spent much of their time trying to explain to themselves and others the compatibility of having an American national identity and a Zionist identity.⁴⁰ In South Africa, where a national South African identity was ambiguous and weak and where important gentile political figures were favorable to the Zionist concept, the Zionist movement flourished.

As a further result of the insulated and homogenous nature of the Jewish community, the Zionist movement in South Africa was particularly unified and organized. The Zionist Federation was the first national body established in South Africa, and therefore, the Jewish community, in a sense, grew up with the Federation. Most of the Zionist groups were affiliated with the Federation, which became an influential driving force in the community: “In contrast [to North America], Zionism functioned in South Africa entirely within the framework of the Zionist Federation [except between 1937 and 1946], which not only co-ordinated (sic) the activities of all Zionist societies and groups, but also acted as an initiating authority.”⁴¹ The coordination and organization of the Federation was important in the success of the Zionist movement.

³⁹ Shimoni, 46.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 32.

⁴¹ Ibid, 28.

One negative characteristic of South Africa that affected the Zionist experience there was its geographical isolation from Europe, the heart of the international Zionist movement. Because of its great physical distance from the important players on the international Zionist scene, the South African movement's involvement was limited:

“Their vast distance from Europe naturally precluded the Zionists in South Africa from taking their place at the helm of Zionist affairs. They inevitably found themselves living in the shadow of events abroad...issues that were vital in Europe were sometimes scarcely issues at all in this part of the world.”⁴²

Sending delegates from South Africa to a Zionist conference in Europe, for example, required a considerable financial commitment. It took a special effort by Zionist leaders to convince the rest of the movement that such an act was worthwhile. While its isolation challenged the South African Zionist movement, perhaps it is a testament to its great commitment to the cause that it remained so involved from afar.

Despite its isolation from the rest of the Western world, the Zionist movement in South Africa was very successful in promoting a strongly Jewish-identifying community that took great pride in Israel. The pluralistic society, the non-Jewish political support, and the organization of the Federation enabled the Zionist movement to successfully influence the Jewish community of South Africa. There was a whole range of degrees of Zionism in South Africa. For some, Zionism meant donating money to Israel. In fact, South Africans donated more *per capita* to Israel than all the major communities in the world.⁴³ For others, Zionism meant making aliyah. Regardless, an overwhelming majority of the South African Jewish community was intensely enthusiastic about Israel. Whether it was attending a massive celebration of *Yom Haatzmaut* (“Israeli Independence Day”) in a local soccer stadium or canceling a family vacation to donate the money to

⁴² Gitlin, 141.

⁴³ Shimoni, 239.

Israel in a time of need⁴⁴, South Africans clearly had a great love for and pride in Israel. This love of Israel became an important “anchor for Jewish ethnicity.”⁴⁵

South African Zionist Youth

The first youth Zionist societies began appearing in South Africa in 1903. These groups were founded primarily by adolescents and were independent of any affiliation with the adult organizations. In fact, the adults were not quite sure how to respond to these youth groups. From indifference to irritation, the adults’ responses and their lack of support created a rift between the youth and senior movements in the early years. In an attempt to reconcile their differences, in 1916 a youth commissioner was elected to serve on the Executive board of the Zionist Federation. By 1920, 33 junior Zionist societies were affiliated to the Federation and that number continued to grow. An important step in solidifying the relationship between the junior and senior movements was taken in 1932 when the youth collaborated with the Zionist Federation to establish the Zionist Youth Council. Despite their affiliation with the Federation, the Zionist youth groups were able to guard most of their independence and authority from the adult movement. This independence is one of the reasons that the youth movements have been so successful.

As stated earlier, one of the reasons for the success of the Zionist movement was the fact that South Africa allowed Jews to develop a national identity in addition to, or instead of, a religious one. While immigrants became less traditional in South Africa, Zionism offered an opportunity to maintain a strong national Jewish identity, without

⁴⁴ K.R., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

⁴⁵ Arkin, 80.

being too involved religiously. For subsequent South-African born generations, who continued to drift even further away from religious Judaism, Zionism was especially important. In general, though they lived a Jewish life, they had little interest for the religion itself. They dreaded *Cheder* and, unless all their friends were going, they did not enjoy synagogue either. If they were going to be active Jewishly, they wanted to do it on their own terms. They wanted to be independent of their parents' generation. They wanted to be proud and feel a sense of belonging to a group. They wanted to be social. Zionism and the youth movements offered the perfect solution. Thus, the Zionist movement, in a sense, saved the youth from a loss of Jewishness. It filled an important need for a positive, structured influence on the development of Jewish identity in South African youth.

Since the Zionist movement had existed from the earliest years of the South African Jewish community and was the first nation-wide Jewish organization, most Jewish youth groups chose to affiliate with it, rather than the synagogues or the Board of Deputies. Therefore, more than any other body, the Zionist movement was most responsible for overseeing Jewish identity development amongst the youth: "Youth work was virtually taken for granted as a Zionist monopoly. Consequently it must be noted that in South Africa, successive generations of Jewish youth were exposed, almost exclusively, to a mode of Jewish identification determined by Zionism."⁴⁶ With this monopoly, it is no surprise that the Zionist youth movements were very important in shaping a strongly identifying Jewish community in South Africa.

⁴⁶ Shimoni, 31.

Clearly, the Zionist movement had a powerful role in shaping South African Jewry. In the next section we will explore an important complication to South Africa's brand of Zionism.

III. Ideological and Vicarious Zionism

One of the most important characteristics of South African society in shaping the Zionist experience there was its favorable environment for a comfortable Jewish life. This lack of a threat against the South African Jewish people presented a serious challenge to the fundamental motivation of the Zionist movement. As a result, South African Zionists could be classified into two types: Ideological and Vicarious. The Ideological Zionists made aliyah for ideological reasons rather than as an escape. They could have lived good Jewish lives in South Africa, but they believed that their full realization as Jews could only be accomplished in Israel. They were the minority. The Vicarious Zionists felt no need to abandon a favorable situation in South Africa to make aliyah, but they used Zionism as a means of Jewish identification. They were the majority. Ultimately, South African Jews exposed to the Zionist ideology of aliyah had to choose their future, South Africa or Israel.

According to Zionist thought, there are two main threats in Diaspora, anti-Semitism and assimilation, which motivate aliyah as a solution. If the host country is hostile to the Jews, discrimination and persecution threaten their safety and well-being. In their own Jewish state, they are no longer a minority group, so there is no internal danger of mistreatment. If the host country is welcoming of Jews, the natural temptation to assimilate into that culture threatens their Jewish identity. In their own Jewish state, they would be constantly immersed in a Jewish way of life and their Jewish identity would therefore remain strong. So, the Zionist movement used these fears of anti-Semitism and assimilation to argue that life in Israel would always be brighter than life in Diaspora.

But was life in South Africa really so dark? For the most part, South African Jews growing up in the 1950s and 60s lived comfortable Jewish lives, relatively free from the threats of anti-Semitism and assimilation.

First, for the generation growing up in South Africa in the 1950s and 60s, anti-Semitism was, for the most part, not a serious threat. Though some might disagree with that argument, it is all a matter of perspective. For example, American Jews of today, who are enjoying one of the most comfortable situations in Jewish history, may look back in horror at the dangerous South African Jewish experience of a half-century ago. The polarization of South African society made it such that there was a lot of antagonism between ethnic groups, particularly the Afrikaners and the Jews. As a result, some Jews were bullied. Several of my interviewees remember being called “bloody Jews” and a few even got into fights. On the other hand, from the perspective of 19th century Eastern Europe, that same South African society could be considered Jewish paradise. Considering these different perspectives, most historians agree that Jewish life in South Africa in the 1950s and 60s was relatively comfortable. Almost all of my interviewees claimed that they were not afraid as Jews and never felt a need to seek a haven from anti-Semitic pressure. While their parents warned them about the vulnerability of Jews and often told them stories of anti-Semitism, very few encountered it personally. In general, Jews did not have to live their lives afraid.

Not only were South Africans physically safe, but also they lived a very comfortable lifestyle. They had access to good education and plenty of favorable business opportunities. Jews were far more educated than the average White. According to statistics taken in 1980, 14.3% of Jews, compared to only 6.3% of Whites, completed a

Bachelor's degree.⁴⁷ Economically, Jews were also doing very well relative to other Whites. They were mostly middle to upper-middle class. They capitalized on the abundance of cheap Black labor in running successful businesses. For most Jews, especially those that had just escaped from a life of economic depression, violence, and gray skies in Eastern Europe, South Africa was paradise. They were beginning to establish roots there. Why should they give that up to live in Israel, an economically unstable country? "The arduous life of Israel presented a stark contrast to the prosperity and luxury of South Africa where Jews enjoyed a standard of living amongst the highest experienced by Jews in the entire western world."⁴⁸

Of course South Africans believed in the importance of Israel as a haven for those Diaspora Jews being persecuted. Yet, they did not need this haven. There was no obvious reason for them, as Jews, to escape. The small percentage of South Africans that did make aliyah, did so more for ideological reasons than out of fear. While Israel tugged on the hearts of Zionists, for most, the relative safety and comfort of the South African Jewish experience challenged the ideology of aliyah.

The second threat of assimilation was more serious than that of anti-Semitism. Allowed to live a safe and comfortable lifestyle, South African Jews had begun to assimilate. As is expected, the South-African born generation was beginning to lose touch with its Jewish roots. Nevertheless, compared to other Diaspora communities in the mid-20th century, especially the U.S., this process of assimilation was slower.⁴⁹ As discussed in Section I, the pluralism and segregation of South African society allowed Jews to live a fairly insulated life and the organization of the community, particularly the

⁴⁷ DellaPergola, 125.

⁴⁸ Shimoni, 258.

⁴⁹ Klaff, 10.

Zionist Federation, gave young Jews important opportunities to develop a strong Jewish identity. Therefore, even the threat of assimilation was diluted.

Living safe, comfortable, Jewish lives, why should South Africans immigrate across the world to Israel where they were promised safe, comfortable, Jewish lives? This illogical loophole created a difficult dilemma for the South African Zionist considering aliyah. As a result, like most Western Diaspora communities, only a small percentage of the Jewish community made aliyah.

Rather, the majority of South African Jews were “vicarious” Zionists. They were proud of Israel and took part in Zionist activities, but did not truly believe in the necessity that they make aliyah. They thought that it was possible to be both a South African and a Zionist. Though it does not fulfill the ultimate goal of the ideology, this type of Zionism was still very important for the South African Jewish community:

“For Jews in South Africa...confidence in the continued viability of Jewish life in their new-world home imparted a vicarious quality which enabled them to identify with the notion of a return to Zion without regarding it as directly applicable to themselves.

However the Zion which they vicariously sensed was absolutely vital as a haven for distressed European Jewry, was, they also sensed, a vital complement for their own future as Jews in the Diaspora [which] would normalize the position of the Jews, solve or at least ameliorate the problem of anti-Semitism, enhance the status and self-esteem of the Jew and provide a vital spiritual-cultural centre for the entire Jewish people. Zion was thus a complement rather than a substitute for their South African Diaspora.”⁵⁰

As a complement to South African Jewry, Zionism became a means of Jewish identification in Diaspora. Vicarious Zionists used, consciously or unconsciously, the ideology of aliyah and the importance of Israel as a tool for the construction and regeneration of a strong Jewish identity and people in South Africa.

