

— Chapter 2 —

FROM HAVEN TO HEAVEN

Changing Patterns of Immigration to Israel



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Introduction

At the end of 1919, the Jewish population of Palestine was estimated to be about 56,000 people.¹ By May 1948, when the Jewish State was established, the number of Jews had increased by a factor of twelve, to around 650,000. Most of the population growth during this period was due to immigration—the most important factor in the development of the Jewish community during the British Mandate period. Indeed, the history of the Zionist colonization of Palestine is to a large extent the history of Jewish migrations. In fact, Israeli historiography of the pre-state years employs periodization that follows five, well-defined migration waves from 1882 to 1938, and an additional wave for those arriving illegally between 1939 and 1948. During statehood, immigration continued to be a major source of Jewish population growth (Della Pergola 1998). In the fifty-two years between 1948 and 2000, an additional 2.8 million immigrants came to Israel. Consequently, by the end of 2000, nearly 40 percent of Israel's Jewish residents were immigrants (i.e., foreign-born), and over 70 percent were either immigrants or children of immigrants (i.e., second-generation immigrants). Surely, the demographic history—and to a large extent the social, cultural, political and economic history—of Israel has been shaped by its migration patterns.

In the following pages I will provide an overview of the immigration patterns to Israel in the last half century, with a special emphasis on post-1967 immigrants. The chapter consists of two main parts. The first part examines immigration patterns to Israel since 1948 and their effect on the national and ethnic structures of Israeli society. The migration patterns of

the last decades, as well as the long term effects of the pre-1967 migrations, resulted in a population structure whose ethnicity and nationality is no longer a simple matter to classify. The current classificatory system, based on country of birth, fails to capture the changing nature of the Israeli population. The second part of the chapter focuses on the skill levels with which immigrants arrived in Israel during the past five decades. I will argue that the increase in immigrants' schooling levels between pre- and post-1967 immigrants is mainly due to changes in immigrants' selection patterns (i.e., changes in the type of people who immigrated to Israel) within source countries.

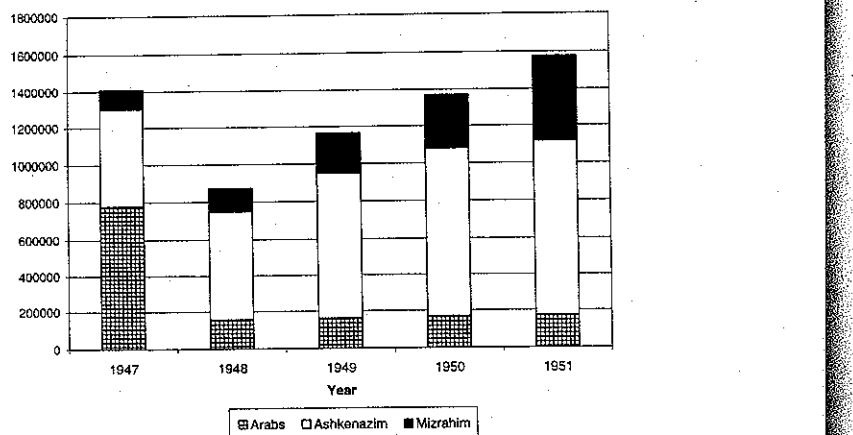
Immigration Patterns

In order to understand the making of Israel's ethnic composition, it is useful to distinguish between three main periods of immigration: the mass migration of the years from 1948 to 1951; the North African immigrations of the 1950s and 1960s; and the post-1967 immigrations (including two main waves, one in the 1970s and the other in the 1990s).

The Demographic Transformation, 1947–1951

The mass migration of the years from 1948 to 1951 brought nearly 700,000 Jews to a Jewish population base of approximately the same size. Most writers analyze this wave with little or no reference to the Arab exodus of 1947 to 1949. Yet the period between December 1947 and August 1951 is the most crucial in Israel's demographic history. During these forty-four months Israel underwent what I call a demographic transformation. The transformation involved two migration processes of about equal size: the (forced) emigration of the Palestinians, on the one hand, and the mass immigration of Jews, on the other hand. The exodus of Palestinians started in December 1947, and lasted nearly two years. During that period, approximately 760,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes in the cities and villages, and about four hundred Arab villages were destroyed (Morris 1987). The Jewish mass migration started in May 1948. In the following three years, 678,000 Holocaust survivors and Middle Eastern Jews were brought to Israel. Until the middle of 1949, 124,000 Jewish immigrants were housed in vacant Arab houses, mostly in cities (Lissak 1999). In 1948 to 1949 alone, 144 new Jewish communities were established (Naor and Giladi 1990), many of them on or near the lands of destroyed Arab villages. While these processes hardly affected the total size of Israel's population (fig. 2.1), they radically transformed its national composition. The proportion of Jews in the area to become Israel in 1949 increased from 44.7 percent² in 1947 (Bachi 1974), to 89 percent at the end of 1951 (Central Bureau of Statistics, CBS 2001), resulting in a record-high Jewish majority that has not been surpassed since.