As a result of the safety and comfort of Jews in South Africa, there was a great ambiguity in the South African Zionist experience, as indicated by this popular form of

⁵⁰ Shimoni, 32.

Vicarious Zionism. Ultimately, the individual had to choose his or her own form of Zionism. South African Zionists had to take a stand in the dilemma of competing identities. Was Israel a realistic end for them or was it just a means for a stronger Jewish identity? Where was their future, South Africa or Israel?

However, it was much more complicated than that. Before we can assess the dilemma for the South African Zionist, we must remind ourselves of an important confounding factor in the decision. While there was hardly a Zionist push factor in South Africa, there was a strong South African political push factor. Jews, as Jews, did not feel a need to escape South Africa. But Jews, as Whites and as South African citizens, did. This push factor had nothing to do with Zionism or Judaism. Along with the rest of the population, Jews, especially in the 1960s and 70s, became aware of and perhaps even frustrated with the injustice and corruption of the discriminatory practices of the South African government against Blacks and other non-Whites. They were also worried, as Whites, of what may become of them when the White government would be overthrown, which many thought was inevitable given the overwhelming majority of Blacks in the country. Whites feared a bloody revolution, a Black takeover, and a backlash against the Whites. This political environment of injustice and instability for the future created the push factor, which was responsible for most Jews eventually emigrating from South Africa. This push factor convinced many Jews, even at a very young age, that their future was not South Africa. Their focus was pushed away from their South African identity. Their foot was already out the door. As one of my interviewees said, “their metaphorical suitcase was packed.”⁵¹ At that point, they were susceptible to any pull factors. One potential pull factor was Zionist aliyah. When analyzing an individual’s

⁵¹ D.G., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

decisions regarding aliyah, one must assess the degree to which that individual was responding to the political push factor rather than the Zionist pull.

In this section, I presented the ambiguous nature of South African Zionism. I have given particular attention to the Zionists' dilemma in choosing a future between South Africa and Israel. Before we evaluate individual responses to this dilemma, we must consider one of the most important influences on those responses: the Zionist youth movement. In the next section, we explore the ideology, structure, and methodology of the youth movement in South Africa. Specifically, we identify the movement's intended effect on the youth's future plans regarding their relationship with South Africa and Israel.

IV. South African Zionist Youth Movement: Habonim

There were four main Zionist youth movements in South Africa in the mid-20th century: Bnei Akiva, Betar, Hashomer Hatzair, and Habonim. Each movement had a slightly different political slant. All but Habonim were affiliated with an Israeli political party. While they may have differed politically, the general goal of all the Zionist youth movements was to encourage aliyah. Bnei Akiva was the second largest and was generally labeled the “religious” movement. It was indeed the most Orthodox and was affiliated with Mizrachi, the religious Zionist party. Betar was a right-wing, more militaristic movement, affiliated with the Zionist Revisionist party. Hashomer Hatzair was a left-wing socialist movement that stressed Kibbutz as the highest ideal. It was affiliated with Mapam, the Socialist Labour party. Habonim, on which I will focus this study, was the oldest, largest, and most influential movement in South Africa.

History of the Movement

After learning about the movement in England, Norman Lourie founded Habonim in South Africa in 1931. Unlike the other movements, it remained politically unaffiliated, although it leaned towards Socialism. Though financially independent, it received great support from the South African Zionist Federation.⁵² It was originally modeled after the Scout movement, but it became increasingly Zionistic after World War II. Bnei Zion was an offshoot of Habonim.⁵³ A group of madrichim broke off from Habonim in the mid-1940s because of the movement’s drift towards a Socialist affiliation. They founded Bnei Zion as a separate movement of General Zionists and non-Socialists. Both groups

⁵² The Story of World Habonim, [World Habonim, 1956], 6.

⁵³ Klaff, 27-28.

continued to educate towards aliyah, but they each were affiliated with different kibbutzim, socialist and non-socialist, in Israel. Before long, as Socialist ideals began to lose popularity, the distinctions between these kibbutzim became less important. As a result of the decreasing importance of this political difference, Bnei Zion merged with Habonim in 1961.⁵⁴

With a membership of 3,618 in 1966, Habonim was responsible for over half of all South African youth affiliated with a Zionist youth movement.⁵⁵ It was the most important of the movements and is still very active today.

Ideology

“ ‘Habonim aims at moulding the character of Jewish youth, by promoting their spiritual, mental and physical development; at making them aware of their responsibilities as citizens of the country in which they live; at educating them to a thorough appreciation of their Jewish heritage and instilling in them an active interest in the State of Israel and particularly in the Hebrew language; at presenting them with the challenge of Chalutzic Aliyah (settlement on a kibbutz [in Israel]); at imbuing them with a spirit of friendliness towards all races and creeds and kindness towards all living creatures.’”⁵⁶

Habonim is Hebrew for “The Builders”, which is an appropriate name for members of this youth movement. Habonim aims to educate young people about Zionism with the ultimate goal that this will enable them to *build* the state of Israel through aliyah. More specifically, Habonim, indicative of its Socialist tendencies, promoted aliyah to kibbutz, a communal settlement. It saw Israel as the solution to the Jewish problem and the kibbutz as the solution to the injustices of the capitalist society.

In addition to the Socialist influence, the importance of kibbutz in Habonim ideology can be traced back to the emphasis on nature and land in the Scout movement and in Judaism. Scouting stresses simplicity and an awareness of and closeness to nature.

⁵⁴ Doddie Gordon, Email Interview, 3-31-03.

⁵⁵ Shimoni, 261.

⁵⁶ Klaff, 35. (quoted from an official Habonim publication)

Most of its activities are done outdoors. Judaism, too, has always stressed the importance of the land, namely Israel. Israel was the original Jewish homeland, yet, for much of its history, the Jewish people has been denied its land. With the establishment of the State of Israel and the popularization of Jewish settlements, the Jews have begun to reclaim their land. In addition to reclaiming the territory politically, the Jews are faced with the challenge of cultivating the land so that it can be agriculturally productive. Thus, the Scouting emphasis on environmental awareness and the Jewish push for a return to the land both influence Habonim's ideology. This is reflected in Habonim's activities, from the hiking excursions in the younger age groups to the ultimate goal of working the land on a kibbutz in Israel.

In 1951, South African Habonim united with its sister movements around the world, forming the World Habonim movement. The founding members were Great Britain, United States and Canada, Southern Africa, New Zealand, India, Israel, and Australia. Together, they published the following statement of their general mission as a worldwide organization:

“As a Zionist Chalutz Youth Movement, Habonim educates its members towards an identification with the Jewish people and its cultural heritage: towards ‘Kibbutz Galuyot’ and the upbuilding of the State of Israel based on the conception of ‘Am-Oved’: towards ‘Aliyah’ and towards chalutzic self-realisation within the framework of the ‘Hityashvut Haovedet.’”⁵⁷

Ideally, these separate movements in Diaspora would gradually come together through aliyah to the Habonim kibbutzim in Israel.

Aliyah was encouraged, not only as the natural realization and fulfillment for any Jew, but also as refuge from the threats against Jewish identity of anti-Semitism and

⁵⁷ The Story of World Habonim, 23.

assimilation that existed in the Diaspora. The following excerpt from a Habonim handbook shows how this dichotomy between the Diaspora and Israel was presented to the youth in such a way as to encourage aliyah:

“Today there are two pictures of Jewish life, one darker and one brighter...the Galut in general is all dark. In most countries the content of Jewish life is of a very low standard. Jewish customs and national identity are being slowly forgotten. Many of our communities are scattered far apart, living insecurely and uncertain of what the morrow may bring. But in Israel there is a bright picture of a living Jewish people, a thriving Hebrew culture, development and building. This is a result of the labours of thousands of chalutzim who throughout the beginning of the century were instrumental in the rebirth of our nation.”⁵⁸

Although we saw in the previous section that Jewish life in South Africa was relatively not that dark, apparently Habonim still attempted to make that argument, further proof of its focus on recruiting immigrants to Israel.

As a child grew up in the movement, he was encouraged to think about his future as a Jew and as a Zionist. Aliyah certainly was not a requirement, but in the older age groups of Habonim, members were challenged to seriously consider it. However, while aliyah was the ultimate goal, in striving towards that end Habonim hoped to educate its youth about Zionist history, instill in them a strong Jewish identity, and promote good human values of simplicity, equality and sincerity.

As the Zionist leaders began to realize the important role they played in ensuring the continuity of Jewish identification and as they came to terms with the fact that the majority of their participants were failing to reach the ultimate goal of the movement, they began to reevaluate their focus. Should they continue to stress aliyah? Should they compromise their goals? Should they focus more on the future of the South African

⁵⁸ The South African Habonim Council. The Habonim Handbook. [Johannesburg: Typo-Art (Pty.) Ltd., 1953], 59.

Jewish community or the mission of building Israel? Should aliyah be an end or should striving for aliyah be a means towards the end of creating a strong Jewish identity?

Again, this is the dilemma about whether the future of South African Jews should be in South Africa or in Israel. Reading through meeting minutes, publications, and other primary sources from Habonim, it is clear that this dilemma was a frequent topic of discussion. Some argued for more emphasis on general Jewish and Zionist education:

“Let us therefore transform our education towards a truly Jewish character education and only then will we be sure that the chaverim of the Movement, even those who do not go to the collective settlement or Aliyah will remain for the rest of their lives conscious, proud and responsible Jews on whom we can always build when an hour of crisis should arise.”⁵⁹

Others disagreed, arguing for an even greater emphasis on aliyah, as anything less would threaten the effectiveness of the movement:

“[Ba-Koach Gaby Haimowitz] expressed his disappointment that so few chaverim have achieved the final aim of settling in Israel. ‘Will the movement become just another social group within the Jewish community serving no purpose but that of bringing the youth together once or twice a week?’ asked Gaby. ‘I think that a more determined effort should be made to encourage Aliyah.’”⁶⁰

In the end, Habonim never faltered in its focus on Israel and aliyah. Aliyah was always presented as the highest ideal of the movement. However, at the same time, the movement acknowledged the important power it had in ensuring the continuity of Jewish identification. In striving towards their ultimate goal, the youth movements hoped to inspire, first of all, aliyah, but, at least, a sentimental attachment to Israel and Jewish pride. Israel remained the primary focus, with the South African Jewish community being a secondary focus. In this way, the youth movements were able to educate successive generations about the importance of Israel, even if the latter had no desire to

⁵⁹ Chalutz Register Report to Moatzah (1953), D, 2.

⁶⁰ Habinyan, Vol. 19, No. 2, September, 1953, 3.

immigrate there. Thus, the Zionist youth movements took a stand in the aliyah dilemma, maintaining their focus on Israel rather than South Africa, and thereby potentially solved the problem of Jewish discontinuity:

“Only the Zionist youth movements had an unequivocal answer to the educational implications of this dilemma. Placing *aliyah* first, they were not willing to release those Zionists who – for whatever reason – did not settle in Israel, from harbouring troubled consciences, even while they continued to build Jewish life in the Diaspora.”⁶¹

As further evidence of Habonim’s stance on the Israeli-focused side of the dilemma, it mostly ignored local politics. It did not concern itself with South Africa because Israel was the future:

“The Zionist Youth Movement adopts a non-partisan approach to the South African political scene...The idea is to imbue knowledge of political ideologies in order to practise the chosen system in Israel, not in South Africa...[in Israel] alone can youth implement its ideology.”⁶²

Not only did Habonim not get involved in South African politics, it used South Africa’s political problems as further justification for the negation of the Diaspora:

“The *Habonim* thesis was, therefore, that the peculiar dilemma of Jews in an *apartheid* society should be recognized for what it was – evidence of the vulnerability and moral deficiency of the *Galut* condition. It contended that it was futile and counter-productive for Jews to attempt to shape the societal environment of any Diaspora land into a pattern compatible with Jewish values. *Habonim* therefore rejected involvement in the conflict over race relations in South Africa and offered the Zionist option ‘to revolutionize one’s own life through *aliyah*’.”⁶³

Structure and Methodology

The Southern African Habonim movement was subdivided into provinces: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Rhodesia. Johannesburg accounted for the

⁶¹ Shimoni, 267.

⁶² Klaff, 50-1.

⁶³ Shimoni, 300.

largest percentage of total membership and was also home to the National Headquarters. At the national office and, to some extent, at the regional offices as well, there were paid positions, including president, treasurer, and secretary. Another important position in the movement was the shaliach, who was a sort of ambassador from Israel working with the movement to create a closer bond with the Jewish homeland. Apart from a few paid adults at the very top of the Habonim hierarchy, volunteer University students were responsible for most of the practical leadership of the movement.

With this strong adolescent self-leadership, one can see an important distinction between the Scouting movement and Habonim. Controlled primarily by adults, the Scouting movement is more of “an agent of socialization of existing values.”⁶⁴ Habonim, on the other hand, was truly a *youth* movement. It was the volunteer youth leaders from the ages of 15 to 22, rather than the adults, who were primarily responsible for constantly reinterpreting the ideology of the movement and passing that on to the next generation. As we will see in the next section, this self-controlling nature of the youth movement led to an inconsistent identity and focus. In passing the Habonim ideology down the ranks, it was diluted to varying degrees, depending on each individual’s interpretation.

As for the participants, they were divided into four⁶⁵ age groups: *shtilim*, *bonim*, *sollelim* and *shomrim*. *Shtilim*, meaning “saplings”, included 8-12 year olds. *Bonim*, meaning “builders”, included 12-14 year olds. *Sollelim*, meaning “pavers”, included 14-16 year olds. *Shomrim*, meaning “guards”, included youth ages 16 and higher. Each age group had its own curriculum and methodology. For the younger age groups, the activities were mostly games. In the middle age groups there was a combination of

⁶⁴ Klaff, 19.

⁶⁵ Originally, there were only three age groups, but in the 1960s *bonim* was split into *bonim* and *sollelim*.

games, social activities, and discussion. For the older age groups, there was a lot more intellectual discussion. As a child graduated from one age group to the next, he was increasingly exposed to the specific aims of the movement:

“[For shtilim] Zionism is not emphasised (sic)...and the stress is on the children learning about the world around them...[For bonim] the programme now consists of introducing the Bonim to the aims and ideals of their group...The aim in this group is to help mould the character of youth and make them aware of themselves as Jews and active members of society...[For sollelim] the aims and ideals of the movement are presented to the youth as well as the challenge of Zionism. However, the Youth are not expected to take any decision on Aliyah...[For shomrim, members are] expected to take some decision as to their future. They are also expected to state their views on Aliyah. Members are faced with the reality of the movement and have to come to grips with the movement’s ideology.”⁶⁶

In addition to their own group meetings, shomrim, and, in some places, sollelim, could also volunteer to become a *madrach*, or group leader. Indeed, most shomrim were *madrachim*. A *madrach* was in charge of one troupe of members, which, for the new *madrachim*, were usually *shtilim*. The *madrach* was responsible for planning group activities, running meetings, and teaching lessons. There was some guidance from their elders, but otherwise the *madrachim* were free to run their meetings as they saw fit. The *madrachim*, who were sometimes as young as 15, were given an incredible amount of responsibility, both in terms of looking out for the safety of the kids and teaching them appropriate lessons. The upper-level leaders of the movement could only hope that the *madrachim* lead their groups with a focus consistent to the original Habonim ideology.

Methodologically, Habonim was similar to the Scouts in providing activities for youth to help them develop as conscious citizens and team players. Young people learned to work in groups and help each other. They learned important values of equality, sincerity, tolerance, discipline, and self-labor.

⁶⁶ Klaff, 29-32.

Habonim therefore borrowed most of its educational technique from the Scouting movement. It believed that competition and fun through scouting and games was the most effective way of educating youth about their aims as a movement. It believed in practicing a philosophy, rather than just talking about it. This was taken from the Scout method of “learning by doing”, whereby “knowledge and skills are caught rather than taught.”⁶⁷

The ideal of communal living, for example, was taught, or practiced, through a variety of activities depending on the age group. The youngest age group might have done an activity where they were all asked to bring a lunch, circle up and put their lunches in a pile in the middle. Each kid then took a different lunch, which then sparked a discussion about sharing. The leader would explain how this activity paralleled kibbutz life. The middle age group may have gotten the same lesson during a hiking excursion, for example. If one member in the group was having trouble carrying his load, the others could volunteer to carry some extra weight. It was reinforced that on a kibbutz, everyone works together for the common good. The older age group members, particularly those seriously considering making aliyah, had the option of living on Hachsharah farms in South Africa. These were agricultural settlements, almost identical to kibbutzim. As a child grew up in the movement, he continuously experienced the movement’s ideals. The longer he remained involved, the more exposure he had to this sort of indoctrination. The goal of the movement was that, after learning about the ideology through practice, the youth would make a personal decision to embrace that ideology as an adult and continue to practice it by making aliyah to a kibbutz and building Israel.

⁶⁷ Frank Opie, The Global Scout: Scouting for Nature and the Environment, [Cape Town: CTP Book Printers, 1993], 23.

Habonim camp was the most important opportunity for a member to experience the movement's ideology. As one Habonim leader described it, "Machaneh [or camp] remains the ideal institution for education in the movement. Living together in an atmosphere of basic requirements and more natural behaviour is the testing ground of all these attitudes we so often discuss."⁶⁸ In addition to the national camp and the two regional camps held in the summer, Habonim held five winter seminars. These seminars were like mini-camps, with a slightly more educational focus. Many participants remember camp or seminar as defining times in their experience in the movement where they really became excited about their Jewish and Zionist identity.

One can gain a better sense of the specific curriculum as envisioned by the leaders of Habonim, by looking through a Habonim Handbook, a sort of textbook for the group members. In one particular handbook designed for the Bonim age group and printed in 1953, the contents are divided into six parts. Part One outlines the principles of Habonim and includes the official emblem, motto, and salute of the movement. Part Two describes the requirements of membership, such as the wearing of the Habonim uniform. Part Three explains the structure of the movement from the division of age groups to the leadership positions. Parts Four and Five have a detailed listing of what the member is expected to learn at this level in order to receive special badges and graduate to the next level. Part Six contains the bulk of the educational curriculum. It teaches about Judaism, the history of the Jewish people and the history of Zionism. It presents the Jewish national anthem, Hatikvah, and a map of Israel. It leads the reader through a lesson in basic Hebrew, specifically those Hebrew words relevant to the movement. It also has a

⁶⁸ Report to Moatzah from Galil Ma'aravi, Meyer Jaffe –Bakoach. Period of report: July 1951-June 1953, 6.

section on knot-tying and other scouting skills. From this Handbook it is clear that the focus at this age group was to teach kids about Israel and to begin to introduce them to the aims of the movement.

In this section, I have presented the history, ideology, structure, and methodology of Habonim as an example of a South African Zionist youth movement. Most importantly, Habonim attempted to produce Ideological Zionists, willing to make aliyah. Its intended effect on youth was the realization of the personal call to aliyah. At the same time, Habonim allowed for a lot of individual interpretation of the movement's goals. In the next section, we will explore the actual effects on individuals as they were exposed to the Zionist ideology.

V. Effects on the Individual Identity

“Habonim is not a sausage machine producing one type of sausage or a minting machine producing one type of coin. It is an environment, in which seeds of various types are planted to grow up and mature. Each will be given an opportunity of developing its own characteristics but as no two seeds are alike, so no two shoots or saplings will be the same...Let us encourage individuality.”⁶⁹

As evidenced by the above quote, even the most ideological leaders of the Youth Movement could admit the varying effects their groups might have on youth. While their ultimate goal was to inspire aliyah, they recognized that this was not a realistic motivation for most participants. They understood that the Youth movement was not the only factor shaping the child’s development. Parents, friends, school, politics, sports, environment, and a number of other aspects of a child’s life vied for attention, each pressuring the child in a different direction.

No two children experienced these pressures in the exact same way. Some parents forbade social interaction with non-Jews. Some schools exposed students to more liberal ideas. Some cities lacked strong Jewish organizations. Some kids fell in love with rugby and played on a team of all Christians. Some families stressed academics over extracurricular activities. A child’s personality traits also influenced decisions. Some children felt a greater need to rebel from parental pressures. Some children were shy about joining new groups. Others were adventurous about leaving home to attend a summer camp. One could go on forever imagining all the possible influences children had to consider in making decisions regarding their relationship with a youth movement: which one they join, should they join at all, how active they are, what they want to learn from it.

⁶⁹ Report of Chairman of the Hanhagah to Moatzah (1953), D, 5.

In the previous section we explored the Habonim educational program. Despite its varying diluted states as it is passed down the ranks, at the very top, the ideology and methodology of this program is clear. Habonim was educating children towards aliyah. To some degree, members of a youth movement were exposed to this ideology of aliyah.

In this section, we will explore the construction of identity – South African, Jewish, and Zionist – through the child’s relationship with a youth movement. We will isolate four stages of identity construction: influences, motivations, experiences, and effects. In order to really gauge the nature of the youth movement as a formative process in a child’s life, we must take into account that child’s particularities at each of the four stages. Influences include, for example, parental pressures towards Zionism or Jewish geographical concentration in one’s hometown. Motivations account for these influences and for personality traits and determine one’s susceptibility to various experiences. Experiences are the actual events a child is exposed to in a given youth group. Finally, effects are the resulting imprints on a child’s identity. The stages are interconnected and work together in constructing an identity: different influences create different motivations, different motivations provoke different experiences, and different experiences lead to different effects. While at the top a youth movement’s philosophy is clear, as these ideas pass through this process of identity construction, a unique individual emerges, reflecting, ignoring, or rejecting to various degrees that original philosophy. In the end, we must ask, who is this child? A South African? A Jew? A Zionist? How has the youth movement affected this child’s identity? Specifically, has the child embraced the ideology of aliyah?