FIGURE 2.1 The Demographic Transformation of Israel—National and Ethnic Composition, 1947–1951



Sources: For the number of Jews and Arabs, see Bachi (1974), and Statistical Abstract of Israel (2001). For the number of Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, see my estimates based on Goldscheider (1989, 1996), and Statistical Abstracts of Israel (different years).

The demographic transformation not only secured the Jewish majority in the new state, but it also altered the ethnic composition of its Jewish population. Before 1948, 90 percent of Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel during the thirty-one years of the British Mandate (1917–48) were born in Europe (most of them in Poland and Russia), and only 10 percent in Asia (most of them in Yemen and Turkey) and Africa (Bachi 1974: 93). The mass migration equalized the proportions. About half the immigrants came from countries in Asia and Africa, and the other half were mostly European-born survivors of the Jewish Holocaust. Three source countries—Iraq, Romania, and Poland, each with over 100,000 immigrants—accounted for about half the immigrants arriving in the mass migration. The other major source countries were Yemen, Turkey, Libya, Morocco, Iran, and Egypt in the Middle East, and Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in Europe. Consequently, the proportion of Mizrahim (the present-day label for Jews of Asian or African origin) among Israel's Jews, increased from about 12 percent in 1948 (Goldscheider 1996: 30), to about 33 percent in 1951 (Goldscheider 1989).

Most immigrants who arrived in Israel during the mass migration were refugees who were brought by the state with the help of Jewish organizations. What can explain the desire of the state to bring so many immigrants in such a short time? Surely, the fear for the fate of Jews in some countries played a role, as did the desire to fulfill the core theme of the Zionist ideology—bringing Jews to Israel in a short time,³ thereby sealing or at least securing the demographic transformation by increasing the Jewish population. Finally, the 1948 war (that lasted well into 1949)

demanded human resources that were expected to be met by the new immigrants (Lissak 1999; Friedlander and Goldscheider 1979: 92). Thus, some Holocaust survivors were issued military draft orders while still in Displaced Person camps in Europe, even before they had become Israeli citizens (Grodzinsky 1998).

The North African (Mostly Moroccan) Immigrations, 1952–1967

The “mass migration” ended in the second half of 1951. In part, this was the result of Israel's policy, as the major operations of the mass migration period were completed, bringing to Israel the entire Jewish communities of Yemen, Bulgaria and Iraq. In some other countries Jews were no longer allowed to emigrate. In addition, a restrictive migration policy was adopted in 1952 for a short time. However, available evidence suggests that the decline in immigration preceded the policy change (Friedlander and Goldscheider 1979). Moreover, the effectiveness and success of the restrictive policy is questionable. At any rate, following three years of low immigration rates (in 1953 net migration was negative), immigration continued, albeit at a slower pace. In the fifteen years between 1952 and the end of 1967, 582,000 immigrants arrived. This migration wave accentuated the ethnic transformation of the Jewish state, and helped maintain the Jewish majority in the face of the higher fertility rate of the Arab minority. Immigrants from Asia and especially North Africa comprised about 60 percent of this wave. Moroccan Jews alone numbered 210,000 in this period, and an additional 60,000 immigrants came from other North African countries. Romanian Jews were the largest European group with about 109,000 immigrants. In fact, in all years during this period (1957 being the exception) Moroccan and Romanian Jews together outnumbered immigrants from all other source countries combined.

The pre-1967 immigration has had a long-term effect on Israel's ethnic composition. Since Mizrahi immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s were younger and had a higher fertility rate than the Ashkenazim, the proportion of Mizrahim in the Jewish population grew, reaching parity with the Ashkenazim in the early 1970s and maintaining it at least until 1990 (Goldscheider 1996: 30)⁴. A comparison between the sizes of Romanian and Moroccan groups illustrates this point. As shown in table 2.1, these are the top two source countries for Jewish immigration during the pre-1967 period, sending a similar number of immigrants to Israel (Romania 227,000; Morocco 238,000). In 2000 there were about 500,000 Moroccan Jews in Israel (167,000 Moroccan-born, and 333,000 second-generation), but only about 250,000 Romanians (121,000 Romanian-born, and 126,000 second-generation).⁵ Differential fertility rates in Israel are the main reason for the dramatic increase in the relative size of Moroccan-Israelis during the past thirty-three years, a period in which only about 28,000 Moroccan and 39,000 Romanian immigrants came to Israel. In short, in order to understand the making of the ethnic mosaic of the Israeli society,

TABLE 2.1 Immigrants by Country of Birth, 1948–2000

Period of Immigration	1948–51	1952–67	1968–88	1989–00	Total 1948–00	1919–48
<i>Country</i>						
Total Asia	237,704	67,722	57,122	14,078	376,626	40,776
Iran	21,910	28,811	23,539	1,708	75,968	3,536
Iraq	123,371	3,838	1,955	291	129,455	–
Turkey	34,547	13,499	10,908	1,303	60,257	8,277
Yemen	48,315	2,118	142	90	50,665	15,838
Syria ¹	2,913	4,862	3,703	93	11,571	–
India-Pakistan	2,176	11,312	11,684	1,041	26,213	–
Other Asia	4,472	3,282	5,191	9,552	22,497	13,125
Total Africa	93,285	279,213	72,759	53,935	499,192	4,033
Morocco	28,264	210,115	24,420	3,290	266,089	994 ²
Algeria	3,811	10,566	7,331	1,655	23,363	–
Tunisia	13,294	32,84	16,239	1,610	53,984	–
Libya	30,976	3,329	1,430	72	35,807	873
Ethiopia	10	82	14,691	41,854	56,647	–
South Africa	666	2,457	11,143	3,366	17,632	259
Egypt-Sudan	8,760	19,198	1,899	243	30,100	–
Other Africa	7,504	625	5,606	1,845	15,580	1,907
Total Europe	332,802	213,479	290,798	931,603	1,768,682	377,487
USSR	8,163	23,851	172,043	885,435 ³	1,089,492	52,350
Poland	106,414	47,143	13,543	3,126	170,226	170,127
France	3,050	3,699	20,074	11,903	38,726	1,637
Romania	117,950	109,273	31,000	7,583	265,806	41,105
Hungary	14,324	11,559	2,353	2,542	30,778	10,342
Bulgaria	37,260	2,359	292	3,965	43,868	7,057
Czechoslovakia	18,788	2,417	2,103	522	23,830	16,794
Germany ⁴	10,842	3,755	7,061	2,437	24,095	52,591
UK	1,907	3,479	14,469	5,538	25,393	1,574
Other Europe	14,104	5,944	27,860	8,560	56,468	23,910
Total America	3,822	22,239	112,065	40,205	178,331	7,579
Argentina	904	10,138	27,224	11,686	49,952	238
USA	1,711	5,111	56,182	17,693	80,697	6,635
Brazil-Uruguay-Chile	418	4,194	13,182	4,020	21,814	–
Oceania	119	348	2,994	1,157	4,618	72
Other America	670	2,448	12,483	5,649	21,250	634
Unknown	19,129	671	1,656	523	26,979	52,982
Total	686,739	583,327	534,391	1,040,344	2,844,801	482,587

¹Until 1972 with Lebanon.²Including immigrants from Algeria and Tunisia.³Since 1995, including 52,000 immigrants who were born in Asian Republics. Before 1955, all immigrants from the former Soviet Union were classified as Europeans.⁴Until 1972 with Austria.

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics. Special Series No. 489; 457; 503; 528; 547; 580; 632; 642; 672; 706; 723; 747; 773; 790; 808; 833; 858. Statistical Abstract of Israel, different years.

fertility patterns are as important as numbers of immigrants. Interestingly, the differences in total fertility rates between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi women have been attenuated over the years, and among the second generation the gap was entirely closed by 1995 (CBS 2001: 3.15).