In order to explore the various effects the youth movement had on identity construction, I conducted interviews of 19 people who grew up Jewish in South Africa in the mid-20th century. I must stress that this sampling of 19 South African Jews is not necessarily representative of the entire South African Jewish population. I was extremely limited in completing this project by my geographic isolation and by time constraints. While I tried to the best of my ability to include a variety of perspectives, ultimately, my interviewees were determined by convenience. The majority of them were friends with my mother and lived in the Seattle area, so I was able to find them easily and interview them in person. Thus, this is probably a biased sampling. Ideally, I would have interviewed more people, both friends and strangers, from a balanced range of geographic locations and backgrounds. Unfortunately, for this thesis, a study of that scope would be impossible. So, admittedly, this is not necessarily a representative study. I am merely trying to explore some examples of how the youth movements can shape identity construction in different ways. However, I will offer some speculation on the degree to which my sampling is representative of its greater population.

All but one of the interviewees were involved at some point in a Zionist youth movement. These interviewees experienced the movement in a variety of ways. In exploring this variety, I have identified certain patterns of youth movement involvement, based primarily on individual decisions regarding emigration. I have divided the interviewees into three groups: Detached, Affiliated, and Ideological. The Detached youth had no, or only brief, involvement in a youth group. The Affiliated youth remained involved in a youth group and was therefore exposed to the ideology of aliyah, but ultimately ignored the call to immigrate to Israel. The Ideological youth remained in the

group, being exposed to the ideology of aliyah, and embraced that ideology, ultimately immigrating to Israel. In presenting each of these categories as the degree of individuals' exposure to and acceptance of the ideology of aliyah, I will analyze the range of effects their involvement had on their South African, Jewish, and Zionist identities. Before going into detail about the various categories, here is a table of the basic information on each interviewee:

Name	Date of Birth	Hometown	Youth Movement	Dates Involved	Aliyah?	Present Address	Effect
G.K.	1959	Johannesburg	Habonim	late 1960s	no	USA	Detached
K.A.	1948	Paarl	-	-	no	USA	Detached
J.J.	1949	Heilbron/Johannesburg	Bnei Zion/Habonim	1957-1964	no	USA	Affiliated
M.C.	1941	Lampton (Germiston)	Bnei Zion	1951-1957	no	USA	Affiliated
B.K.	1951	Germiston	Bnei Zion/Habonim	1958-1966	no	USA	Affiliated
D.G.	1927	Johannesburg	Habonim	1937-1943	no	USA	Affiliated
B.L.	1955	Johannesburg	Habonim	1963-1973	no	USA	Affiliated
E.F.	1942	Germiston	Bnei Zion	1952-1958	no	USA	Affiliated
D.I.	1947	Germiston	Bnei Zion	1956-1963	no	USA	Affiliated
C.P.	1942	Germiston	Bnei Zion	1950-1960	no	South Africa	Affiliated
H.E.	1932	Nigel/Springs	Habonim	1944-1956	no	New Zealand	Affiliated
S.C.	1948	Germiston	Betar/Mateh Sinai	1950s, 60s	no	USA	Affiliated
K.R.	1951	Parow/Bellville	Habonim	1964-1967	no	USA	Affiliated
L.W.	1956	Johannesburg	Habonim	1964-66, 1970-73	yes	Israel	Ideological
D.S.	1944	Cape Town	Habonim	1956-1964	yes	USA	Ideological
R.S.	1942	Cape Town	Habonim	1950-1964	yes	USA	Ideological
V.K.	1942	Rustenberg/Durban	Habonim	1950s, early 60s	yes	USA	Ideological
D.A.	1952	Pretoria	Bnei Akiva/Habonim	1960-1968	yes	USA	Ideological
B.E.	1933	Brakpan, Nigel, Springs	Habonim	1942-1950	yes	Israel	Ideological

A. The Detached Youth

The Detached youth was not necessarily detached from Judaism, or even from Zionism, but rather just detached from a Zionist youth movement and its structured

ideology of aliyah. Some were detached by choice, others by geography. I have classified two of my interviewees in this category.

K.A. was born in 1948 to Eastern European immigrants.⁷⁰ Members of the middle class, his parents were comfortable with their choice to live out their lives in South Africa. Yet, K.A. claims that it was impossible to be proud to be South African. He identified as Jewish first, then South African. He grew up in a country town, Paarl, where he was very aware of being a minority and was, on occasion, bullied. He participated in a lot of Jewish activities: attending shul regularly, going to Cheder, having a traditional Shabbat dinner at home, going on summer vacations with other Jews. However, there were no Zionist youth groups in Paarl.⁷¹ As it is natural for a child to desire to be in a group, K.A. joined what was available to him: the Boy Scouts. By geographical coincidence, he found himself socializing and learning values from a primarily Christian youth group. He participated in Boy Scouts from the ages of 11 to 15 and he loved it. Since the Zionist groups were partly modeled after Boy Scouts, there were a lot of similarities as far as building camaraderie in the group and learning pioneering and survival skills. His experience differed, however, in that there was no focus on Israel and there was greater socialization with non-Jews.

Though his youth group experience didn't influence K.A. Jewishly or Zionistically, his family and the Jewish community made up for this to some degree. He remembers many young men from his town joining the Israeli army. It was almost a

⁷⁰ K.A., Interview, Seattle, 1-15-03.

⁷¹ One unrelated resource ("Heritage", Habonim (Southern Africa), Volume 1, No. 2, October 1988) discussing Jewish life in Paarl in the 1940s claimed that there was a Habonim group at that time. Whether this group still existed in the 1950s and 60s is unclear. Regardless, what is most important is that in K.A.'s eyes, there were no youth groups available to him. If there had been a group, he would have joined, but since there was not, his experience was unique.

subtle expectation in Paarl that when he grew up, he would join the Israeli army too.

Aliyah was certainly not discouraged, and at times, it was even suggested.

Despite his strong Jewish upbringing in the home and the general Zionist sentiment of the Jewish community, K.A. never had the opportunity to develop his feelings towards Zionism in any structured way because there were no Zionist youth groups in Paarl. After meeting many people in university who were involved in Habonim, now retrospectively, K.A. can compare his experience with theirs:

“My Zionism was ‘hey, listen, I believe in Israel.’ It never occurred to me to question Israel’s existence. It never occurred to me not to support Israel. But [Habonim’s] Zionism was more structured: you know, ‘you believe in Israel, you believe in all that, so why are you here?’ So, aliyah was seen as the logical next step.”

As there were no Zionist youth groups in Paarl, K.A. was never pushed to develop his Zionist beliefs towards aliyah. He sees this as a determining factor in making him more rooted in South Africa. He describes his friends who were involved in Habonim as less attached than those who were unaffiliated to a Zionist group and he remembers how this affected their future emigration decisions:

“I remember when I was in university, we would talk about the ethics of living in South Africa. [My] Jewish classmates who [were mainly involved in Habonim] made no bones about it, the day they qualified they were out of the country. I said, ‘how can you do that? That’s immoral. The government is subsidizing our education so much. Don’t you think it’s your duty to stay.’ Their feeling was ‘if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. By remaining in South Africa, you lend the tacit support to the apartheid regime and you are contributing towards apartheid’ ...I did feel I owed a debt to the country that educated me.”

While K.A. was influenced and motivated Zionistically, his experience growing up without a Zionist youth group and without that structured exposure to the Zionist ideal of aliyah was ineffective in developing a strong enough desire within him to immigrate to Israel. Actually, when the push of the South African political system became too strong

and he was looking to emigrate, Israel was a personal consideration. In the end, attracted by the great economic pull of the United States and dissuaded from Israel by his wife, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1985. This case shows that emotional attachment to Israel could potentially be quite strong in South Africa even without the youth movements. However, it also shows that affiliation to a Zionist youth group could give a certain structure to one's Zionism that stresses the ideal of aliyah and challenges one's roots in South Africa. K.A. felt more of an attachment to South Africa than did his Habonim contemporaries. While he maintained a certain Zionist identity, it was only after he accepted the South African push that he considered the Zionist pull of aliyah, and even then, the U.S. pull prevailed.

K.A. now resides in Seattle, U.S.A., where he has attempted to give his children a strong Jewish upbringing. He stresses to his kids the importance of visiting Israel, though he admits that aliyah as a concept is less important today and rather that we should ensure a strong Diaspora.

G.K. was born in 1959 to South African parents, members of the middle class.⁷² Her parents encouraged her to emigrate and even considered leaving South Africa themselves. She grew up in a Jewish suburb of Johannesburg, attended a Jewish school for part of high school, and as a result, most of her friends were Jewish. Though she was aware of Afrikaner antagonism towards Jews, she claims that she was never scared of the threat of anti-Semitism.

G.K. claims that Israel probably accounted for most of her Jewish feeling, as she never really identified much with the religious aspect of Judaism. She had family in

⁷² G.K., Interview, Seattle, 1-13-03.

Israel. Her parents were strongly Zionist and took her on a trip to Israel, though they never encouraged her to immigrate there.

G.K. was briefly involved in Habonim in primary school, but says it had little effect on her. She had some friends that used to go so she would tag along, but then she got interested in other activities like ballet and politics. As a teenager, most of her friends were also Detached; even at the Jewish high school, she does not remember any of her friends being involved with youth groups.

In high school and university, G.K. became very involved with political activism. Like her parents, she was liberal. She hated apartheid and became quite active in various organizations fighting against the South African political system. Like K.A., G.K. also became frustrated with those Habonim Jews who seemed to ignore their South African identity:

“We used to have these debates: are you a Jew first or a South African first? I was on the South African side. You’ve got to take a stand against the system. The [Habonim people] were against the system, but their primary concern was more with Israel... Many of my Jewish friends who were involved in [the political group] NUSAS [National Union of South African Students] with me [also identified as South African first]...it wasn’t part of the political culture at that time to be talking about all this Jewish stuff, the focus was on the system.”

G.K. was frustrated with Habonim for not taking an official stand against apartheid. She still remembers her anger about Habonim’s refusal to support an event she had helped organize, the Wilson Roundtree strike. Certainly, Habonim was unofficially anti-apartheid. Yet, its focus was Israel, so it did not want to risk getting involved in a South African issue. This is another case of a Detached youth embracing her South African identity to a greater extent than did her youth group-affiliated contemporaries. She still identified strongly with Israel, again a testament to the ubiquitous Zionist sentiment in the

South African Jewish community, but she never experienced the Zionist pull towards aliyah of the youth movements. G.K. eventually immigrated to the U.S. in 1984, which is where she lives today.

Without regular exposure to the structured ideology of aliyah in the Zionist youth movements, the Detached youth that I interviewed were more rooted in their South African identity. While they may have been encouraged to make aliyah by other influences, they did not seem to consider this option too seriously.

B. The Affiliated Youth

The Affiliated youth was involved in a youth movement to some extent, but never fulfilled the ultimate goal of aliyah. The youth in this category were exposed to the movement's philosophy and educational program, though the degree to which they internalized that philosophy and enacted it varied greatly. For some, though the youth group might have had a subtle Zionist influence on them, they were only involved for the social life. For others, the educational content also interested them and the idea of immigrating to Israel was very tempting, though they eventually decided against it. I have classified eleven of my interviewees in this category.

B.K. was born in 1951 to Eastern European immigrants.⁷³ Members of the middle class, her parents were comfortable and safe and they never thought of leaving South Africa. She describes her neighborhood and her school as distinctly non-Jewish. Yet, her parents, always untrusting of non-Jews, put a lot of pressure on her to only socialize

⁷³ B.K., Interview, Seattle, 1-17-03.

with Jews. Growing up comfortably in a non-Jewish environment, B.K. did not understand her parents' perspective and resisted this pressure: "There was no reason for me to base my friendship on somebody who was just Jewish. I didn't feel threatened or unsafe with other non-Jews. I just chose my friends because they were my friends." As a result, most of her friends were non-Jewish, particularly her boy friends. All the Jewish boys she knew were "nerds". Add to that her mother trying to set her up with these unappealing Jewish boys – what young teenager appreciates her mother telling her whom to date? – it is no wonder she became interested in non-Jewish boys.

While she may have dissociated herself socially from Jews, she never questioned her Jewishness and still participated in most of the normal Jewish activities. Her traditional Jewish home, her synagogue, and Cheder solidified her Jewish identity. She also remembers being involved in Bnei Zion as a young girl until she was 15. She thought of the youth group as Jewish Scouts and was proud that the Jews had their own group.

When she was 15, motivated by a friend and after much pleading with her parents, she attended Habonim camp. This was a pivotal moment in her life as a Jew. She loved camp and still has fond memories of her experience there. It was a very defining moment in terms of her Jewish identity because it finally gave her the motivation to socialize with Jews. Whereas beforehand the few Jews she was exposed to did not interest her, camp opened her eyes to a whole new Jewish world. Finally immersed in an all-Jewish environment, independent from parental pressures, she realized that not all Jews were nerds!:

"That Habonim camp was the first time in my life that I had been interested in a Jewish boy, or where I saw a group of Jewish boys that was of any

interest to me. I think that that was definitely a turning point in terms of my changing from being interested in socializing with Jews versus non-Jews.”

Suddenly, a whole new realm of social opportunities had opened up for her. After camp she remained in this social circle, meeting her new Jewish friends at parties in Johannesburg. Even attending synagogue became more interesting to her as another social forum. Before Habonim camp, B.K. had written off her Jewish contemporaries as a boring social group, and as a result of her less frequent interaction with Jews, her Jewish identity was not as strongly reinforced. When she became motivated to socialize with this Jewish social group, her Jewishness was more consistently reinforced.

While B.K. is quick to admit that, at the time, she participated in these youth group activities solely for social reasons, in retrospect, she believes that they strengthened her Jewish identity and probably made her more Zionist. She certainly did not have any interest in making aliyah for the sake of the Jewish people or for her fulfillment as a Jew, but the groups did give her a subtle emotional attachment to Israel. She glowingly remembers learning how to do Israeli dancing at camp and she has always retained that interest. This case shows the different ways in which the youth movements were effective. Habonim offered social opportunities that motivated B.K. to become involved. Coincidentally, as she became more attached to this social group, she strengthened her Jewish identity and gained a greater attachment to and pride for Israel, though she never saw it as a future home.

B.K. emigrated from South Africa in 1972 because of a desire to get away from her parents and see the rest of the world. She married a converted Jew and settled in the U.S. She now lives in Seattle. She feels it is important for her children to marry a Jew and retain their Jewish identity.

M.C. was born in 1941 to South African parents, members of the middle class and university-educated.⁷⁴ Though his roots went back a couple generations in South Africa, he had a very bleak view of the future there. In fact, in high school he was already planning on leaving. He did not want to raise a family in such a racially-charged environment and he wanted to escape before the “bloody revolution” he expected came.

Jews were the minority in his neighborhood and school. His parents were not too religiously observant and, in fact, as M.C. grew older, he became quite anti-religion. As a teenager he attended synagogue for social reasons. In high school, he made a deliberate effort to socialize with non-Jews, though he continued to spend time with Jewish friends through synagogue, Cheder, and the youth group. Before joining Bnei Zion around the age of 11, M.C. was strongly influenced by his father to be skeptical of the youth movements:

“Before I went to [my] first [Bnei Zion] meeting, [my] dad gave me a briefing on the youth movement and their Zionist meetings. Basically he was inoculating me against Zionism...What he had to say to me then pretty much remained with me for the rest of the years I was in South Africa. ‘Anyone who tells you you need to go to Israel, ask yourself what they’re doing in South Africa and ask them why they aren’t in Israel’. So every time we got a bit of Zionist propaganda and brainwashing in Bnei Zion, I used to somehow subtly ask the people when they were going to Israel.”

This parental influence was very important in limiting the effect of M.C.’s experiences on his Zionist development. He was “immunized” against making aliyah and therefore was resistant to most of the Zionist propaganda. He remained involved because he enjoyed the social life, especially when the meetings became coed when he was 14. Though he says that he did, coincidentally, learn a lot through Bnei Zion about Judaism

⁷⁴ M.C., Phone Interview, 2-4-03.

and Zionism, he did not embrace these ideas. Before he joined Bnei Zion, he had already developed a pro-Israel stance, influenced by his Jewish upbringing, synagogue, and Cheder. Bnei Zion did not affect his support of Israel in either direction and it certainly did not succeed in making him an ardent Zionist wanting to make aliyah.

Around the age of 15, M.C. became a madrich. He explains the range of Zionist attitudes in a self-controlled youth movement such as Bnei Zion where older members of the group teach the younger ones:

“I think the leadership of the movement was pretty Zionistically inclined, and they tried to develop Zionist attitudes as they went down the ranks. But I think there was quite a spectrum of attitudes; not everyone had the same intensity of Zionism. If they were lucky, they got someone who had a very strong Zionist intent passing on that message to the younger kids and if they weren't so lucky, they got someone like me, who was more interested in giving the kids a good time on a Sunday morning...They probably got a lot less of the Zionism from me than I got from my teachers. In fact they got no Zionism from me, they probably got more cricket!”

This ineffectiveness of passing on a strong Zionist attitude therefore perpetuates itself in a self-controlling youth movement.

This case shows how a prior indifference towards Judaism as a religion and an active resistance against Zionist propaganda can limit the effectiveness of the youth movement. Though this forum of Jewish socialization reinforced M.C.'s Jewish relationships and exposed him to some Israel education, he refused to espouse the Zionist ideals. Despite waiting for his opportunity to leave South Africa since high school, he never looked towards Israel as a way out. This shows clearly how his youth group experience was ineffective in instilling in him the Zionist pull towards aliyah.

M.C. immigrated to the U.S. in 1971. He provided his children with a mostly secular Jewish education. He admits that his children do not have as strong a Jewish identity as he might have preferred.

J.J. was born in 1949 to Eastern European immigrants, members of the upper-middle class.⁷⁵ He spent his first ten years in Heilbron, an Afrikaans farming town, and then moved to Sydenham, a Jewish neighborhood in the northern Johannesburg suburbs. He grew up in a strongly traditional Jewish family. In Johannesburg he went to a Jewish school and his main friends were Jewish. Through school, the youth group, and his extended family, his Jewish identity was constantly reinforced: “It was a very strongly immersed Jewish life in so many different ways, and you just kinda lived and breathed that.” His parents were also strongly Zionist and even talked about going to live in Israel when J.J. was around 11.

While in Heilbron, J.J. participated in Bnei Zion for a couple years. When he moved to Johannesburg he joined Habonim. He stopped attending Habonim meetings regularly at the age of 15, though he continued to go occasionally and spent a lot of time with friends who were still involved. Given the strong Jewish and Zionist influences of his family, it is no wonder that he was motivated similarly in participating in Habonim:

“My strongest motivation was probably the fact that I felt Jewish and Zionist and felt most comfortable expressing that through Habonim and their kinda ideological, socialist movement supporting the kibbutz movement in Israel.”

He admits that the fact that his friends were going added incentive, but he maintains that the social aspect of Habonim was not his primary motivation.

⁷⁵ J.J., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

With his ideological motivation, J.J. was more inspired by the ultimate goal of aliyah than M.C. was. Most of his madrichim did immigrate to Israel. At one point during medical school, J.J. did consider transferring to Israel. However, as he got older, other more immediate and practical issues – work, a girlfriend, and South African politics – distracted him from continuing along that ideological path towards aliyah. “I guess I had come to the point that I could be just as Jewish without having to live in Israel necessarily myself.” He still felt strongly Jewish, but he became less focused on Israel.

The push factor to emigrate was certainly there for J.J.; he hated South Africa politically and planned on leaving as soon as he finished his medical degree. But by the time he was ready to emigrate, he did not feel the Zionist pull towards Israel. Instead, he immigrated to London in 1976 and finally settled in the U.S. in 1980. Of course he continued to identify with Israel and Zionism remained a large part of his Jewishness, but the youth movement was not successful in inspiring his fulfillment of the ultimate goal.

Unlike M.C., J.J. was motivated to join the youth groups primarily because of Jewish and Zionist influences he experienced growing up; yet, in the end, like M.C., he did not reach the ultimate goal of making aliyah. However, J.J. was more successful in passing on a strong Jewish and Zionist identity to his kids. He raised them in a fairly traditional home and made them aware of the importance of Israel. His oldest son actually made aliyah.

This is another example of the range of effects the youth movement can have in the development of Jewish and Zionist identity. While none of the youth in this category fulfilled the ultimate Zionist goal of making aliyah, they embraced the Zionist ideals to

varying degrees. For all of the interviewees in this category, their involvement in the youth groups, at the very least, reinforced their Jewish identity and their attachment to Israel. But overall, this attachment to Israel remained on a more distant, emotional, and vicarious level. Their Zionist involvement, realistically, was just a uniting force, a means, for the South African Jewish community.

C. The Ideological Youth

While certainly motivated by social reasons as well, the Ideological youth truly embraced the Zionist ideals of the youth movement, in particular, aliyah. They seemed to be internalizing the ideas that they were exposed to in the youth groups. All those in this category immigrated to Israel. In most of these cases, their immigration to Israel seems to be in large part due to the youth movement. I have classified six of my interviewees in this category.

D.A. was born in 1952 to Eastern European immigrants, members of the middle class.⁷⁶ He grew up in Pretoria, in a non-Jewish neighborhood, however, most of his friends were Jewish, whom he met through synagogue and the youth groups, and his family gave him a strong Jewish identity. He was briefly involved with Bnei Akiva, a more religious Zionist group, around the age of 9, but then joined Habonim, with whom he remained active until the age of 16.