The Post-1967 Period: Ideological and Economic Immigrants

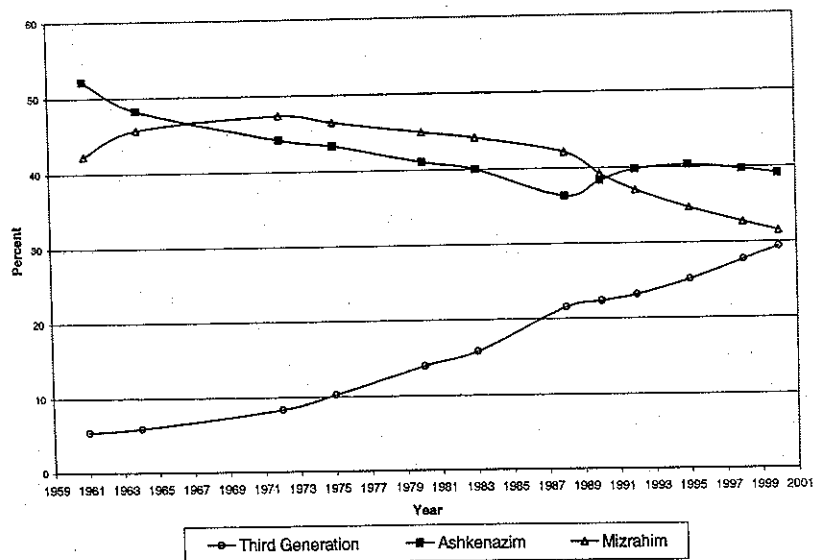
The migration waves following the 1967 war were different from those preceding the war. Israel's economic development has made it an increasingly attractive destination country for immigrants seeking to improve their economic situation, rather than a haven for refugees. With the exception of about 56,000 Ethiopian immigrants arriving in two waves in 1984 and 1991, entire groups are no longer being brought to Israel in military-like operations, nor are there refugees who have no choice but to come to Israel. Rather, most of the 1.5 million immigrants who came to Israel in the post-1967 period elected to do so for economic, political, ideological or religious reasons. The Israeli victory in the 1967 war and its aftermath attracted nearly 200,000 Jewish immigrants from the developed countries of North America, Western Europe (mostly France and Britain), Australia, and South Africa. These immigrants, especially the North Americans (about 70,000) and to a lesser extent the West Europeans, included a disproportionate number of ideological immigrants—mostly right-wing religious zealots, as evidenced by their crowding into the Jewish settlements in the West Bank.⁶ Immigrants from South America also started to come after 1967, and until 2000 about 60,000 of them, mostly from Argentina, arrived in Israel. They too, should not be viewed as refugees, although some of them—mostly those with left-wing affiliations—fled the repressive regimes in South America in the 1970s and 1980s. Likewise, the 160,000 Soviet Jews arriving in the 1970s could have gone to the U.S. where they were offered refugee status, but most of those leaving the USSR during the 1970s decided to immigrate to Israel (Dominitz 1997). Although refugee status in the U.S. is not available to the current wave of immigrants from the former USSR, they too, must not be viewed as stateless refugees. Rather, the 885,000 immigrants arriving during the years from 1989 to 2000 are rational decision makers who elected to leave the former Soviet Union and reside in Israel, where they believe that they and their offspring will fare better than in their source countries.

The impact of the post-1967 wave, and especially the post-1989 wave on Israel's ethnic and national composition cannot be exaggerated. Less than 12 percent of the immigrants arriving since 1989 were born in Asia or Africa (including those born in the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union). Consequently, the proportion of first- and second-generation Mizrahim among Israeli Jews declined from 44 percent in 1983 to 31 percent in 2000, while the proportion of their Ashkenazi counterparts remained stable at about 40 percent. The remaining 16 percent in 1983 and 29 percent in 2000 are third-generation Israelis (Israeli-born to fathers

who were also born in Israel), defined in official statistics as being of "Israeli origin." Origin is defined in Israeli statistics strictly by one's country of birth, and for the Israeli-born, by father's country of birth. The reliance on an objective definition of country of birth as the sole indicator of ethnicity, together with the decision to trace it only one generation, results in the elimination of ancestry and ethnicity from official statistics within two generations, or about fifty years. Whether such administrative rulings affect identities or change the role of ethnicity in Israel remains to be seen. So far, available evidence suggests that the role of ethnicity has not diminished in the past twenty years, at least with respect to voting patterns,⁷ and, in particular, in determining social and economic standing.