D.A.'s parents made him aware of anti-Semitism and the vulnerability of Jews, but he could not relate to their "Old World shtetl mentality, whereby they saw themselves

⁷⁶ D.A., Interview, Seattle, 1-5-03, 1-8-03.

as victims [and thus] should keep a low profile.” He did not believe in remaining so passive under an unjust South African government. He was not proud to be a South African and clashed with his parents often on this point: “They felt that South Africa was God’s country and they felt that they were blessed to be able to live in the society at that time, whereas I grew up being very critical of the political situation and in a sense detesting it.” His parents wanted him to stay in South Africa, but he wanted to emigrate.

This generational clash of South African identity translated into a tension over D.A.’s involvement in Habonim as well. His parents placed great value on education. They constantly stressed academics as a top priority. So, it was very important for them that he finish his degree and qualify to make a living. That he be involved Jewishly was important, however, they interpreted Habonim as too much of a threat to his educational career in South Africa:

“On the one hand [my parents] were happy that I was active with other Jewish people and involved with friends in a constructive environment, but they also had their fears that [Habonim was] pressurizing people to go to Israel before they had their educational skills or qualifications to survive.”

This attitude towards Habonim was not unusual. Many parents were wary of their children’s involvement in youth movements because they did not want their children to emigrate, which was clearly the ultimate goal of the movements.⁷⁷ Imagine their perspective. They had finally begun to establish roots in this new country. They had worked hard to get accepted into the community and attain financial security and a comfortable lifestyle. They had a very insulated Jewish social life. They stressed to their kids the importance of a good education to ensure continued upward economic mobility. Often, they were too old to emigrate themselves, so they did not want to lose their kids to

⁷⁷ Klaff, 37.

emigration. They were scared their children would abandon them alone in South Africa. They were worried that Israel was too difficult of a place to make a comfortable living. So, many parents had mixed feelings about the youth movements. They appreciated the movements for giving their children a strong Jewish identity, knowledge about Israel, and an active Jewish social life. But many were worried about the propaganda of aliyah to which their kids were being exposed in the movements. For this reason, some parents discouraged involvement and some even forbade it.

Despite his parents' skepticism, D.A. remained actively involved in Habonim. As he grew older, the youth group became a large part of his social life. He was most grateful of the friendships he made through Habonim and the positive reinforcement of his Jewish identity. "It was simply fun...It gave me a strong sense of identity, where I had great friendships, a feeling of belonging and it made me feel real positive as a Jew."

At the age of 16 he became a temporary madrich, a role in which he took great pride. He passed on to his troupe a strong Israel focus:

"[For the madrichim] there was a strong intention to provide [the children] with a Jewish identity living in South Africa, but there was also a very strong sense that the realization of these people as Jews would lie in the eventual immigration to Israel."

The Zionist pull about which D.A. learned and taught others eventually overpowered him. Along with the omnipresent push factor of wanting to get out of South Africa before the "pending overthrow of the white regime", the Zionist pull led D.A. to spend eight months in Israel in 1972 at the age of 20. He worked on a kibbutz, thus attaining the highest goal of the Habonim movement. After his time in Israel, he traveled around Europe for three months and finally moved back to South Africa. Though he considered settling in Israel at various stages in his life, he never returned to live in Israel

for such an extensive period of time. Nevertheless, since his experience on the kibbutz, he has always identified more with Israel than with South Africa.

While we cannot consider this extended visit an example of aliyah, it does show an extraordinary interest in and practical commitment to the Zionist ideology. Unlike those who were affiliated with the movement, exposed to the ideology of aliyah, but ultimately were little more than vicarious Zionists who remained in Diaspora, D.A. enacted the Zionist goal. Admittedly, he did not accept the ideology of aliyah to the same degree as others that I have classified as Ideological since he did not go to Israel with the same serious intentions of settling there. However, when compared to the Affiliated youth, his exposure to the Zionist ideology of the movement was more successful in indoctrinating him with the idea that aliyah should be a reality.

D.A. eventually immigrated to the U.S. in 1980. He still feels a strong connection to Israel and feels that is his true home. He has attempted to pass on his Jewish and Zionist pride to his children, though he worries they, along with most American Jewish children, have become too assimilated.

V.K. was born in 1942 to South African and European immigrant parents, members of the middle class.⁷⁸ He lived in Rustenberg until the age of 13 and then moved to Durban, in both places partaking in a small, but very strong and insulated Jewish community. He was raised to be strongly Jewish-identifying, though not in a religious way. He attended synagogue often as a teenager for social reasons. 99% of his friends were Jewish. He identified as Jewish first, then South African. He was not proud

⁷⁸ V.K., Interview, Delaware, 1-31-03.

to be South African. He encountered some anti-Semitism, but never felt physically afraid.

Habonim was most influential in defining V.K.'s Jewish identity. Encouraged by a cousin and supported by his parents, he joined Habonim at the age of 8. He became a madrich when he was 15. Habonim became almost his whole life, accounting for all of his social activities outside of school and sports. It was a lot of fun, but he also remembers how they took it very seriously. He recalls one time when his friend was driving him home and they were debating some ideological point of Habonim. The debate became so heated and his friend became so furious that he threw him out of the car. They were very passionate about the Habonim ideology. Even from a young age, V.K. had embraced the ideal of aliyah:

“By age 11, I’d pretty much decided I was going to go to Israel. The Zionist youth movement was a very powerful indoctrinating influence. You had madrichim who themselves were committed to going to Israel. Even if they didn’t go, at that stage they were pretty much committed to the idea.”

V.K. argues that these youth groups were so effective because they were self-controlled. There was no rabbi telling you what to say. There were adults involved, but they stayed out of the way, for the most part, and allowed you to develop your own ideology and plan your own social activities. Young people were in charge. This self-control, along with the social opportunities, made Habonim a very attractive activity for kids.

As a madrich, V.K. was focused on inspiring children to make aliyah: “By the time you were 15, you were so damn indoctrinated that the object of the game was to create a Jewish identity with the hope that this would entice people to become involved in the leadership of the movement and eventually go to Israel.” And he was successful at this,

perhaps too successful. The year that he made aliyah, so many leaders went to Israel that they destroyed the movement: there were not enough people to take their place and recharge the movement. It is important to note here how an overly intensive Israeli focus can hurt opportunities for Jewish and Zionist identity development in the Diaspora. As explained by M.C., “when a community actively promotes Zionism, they’re actively promoting the death of the Jewish community in that society...So Zionism is a double edged sword, unfortunately.”

This intense Israeli focus also came at the price of a weakened South African identity and commitment. V.K. had committed himself to Israel and therefore was less willing to involve himself in South African issues. He noticed the same tendency amongst his Habonim friends:

“By the time I got to be 14 or 15, in the youth movement, you really had to commit yourself to one strategy or another. [There was] this sort of duality. Can you act within a Zionist youth movement, in opposition to the South African government and still be involved in Zionism and the idea of going to Israel? Will the one influence or impact upon the other? The people who became more involved in the South African side, eventually never made it to Israel...The majority of the people in [my] youth movement were, I would say, anti-apartheid. We just didn’t want to get involved because we knew we’d end up in jail and we had better things to do. We had to make a choice. It’s not that we were pro-apartheid, it’s that we made a choice that our goal was to go to Israel.”

It was this attitude about which the Detached youth expressed frustration. From the perspective of those deeply involved in the youth movement, they were too focused on eventually making aliyah to be concerned with South Africa. They had already given up on South Africa; Israel was their future.

V.K. finally immigrated to Israel in 1966. He worked on a kibbutz for a year and then moved to Jerusalem. While he recalls feeling the push factor of wanting to

emigrate, he admits that he could have lived a very good life in South Africa and thus claims that it was the Zionist pull factor that was stronger in provoking his move.

V.K. later settled in the U.S. where he raised his children to be Jewish-identifying and aware of Israel. He admits that it is very difficult to convince American children of the importance of Israel and aliyah without the same structure of Zionist and religious indoctrination that he was exposed to growing up in South Africa, particularly in the youth movement.

R.S. was born in 1942 to German immigrants, members of the middle class.⁷⁹ He had a very traditional Jewish upbringing, lived in a relatively Jewish area, attended a Jewish school, went to synagogue every Shabbat, and socialized primarily with Jews: “My entire cocoon of life was Jewish.” While he was aware of anti-Semitism, he was not afraid and never saw anti-Semitism nor assimilation as real threats.

R.S. joined Habonim at the age of 8 and remained involved through university. As he grew older, it became his social life. As a medical student, all his free time activities were directed towards Habonim. It was very influential:

“Habonim was probably the single-most important factor in my life growing up to shaping my political views, shaping my view on relationships and the world, far more than my parents and far more than my Jewish day school.”

Beyond its political and social influence, Habonim was certainly important in driving R.S.’s Zionist development. He embraced the Habonim ideal of aliyah and took this very seriously:

“[Habonim] demanded a lot. It required commitment. It was very clear that, for Habonim, Zionism equaled aliyah to Israel. Anything short of that, people for example who chose to remain in South Africa and be supporters of Israel, for us, they weren’t

⁷⁹ R.S., Interview, Seattle, 1-12-03.

really Zionists. The only true Zionists were the Ben Gurion Zionists: ‘you can’t be a Zionist if you don’t come and live in Israel’.”

As a teenager, R.S. had already begun to feel the push factor: an internal sense that South Africa was not a country that had a future. Add to this the Zionist pull of the youth movement and, like V.K., he was Israel-focused, sacrificing his commitment to South Africa. Therefore, along with the other Habonim leaders, he did not get too involved in South African political activism:

“The leaders of Habonim had actually made the emotional break and we no longer felt that South Africa was our future and our country. We saw Israel as the place we were striving to go to. So we did not get involved in illegal anti-government activities, which is actually what a disproportionate number of young Jews who weren’t in the Zionist movements at the upper levels did...[The Sharpeville Massacre in 1960] was kind of the nail that for us said this is a hopeless situation. So I think in some ways we dodged the question of, ‘ok, so here you have an immoral reality around you, what do you do about it?’”

Dodging the difficult questions of maintaining a South African identity, R.S. chose to embrace his Zionist identity through involvement in Habonim and, ultimately, immigration to Israel. He made aliyah in 1964. He remained in Israel for ten years, working in a hospital, in the Israeli army, and on a communal settlement. He really wanted to stay in Israel, but his wife wanted out, so they immigrated to the U.S. in 1974. While he provided his children with a very strong pro-Israel education, he never pushed them to make aliyah. His wife and he have been frustrated with the challenge of raising Jewish children in such an assimilationist culture as America.

For the Ideological youth, Israel was an end, rather than a means by which the South African Jewish community could be strengthened. In fact, they had mostly given up on their South African identity. They embraced the movement by enacting the ideology of

aliyah. Interestingly, many of those who made aliyah eventually emigrated from Israel. However, it is clear that, at the time, they were most committed to the movement and to Israel.

Representative Accuracy of Individuals and Greater Population

Having presented a summary of the youth movement's effect on these nineteen individuals, before drawing conclusions from this sampling of interviewees, I must acknowledge certain limitations of the study. The first limitation deals with the accuracy of my representation and classification of the individual. The second limitation deals with the degree to which these individuals were representative of the greater population.