Unlike their Jewish counterparts, Arab citizens of Israel, some 1.2 million in 2000, are unable to attain the status of having an "Israeli origin" no matter how many generations their ancestors have resided in Israel. Rather, they are referred to as "Arabs" (until 1995 they were referred to merely as "non-Jews" or as "other religions"), and are divided in official statistics by their religion—Muslims (the largest group, comprising about 80 percent of all non-Jews in Israel), Christians, and Druze. Following the 1967 war, Israel

FIGURE 2.2 Ethnic Composition of the Jewish Population—percent Mizrahim, Ashkenazim, and Third-Generation Jews, 1961–2000



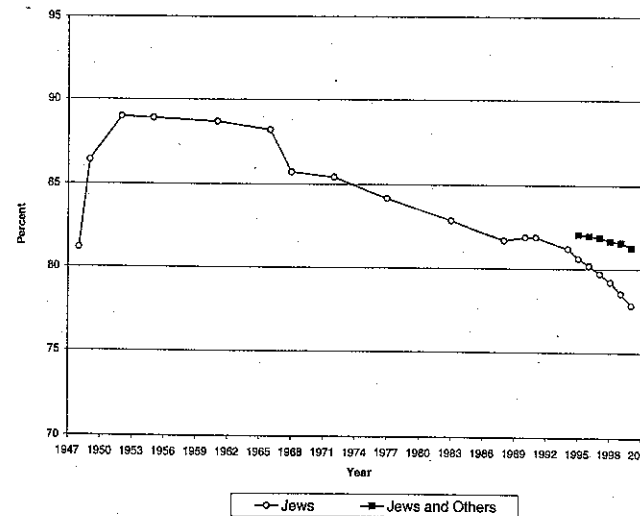
Ashkenazim: Jews born in Europe or America and Israeli-born Jews to fathers born in Europe or America. Mizrahim: Jews born in Asia or Africa and Israeli-born Jews to fathers born in Asia or Africa. Third-Generation Jews: Israeli-born Jews to Israeli-born fathers.

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel (2001, table 2.24).

unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem, thereby, increasing the proportion of Arabs in the Jewish State from 11.8 percent to 14.1 percent overnight. The proportion of Arabs continued to climb and reached 18.5 percent in 1989. Thus, between 1967 and 1989 Jewish immigration to Israel lagged behind Arab fertility, reducing the Jewish majority to 81.5 percent.

The 1990s brought to Israel new kinds of immigrants, some of them non-Jews. Thus, despite the mass migration of the 1990s, the proportion of Jews continued to decline and reached 77.8 percent in 2000. Ironically, the decline in the Jewish majority during the 1990s is due, at least in part, to the Law of Return. Many of the immigrants from the former USSR in the 1990s were not Jews, but had Jewish relatives that enabled them to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return.⁸ Consequently, in 1995 a new religious category—"religion unclassified"—was added to Israel's official statistics, and the group of Christians was divided to "Arab Christians" and "other Christians." Both groups were labeled as "others," and consequently, by the end of 2000, 3.5 percent of the Israeli population were defined in official statistics as "others": 201,500 persons without religious classification, and 3,500 non-Arab Christians. If we add all "others" to the group of Jews, as has been the CBS practice in recent years,⁹ the proportion of "Jews and others" in 2000 was 81.3 percent (CBS 2001), which essentially amounts to the proportion in 1989 just before the beginning of the current immigration wave. However, the fate of these non-Jews in Israeli society is still unclear, and their proportion is rising. They

FIGURE 2.3 National Composition of Israel's Population—percent Jews, 1948–2000



Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel (2001, table 2.1).

may face legal and administrative problems that will align them with other non-Jewish groups, including the growing population of labor migrants (Lustick 1999). Alternatively, their exposure to the main Zionist socialization agents—schools and the military—may prevent such alliances, at least for the time being.

The second kind of non-Jewish immigrants arriving in the 1990s are temporary labor migrants from Southeast Asia (mostly Thailand and the Philippines), Eastern Europe (mostly Romania), South America, and Africa who were recruited to replace Palestinian Arabs from the occupied territories. As in most developed countries, it is impossible to estimate the number of labor migrants with any precision. Available estimates for the end of the 1990s range between 150,000 to 200,000 legal and illegal immigrants (Rosenhek and Cohen 2000).¹⁰ Experience from other labor importing countries in Europe and America suggests that a large proportion of labor migrants and their families will stay in Israel. So far, they are unable to gain citizenship due to Israel's immigration and citizenship laws. Nevertheless, with time they are likely to gain some rights (Kemp and Rajiman 2000), become a permanent sector in Israel society, and influence its national and ethnic composition.

The above discussion leads to one surprising conclusion: it is no longer a simple matter to classify the Israeli population by national and ethnic categories. What was possible twenty years ago—when all immigrants were Jews, all non-Jews were Arabs, all labor migrants were Palestinian commuters, and all or at least most third-generation Israelis were Ashkenazi—is no longer the case in contemporary Israel. Rather, at the turn of the millennium, the proportion of non-Jews among immigrants from the former Soviet Union exceeds the proportion of Jews; the proportion of labor migrants in Israel's labor market (about 13 percent) is larger than in most European countries. Finally, not much is known of the ethnicity of the growing group of third-generation Israeli Jews. In 1972 this was a homogeneous group of less than 230,000 persons of mostly Ashkenazi grandparents, comprising 8 percent of the Jewish population. Ignoring this group, or considering it a part of the Ashkenazi ethnicity was unproblematic, as most grandparents of third-generation Jews were born in Europe. In 2000 the size of this group has grown to 1.5 million, or 29 percent of the Jewish population. While it is impossible to estimate precisely the proportion of those having Mizrahi grandparents, it is known that the older age cohorts are mostly Ashkenazim, while the younger age cohorts of third-generation Jews are predominantly Mizrahim (i.e., they have grandparents who were born in Asia or Africa).¹¹ Given that the median age of third-generation Israelis is less than fifteen (CBS 2001), it is no longer possible to assume that in 2000 the majority of them are of Ashkenazi origin.

To be sure, an "objective" ethnic classification by father or grandfather's country of birth is an important dimension of ethnicity, as it largely determines how one is treated by others, as well as influences one's subjective identity. It (country or continent of birth) cannot, however, serve as the

sole indicator for ethnicity, especially if the people involved do not view themselves as such (Mizrahim or Ashkenazim). The ethnic identity literature of the past decade emphasizes that nationality and ethnicity are multidimensional dynamic identities, having both objective and subjective elements that are likely to interact (Jenkins 1996). Relying on grandparent's country of birth is not only theoretically problematic, but also practically nearly impossible, as each person has two grandparents who could have been born in two different countries. In short, for both theoretical and practical reasons it is time for Israel to ask its residents (not only its citizens) to define their ancestry and (ethnic) identity. Other migration countries where most of the population are descendants of immigrants do so. For example, in the U.S. Americans are asked about their ancestries, allowing each respondent to name two ancestries.¹² Having information on ethnic identities is necessary for describing and understanding Israeli society. As things currently stand, we are unable to assign an ethnic identity to 1.2 million Arabs and 1.5 million third-generation Jews. The former are classified by their religion only, and the latter are considered as having one, unequivocal "Israeli" origin.

Throughout this chapter I have followed the classification of Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, which is a common dichotomy used by both popular and scholarly writers in describing Israel's Jewish population. This binary view of Israel's Jewish population has been sustained in the 1980s and early 1990s by indicators of education, occupational status, and income for second-generation immigrants. Interestingly, the dichotomy of Mizrahim and Ashkenazim or continents of birth was not the best way to describe pre-1967 immigrants' socioeconomic status. For example, the pre-1967 immigrants from Egypt and Iraq had schooling levels that were more similar to those of Romanian and Polish immigrants than to immigrants from other Asian or African groups (Khazzoom 1998). By 1983, the dichotomy of the two ethnic groups adequately describes the socioeconomic standing of the second generation (Amit 2002). Apparently, with time and generations, Israeli society has constructed this ethnic dichotomy along social, economic and cultural lines. In the 1990s, however, there are indications that the dichotomy is weaker than it used to be in the 1980s. Specific countries of birth are once again important for understanding the socioeconomic fortunes of second-generation immigrants (Amit 2002). In short, it appears that the current classificatory system (based either on continents of birth or on the aforementioned ethnic dichotomy) is no longer adequate, and fails to capture the structural complexities and the changing nature of the Israeli population.

Selection Patterns and Socioeconomic Assimilation

While admittedly crude, the ethnic dichotomy still serves an important function when measuring social and economic inequalities among