Firstly, one might challenge how the individuals are represented in my study. Isolating influences and motivations to explain your own actions is hard enough. The task is even more difficult when analyzing another person's experience. My analysis and categorization of individual interviewees was only as accurate as my understanding and their honesty. The representation of these individuals was my interpretation of how the interviewees chose to present themselves. This is an inevitable fact of the process of oral history. There are always limitations to how closely an outsider can zoom in on reality. There is always a chance of misrepresentation. In acknowledgement of this risk, I can only say that we did our best. I attempted, with great care and patience, to understand and portray an accurate picture of the individual; the interviewees were also cooperative and seemed to participate in the process with incredible honesty and sincerity.

Secondly, one might challenge how representative the sampling is in my study. Due to the small size of my sampling, it likely does not reflect a general reality experienced

by the greater population. It would be very naive to assume that nineteen individuals are representative of tens of thousands. Almost all of my interviewees were affiliated with a youth movement. In actuality, according to the Zionist Youth Council census of 1966 and the South African census of 1970, about 28 per cent of South African Jewish youth aged eight to eighteen were members in some youth movement. Total membership including all the movements was 6,800: 3,618 in Habonim, 1,483 in Betar, 1,478 in Bnei Akiva, and 221 in Hashomer Hatzair.⁸⁰ According to these statistics then, my sampling was not at all representative of youth movement affiliation. If I had attempted to generalize about the greater population based on my sampling, I would have concluded that two out of every nineteen South African Jewish youth were Detached. In reality, nearly three out of every four were Detached.

While my sampling was not representative of the greater South African Jewish population, it was perhaps more representative of the population that was affiliated to a youth movement. Still, there were limitations: while individuals in my sampling categorized as Affiliated were realistically the majority, the number categorized as Ideological was too high to accurately reflect the greater affiliated population. Six of the seventeen movement-affiliated youth had made aliyah and were thus classified as Ideological. This is an unrealistic proportion. From 1960 to 1974 there was a yearly average of about 400 South African emigrants to Israel.⁸¹ By 1972 it was estimated that 5,500 former South African residents had settled in Israel, a little under five per cent of the total South African Jewish population.⁸² Regardless of the fact that these numbers might be impressive when compared with other Diaspora countries, South African

⁸⁰ Shimoni, 261.

⁸¹ Dubb, 108.

⁸² Shimoni, 260.

emigrants to Israel were a very small minority. By these statistics, in an average sampling of seventeen movement-affiliated youth, it would be unusual that even one of those seventeen made aliyah. Therefore, six out of seventeen is extremely high. This bias is probably attributable to the fact that almost all of my interviewees were emigrants since I was doing my interviewing in America. They were clearly willing to emigrate in general and thus were more likely to immigrate to Israel than the average South African. If I lived in South Africa and did the same study, because of geographical convenience my sampling would have included more interviewees currently residing in South Africa and most likely would have told a different story.

It is important to acknowledge these inconsistencies between my sampling and the greater population. My interviewees apparently were more influenced by the youth movements than the average South African Jew. In reality, those who were affiliated with a youth movement were a minority and those who were affiliated and made aliyah were an extremely small minority. Recognizing this enables us now to make confident and accurate conclusions.

Conclusion

In the introduction I established that my primary focus was to explore the effect of the Zionist youth movement on the *individualized* process of identity construction and negotiation. With this goal, a conclusion section might seem paradoxical. The emphasis of this study was a sort of zooming in on individual stories. The act of conclusion is often the opposite: a zooming out. It is a statement of an overarching theme generalizing across individual data. My first conclusion, then, is that there is no conclusion. Identity is as individual as it gets. No two children have the same influences, motivations, or experiences, so no two children are affected in the same way. What was Habonim's effect on a child's South African, Jewish, and Zionist identity? I would respond to that question with this one: Which child? This thesis was primarily an exploration of the individual. Rather than study this topic from the perspective of Habonim, the organization, I chose to look at it through the eyes of the individual.

Nevertheless, there were similarities amongst the individuals I interviewed, which lead me to suggest the following conclusion: the majority of youth affiliated with Habonim used the movement as another social group, which provided them with great self-pride and communal bonds. The youth movement enabled an involvement of vicarious Zionism, which intensified the member's Jewish identity and strengthened the Jewish community in South Africa. The average affiliated youth participated for social reasons, was exposed to the Zionist ideology, and emerged from the experience as a strongly-identifying Jew with an emotional attachment to Israel. The movement was mostly unsuccessful in recruiting immigrants to Israel, but its indirect effect was positive for the survival of the Jewish people.

Like all youth, these nineteen individuals spent much of their younger years experimenting with involvement in various social groups. Many of their elders pressured them to remain primarily in Jewish groups. However, there were very few opportunities for them as adolescents to identify as Jewish and be a proud member of the community on their own terms. The youth movement offered such an opportunity. In the beginning, it was just another social activity. All the other Jewish kids in the neighborhood had joined, so of course you would join too. Habonim capitalized on this pressure and need for a fun, Jewish social forum, providing just that. Slowly though, the children were exposed to the real ideology of the movement.

As the Zionist emphasis increased and the ultimate goal of aliyah was presented to the members, they reacted in different ways. The Zionist element turned some away from the movement, but with others, it caught on. One way to measure the degree to which it “caught on”, which I used in this study, is to look at the member’s decisions regarding aliyah. This ultimate decision reveals an individual’s constructed identity because it marks a transition from a state of passively receiving influences to one of actively choosing a path of identification. The true Zionist chose aliyah. Though small in number, these true Zionists made an important contribution to the Israeli people.

However, the majority of participants, the Affiliated youth, did not make aliyah. They continued to participate because Habonim fulfilled a social need. It was fun. Although their motivations were mostly recreational, their experience in the movement still affected their identity. Involvement in the youth movement reinforced and intensified one’s Jewish feeling. There were several potential Jewish influences in an

adolescent's life, but the youth movement was one of the most effective in encouraging the youth to actively and proudly identify as Jewish in their own way.

According to my interviewees, South African Jews identified first and foremost as Jews. The significance of their South African and Zionist identity varied, but their Jewish identity was almost unanimously most important. For many, Habonim was an essential part of their Jewish identification growing up. Though they were a minority, youth movement participants still had a significant impact on the development of South African Jewry. Whether they remained in South Africa, made aliyah or immigrated elsewhere, the Zionist youth movement had a positive effect in ensuring the survival of the Jewish identity of South Africans in the mid-20th century.

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

(I used this list only as a guide, so not all of these questions were asked in every interview. I focused primarily on certain key questions, indicated by two preceding asterisks: '**'.)

1. Background Information

**Date of birth?

Place of birth?

**Where did you spend most of your childhood/adolescence?

2. Family Background

**How long had your family (ancestors) lived in South Africa?

Where did they come from?

Why did they come?

What did your parents do?

**What social status would you say your family belonged to?

3. Jewish Background

**Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

**How religious was your family?

How often did you go to shul?

Were you involved in other shul activities?

What other Jewish activities were you and your family involved in?

Was your family involved in a landsmanshaft (society of immigrants from same town/region in Old country)?

Was your family involved in another charitable society (Chevra Kadisha, Mizrachi, etc.)?

Was your family involved in a Zionist group (besides your youth group)?

Did your parents socialize with non-Jews?

**Did you socialize with non-Jews?

How many Jews were in your school? Was there a Jewish Day school in your area?

What activities (sports, clubs, etc.) were you involved in?

**Where/How did you do most of your socializing?

**Would you say you identified as Jewish first and then South African or vice versa?

Were you proud to be South African? Are you proud to be South African?

4. Political Background

**How would you describe your family's political views (conservative, liberal, etc.)?

What were your parents' opinions on apartheid?

What were your opinions on apartheid?

Did you ever participate in anti-apartheid protests?

Were you involved in any political groups?

What newspapers did your family read?

**What were your parent's opinions on the future of South Africa?

5. Generational Transition

At the time, what did your parents try to teach you about life?

What pressures did your parents put on you academically? socially? professionally?

What did your parents tell you about their past?

Did they try to teach you anything about Jewish history?

Did they ever discuss anti-Semitism and the Holocaust? What did they say?

6. Jewish Identity

**Growing up, why were you a Jew? What defined your Jewish identity? Where did you get your Jewishness? What made you feel Jewish? What had the strongest influence on your Jewish identity? (identifying with your family's Jewish roots, hanging out with your Jewish friends, being involved in shul, being Zionist, etc.)

**Now, why are you a Jew (if you are, that is. if you aren't, why)? What defines your Jewish identity? What motivates you to be actively Jewish or to encourage your kids to be so? What continues to make you feel Jewish?

**Did you or anyone you knew personally encounter anti-Semitism? How did that affect you? Were you afraid for your future as a Jew in South Africa?

**Arguably the 2 biggest threats in a Jewish community in Diaspora are (1) anti-Semitism and (2) assimilation. Growing up, were those threats ever talked about with regard to the South African Jewish community? Were those threats real? Were they so real that you were scared for the future of South African Jewry?

7. Zionist Involvement

Outside of your activities with a Zionist group, what did you hear of Palestine/Israel from your parents, newspapers, friends, etc.?

**Why did you originally get involved in a Zionist group?

**Did your parents encourage you to participate in Zionist activities?

**Which Zionist groups were you in growing up (B'nei Zion, Habonim, Betar, etc.)?

Why did you choose that particular one(s)? Was it a conscious decision? Were you aware at the time of other groups in the area? What was the difference between the groups?

At what ages did you participate in these groups?

What did you do?

How often did you meet? When? Where?

Were there dues? Who paid them and to whom?

Who organized the activities?

How did you hear of upcoming events and meetings?

Was there a newsletter?

Were you required/expected/pressured to attend meetings?

**Did the majority of Jews in your area participate in a Zionist youth group? Was it 'cool' to go to Zionist activities? At what ages?

Who were the teachers/leaders/organizers? How old were they?

What was your favorite activity?

What was your favorite part about the Zionist group? Why did you keep going?

Did you ever attend national Zionist conventions? If so, what were those like?

At the time, did you realize that these groups were international organizations?

**At the time, when they taught you scouting skills (camping, knot-tying, etc.), did you understand how that related (to enable you to settle on a kibbutz in Israel)? Did the group leaders make it clear how you would use these skills?

**At the time, did you think of this type of instruction as your real preparation for settling in Israel, or was it just fun to go camping, etc.?

**At the time, how aware were you of the political slant of your group? For example Habonim's ideology was very socialist. As a kid, did you believe in that aspect of the group? Was that part of what made you interested in the group or was it irrelevant or unnoticeable? What did your parents think of the political aspect?

Did you ever visit Israel? If so: Why? With whom? How long? What did you do there? How did your trip affect you as Jew? a Zionist? a South African?

**Was your involvement in a Zionist group influential in your decision to visit Israel?

How many kids from your group went to Israel to visit or live?

**Growing up you were probably surrounded by Zionism (in Cheder, in shul, at home). Was there anything unique about the Zionist youth groups that affected you as a Zionist or as a Jew? Would you be any less, more, or a different type of Zionist, if not for your involvement in these groups? Were the youth groups any more effective in making you Zionist?