immigrants. In the melting pot model of immigrant absorption one expects social, cultural, political, and economic differences between immigrants and natives to gradually narrow and eventually disappear in one or two generations. On the basis of voting patterns and especially of socioeconomic gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, most scholars view the Israeli melting pot as a failure (Lissak 1999). This assessment is probably true, especially in light of the socioeconomic fortunes of the pre-1967 waves of Mizrahi immigrants and their offspring. The schooling and income gaps between second-generation Mizrahim and Ashkenazim have hardly changed during the past twenty years. In 1975 one in every four Ashkenazi men was a university graduate, compared to one in twenty among Mizrahim. In 1995 the education gap narrowed, but not by much: one out of three Ashkenazim was a university graduate, compared to one in ten among Mizrahim (Cohen 1998). Despite narrowing the schooling ethnic gap, the income gap among second-generation Jews increased during the past twenty years. In 1975 the average Mizrahi man earned 79 percent of the earnings of his Ashkenazi counterpart. By 1995 this proportion dropped to 69 percent (Cohen 1998). In sum, pre-1967 Mizrahim have failed to catch up economically with their Ashkenazi counterparts. While in other spheres of life (fertility, marriage patterns, labor force participation rates) the ethnic gap narrowed significantly or even disappeared in the second generation (Goldscheider 1996), the schooling and income gaps among the second generation of pre-1967 immigrants hardly changed. Unfortunately, the lack of ethnic information regarding the third generation, as well as their relatively young ages, prohibit analyses of the income gaps in the third generation.

The failure of the melting pot to absorb pre-1967 Mizrahi immigrants is exacerbated by the relative success of (the mostly Ashkenazi) post-1967 immigrants (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 2000). The immigrants of the 1970s and 1980s (with the exception of the Ethiopians) fully assimilated in the Israeli labor market and economy within a short time. There are no income or schooling gaps between them and the native population. Moreover, by 1983 the income of post-1967 immigrants surpassed the income of Mizrahi veteran immigrants arriving in the pre-1967 period. For example, in 1983, recently arrived Romanian immigrants earned more than pre-1967 Moroccan immigrants, and as much as Iraqi Jews who arrived in 1950–51. In 1983 Russian Jews who arrived in the 1970s, earned more than pre-1967 immigrants from any Mizrahi source country (Cohen and Haberfeld 2000). Likewise, the economic absorption of the current wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union appears to be successful. Their schooling level is high, and in relatively short time they find jobs that enable them to join the Israeli-Ashkenazi middle class (Sikron 1998).

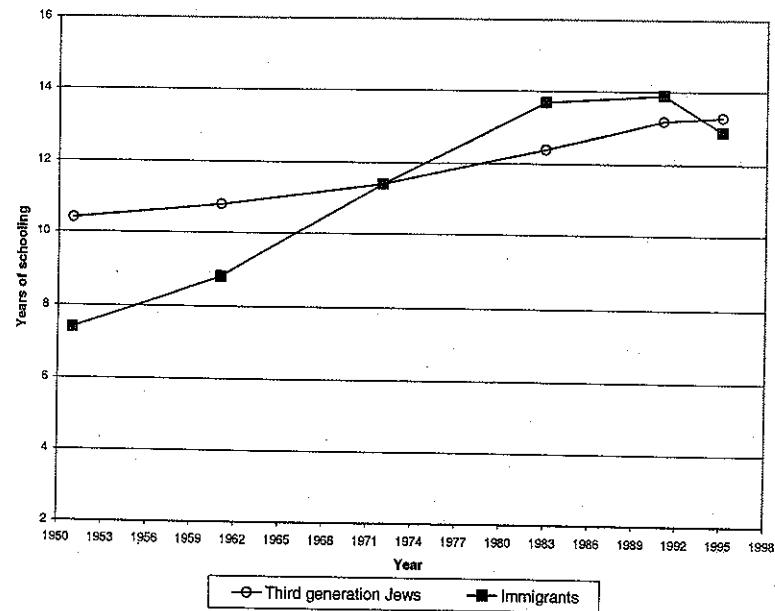
The success of post-1967 immigrants is largely attributed to the high skills with which they arrived in Israel compared to pre-1967 predecessors, both Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. This assessment is, for the most part, true, although another factor, institutional discrimination (Swirski

1990), played a central role in the failure of Mizrahi immigrants and their children to fully assimilate in Israel's economy and society.¹³ Notwithstanding the existence of institutional and other forms of discrimination against Mizrahi immigrant groups, educational level upon arrival is arguably the single most important determinant of immigrants' economic progress, as well as the main predictor for the educational attainment of their offspring (Friedlander et al. 2001). This being the case, the next section presents analyses that track changes in the skill levels of successive immigrant cohorts arriving in Israel in the past five decades.