**Now, try to put yourself in the perspective of one of these Zionist youth group leaders or madrichim: at the time, by organizing these Zionist events, were you really trying to get this generation to immigrate to Israel or were you merely trying to create a strong Jewish community in South Africa by providing another forum for Jewish socialization?

**Now, forget your perspective now, try to put yourself in the perspective of you as a child. Every Sunday or whatever day when you got ready to go to a Zionist youth group activity, why were you excited? What about the meeting were you looking forward to? Was it seeing your friends? Was it learning the necessary skills to enable you to move to

Israel? Was it singing and dancing with your friends? Was it learning about Israeli culture?

****Did you want to be involved in a Zionist group because you believed in and were interested by Zionist ideology and you were thinking of your future as a Jew and the future of the entire Jewish population; or was this just another social opportunity? How do you think the majority of the kids in your group would answer that question?**

****If you participated back then mainly for social reasons, in retrospect, was it also successful in making you more a Zionist?**

****Were your parents Zionist? Did they define making aliyah as a definite part of Zionism? Did they think it was important for you to make aliyah?**

8. Emigration

If you emigrated from South Africa, why? If you did not emigrate, why?

****Did you leave South Africa because you didn't see a future there as a South African or you didn't see a future there as a Jew?**

Where did you immigrate to and why there?

****Was your experience in the Zionist group at all influential in your choice to emigrate and in your destination?**

Did you consider immigrating to Israel? Why or why not?

****At the time, did you get the impression that your parents were encouraging you to assimilate into South African culture or did they want you to immigrate to Israel or someplace else? Where did they see your future?**

****The following are two arguments for the role of Zionist youth groups in South Africa. After reading each, answer the four questions below.**

- a) Jewish communities in Diaspora are in danger. Young Jews risk losing their Jewish identity by succumbing to the pressures of assimilation. Also, Jewish communities in Diaspora are susceptible to anti-Semitism. All Jews in Diaspora must make *aliyah*. Only through immigration to Israel, can one's role as a Jew truly be fulfilled and the future of Jewry saved. Zionist youth groups focused on helping young Jews prepare to immigrate to Israel. A by-product was a strong South African Jewish community, but the primary focus of the Zionist youth groups was encouraging immigration to Israel.
- b) While it is true Jewish communities in Diaspora risk being confronted with anti-Semitism and assimilating, this is all the more reason to strengthen these Jewish communities in Diaspora. It is not realistic to expect everyone to drop everything and move to Israel. It is important to support Israel, financially and otherwise, to

ensure a haven for persecuted Jews, but there is no realistic need for South Africans to emigrate, although if some want to, that's great. Rather, let's focus on building a strong Jewish community in South Africa. Let's not only send money to Israel, let's invest some of it in our future here in South Africa. Zionist youth groups, by educating about Jewish history and Israel, brought young South African Jews together, which created strong connections and created a sense of community and a bright future for the Jewish community in Diaspora. A by-product was Zionism, but the primary focus of Zionist youth groups was building a strong South African Jewish community.

**At the time, which argument did you think best characterized the role of Zionist youth groups in South Africa? What did you think the groups were really trying to do?

**In retrospect, which argument do you think best characterizes the role of Zionist youth groups in South Africa for that time period? Now, what do you think the groups were really trying to do?

**At the time, which role did you think they should play?

**Now, which role do you think they should play?

9. Retrospective Comparisons

Try to remember your childhood perspective: Growing up, what did you think it meant to be a Zionist? Did it mean believing in the necessity of a Jewish State for persecuted Jews? Did it mean believing in the necessity of a Jewish State for all Jews? Did it mean sending money to Israel? Did it mean voting for politicians friendly to Israel? Did it mean immigrating to Israel?

From your perspective now, what does it mean today to be a Zionist?

**Growing up, did you think immigrating to Israel was an important part of Zionism?

Now, do you think immigrating to Israel is any more or less important a part of Zionism?

If your answers to the previous two questions are different, what do you think has changed?

How has your Zionist involvement then affected your life since childhood and how does it continue to affect you now?

Have your thoughts on Zionism and Israel changed since then?

**How does your present Jewish community compare to your South African Jewish community growing up?

How and why do you think they differ?

**How is the role of Zionist groups in building your Jewish community today different from the role of Zionist groups in building your Jewish community growing up?

10. Another Generational Transition

Are your kids involved in any Zionist activities or groups like you were growing up?

How have they developed their Jewish identity? How is that different to how you developed your Jewish identity?

**What have you tried to pass on to your kids in terms of your Jewish identity? your South African identity? your Zionist identity?

**Did your Zionist involvement influence how you raised your kids?

Are your kids more assimilated than you were? If so, why do you think that is? Does it worry you that they are losing their Jewish identity?

Bibliography

Secondary Sources:

Abramowitz, Yosef, Jews, Zionism & South Africa, USA: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1986.

Arkin, Marcus, South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey [Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1984]

Barnavi, Eli (ed.), A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present, Torino, Italy: G. Canale & C. S.p.A., 1992.

Ben Gurion, David, "The A.B.C. of Zionist Policy", Habonim Library, No.1, Spring 1945, New York: Habonim Labor Zionist Youth.

Bernstein, Edgar, South African Jewry, 1944.

Breslau, David, Arise and Build: The Story of American Habonim, New York: Shulsinger Bros. Linotyping & Publishing Co., 1961

Burman, Sandra and Pamela Reynolds (ed.'s), Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986. Frankental, Sally and Milton Shain, "The Open Ghetto: Growing UP Jewish in South Africa", p. 208-225.

DellaPergola, Sergio and Allie Dubb, South African Jewry: A Sociodemographic Profile, American Jewish Year Book Volume 88, 1988, Jerusalem: Hebrew University

Dubb, Allie, Jewish South Africans: A Sociological View of the Johannesburg Community, Grahamstown, South Africa: Rhodes University, 1977.

Gilman, Sander and Shain, Milton (eds.), Jewries at the Frontier: Accomodation Identity Conflict, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. Shimoni, Gideon, "From One Frontier to Another: Jewish Identity and Political Orientation in Lithuania and South Africa, 1890-1939.

Gitlin, Marcia, The Vision Amazing: The Story of South African Zionism, Johannesburg: The Menorah Book Club, 1950.

Golden Jubilee, 1928-1978: Report to the 18th National Education Conference, Johannesburg: South African Board of Jewish Education, 1978.

Hartog, Anna, "The Jewish Communal Settlements in Palestine", Habonim Library, No. 3, Fall 1945, New York: Habonim.

- Herzl, Theodor, The Jewish State, New York, NY: Harry Gantt, 1970.
- Hirson, Baruch, Revolutions in my Life, Cape Town: Creda Press, 1995.
- Kaplan, Mendel and Robertson, Marian (ed.s), Founders and Followers: Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915, Goodwood, South Africa: National Book Printers, 1991.
- Klaff, Vivian, “An Exploratory Study of the South African Youth Movement, Habonim. its Structure, Ideology and Conflicts.” Honours Thesis for the Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Natal, Durban. 1965. (Thanks again to Professor Klaff for allowing me to borrow this manuscript.)
- Laqueur, Walter, A History of Zionism, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.
- Livneh, Eliezer, Toward Unity of Youth and the Kibutz Movement, 1939.
- Musiker, Naomi, Guide to the Manuscript Archives in the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 2001.
- Opie, Frank, The Global Scout: Scouting for Nature and the Environment, Cape Town: CTP Book Printers, 1993.
- Poliva, Joseph, A Short History of the Jewish Press and Literature of South Africa from its Earliest Days until the Present Time, Johannesburg: Prompt Printing Co.
- Saron, Gustav, The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, its role and development: an analytical review on its 70th Anniversary, Johannesburg: South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1973.
- Saron, Gustav, The Jews of South Africa: An Illustrated History to 1953, with an Epilogue to 1975, Johannesburg: Scarecrow Books, 2001.
- Shain, Milton, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994.
- Shimoni, Gideon, Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience, (1910-1967), Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Shimoni, Gideon, “From One Frontier to Another: Jewish Identity and Political Orientation in Lithuania and South Africa, 1890-1939”; Gilman, Sander and Shain, Milton (eds.), Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Shur, Chaim, Shomrim in the Land of Apartheid: The Story of Hashomer Hatzair in South Africa 1935-1970, Kibbutz Dalia: Ma’arechet Publishing House, 1998.

South African Zionist Federation, Nine Dynamic Decades: A Tribute to 90 Years of Zionism in South Africa, 1989.

Primary Sources:

South African Habonim Council, How to Pass madregah Sheniyah, Johannesburg, 1938.

The South African Habonim Council. The Habonim Handbook. Johannesburg: Typo-Art (Pty.) Ltd., 1953.

The Story of World Habonim, World Habonim, 1956.

The following sources come from the Habonim Archive at the University of Cape Town Libraries (I am most grateful to Lesley Hart, manager of Special Collections Information Services, for arranging copies of these sources to be sent to me):

Report of Chairman of the Hanhagah to Moatzah (1953), D.

Report on Shichvat Hashtilim to Moatzah (1953), D.

Report of Shichvat Abonim to Moatza (1953), D.

Report of Shichvat Hashomrim to Moatza (1953), D.

Chalutz Register Report to Moatzah (1953), D.

Bet Habonim, D.

Report to Moatzah from Galil Ma'aravi, Meyer Jaffe –Bakoach. Period of report: July 1951-June 1953

Habinyan, Vol. 19, No. 2, Septmeber, 1953.

“Heritage”, Habonim (Southern Africa), Volume 1, No. 2, October 1988

Extracts from Trees and Nature: Shatal’s Chats on Hashtilim

Fourth Talk: Games, E.

Websites:

Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, <www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/usjewpop1.html>, 4-15-03.

<www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/gallery/8-big.htm>, 4-15-03. (Picture on cover page).

Interviews:

Primary Interviews:

S.C., Phone Interview, 1-2-03.

R.S., Interview, Seattle, 1-12-03.

D.A., Interview, Seattle, 1-5-03, 1-8-03.

D.G., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

V.K., Interview, Delaware, 1-31-03.

K.A., Interview, Seattle, 1-15-03.

D.I., Phone Interview, 2-4-03.

M.C., Phone Interview, 2-4-03.

J.J., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

K.R., Interview, Seattle, 1-7-03.

B.L., Interview, Seattle, 1-16-03.

H.E., Email Interview, 2-15-03.

G.K., Interview, Seattle, 1-13-03.

B.K., Interview, Seattle, 1-17-03.

D.S., Interview, Seattle, 1-12-03.

E.F., Interview, Philadelphia, 1-26-03.

C.P., Email Interview, 1-31-03.

L.W., Email Interview, 1-29-03.

B.E., Email Interview, 2-15-03.

Secondary Research Interviews:

Gordon, Doddie, Email Interview, 2-18-03, 3-31-03.

Issroff, Saul, Email Interview, 9/02-4/03

Rabinowitz, Ann, Email Interview, 9-29-02

Shain, Milton, Email Interview, 10-21-02

Shimoni, Gideon, Email Interview, 10-20-02