The Educational Levels of Successive Immigrant Cohorts

In order to estimate the skills with which immigrants arrive, their education level, (which is considered the best proxy for immigrant labor market skills), should be measured in the first few years after they arrive in Israel, before they had a chance to acquire more schooling in their new country.¹⁴ The trend in mean years of education reveals a relative improvement in immigrants' schooling over time. The average immigrant

FIGURE 2.4 Mean Years of Schooling upon Arrival of Recent Immigrants and of Native Jews, 1951–1995



Recent immigrants: immigrant men arriving in Israel during the three years preceding the year of observation. Native Jews: third-generation Jewish men.

Source: Cohen and Haberfeld, 2000.

coming to Israel in the mass migration in the years from 1948 to 1951 had 7.4 years of schooling, compared to 10.4 years among natives. This gap between recently arrived immigrants and native Jews gradually narrowed over the years until 1972, when recently arrived immigrants and natives had the same average years of schooling. Eleven years later, in 1983, recent immigrants surpassed natives by 1.3 years, but by 1995 (the date of the last Israeli census) recent immigrants (arriving in 1992 to 1995) fell behind again, although not by much.

Years of schooling, however, is only one measure of educational level. Academic degrees have increasingly become important in the labor markets of developed countries including Israel. Comparing recent immigrants and natives on that measure—the proportion with at least a B.A. degree—reveals even more impressive progress among immigrants. During the mass migration of 1948 to 1951, less than 5 percent of immigrants were university graduates, compared with nearly 9 percent among natives. Twenty years later, in 1972, the proportion among recent immigrants (27 percent) was more than twice the proportion among natives. In the years 1979 to 1983, nearly 40 percent of immigrants had a college degree (compared to less than 20 percent among natives), and by 1989 to 1991 nearly half the immigrants were university graduates. Those arriving in 1992 to 1995 also had a higher proportion of university graduates than natives, but the gap was not as wide as in 1983 or 1991. In sum, both measures of schooling indicate that the educational level of recent immigrants to Israel has increased over the years, from the periods of 1948–51 to 1989–91, and somewhat declined since 1992.

Explaining the Rise in the Educational Level of Successive Immigrant Cohorts

Contrary to popular and scholarly beliefs, these changes—the rise in immigrants' educational levels during the period from 1948 to 1991, as well as the decline since 1992—are mainly due to educational changes within their country of origin rather than to shifts in source countries from which most immigrants come. In other words, while shifts from low to high education countries (e.g., from Yemen to the USSR) contributed to some of the overall rise in immigrant schooling during 1948 to 1991, most of the rise occurred because of changes over time in the education level of successive immigrant cohorts coming from the same countries (i.e., within-country changes). Consider, for example, Moroccan immigrants. Most of them, about one-quarter of a million, came during the period from 1948 to 1969, and had low schooling levels. In 1972, the average Moroccan immigrant man who immigrated to Israel during the preceding four years had little more than eight years of schooling, and only one in twenty-five immigrants had a university degree, compared to one in eight among native Jews. Eleven years later, in 1983, the average Moroccan immigrant who arrived during the years from 1979 to 1983 had about

fourteen years of schooling, and one in three was a college graduate, twice the rate among natives. The increase in schooling level among successive cohorts of Romanian immigrants is even more striking. Their mean years of schooling increased from 9.7 for the cohort arriving during 1957 to 1961 to 13.8 for the cohort of 1968 to 1972, and to a peak of 15.6 for those arriving during 1979 to 1983. Apparently, in all decades, within-country changes were responsible for over one-half of the total rise in the schooling of successive cohorts of immigrants. Thus, while shifts from low to high education countries contributed to some of the overall rise in immigrant schooling, most changes during the period from 1948 to 1991 were due to rises in the educational level of immigrants coming from specific countries.

The decline in immigrant skills in the post-1991 period is also due to the same type of changes within countries. Since 1989, the top two source countries sending immigrants to Israel are the former Soviet Union (85 percent), and Ethiopia (4 percent). While the (low) educational level of successive cohorts of Ethiopian immigrants has not changed over time, a close examination of immigrants coming from the former USSR in the 1990s reveals a decline in their schooling starting in 1992. Those arriving in 1989 to 1991 belong to the first wave that brought some 400,000 immigrants to Israel. In subsequent years, the annual number of immigrants from the former USSR was around 40,000 to 70,000. The schooling levels of those arriving in the first wave were significantly higher than that of those arriving during the years 1992 to 1995. Mean years of schooling of those arriving during the years from 1989 to 1991 is fourteen, and 51 percent of them are university graduates. The respective figures among those arriving between 1992 and 95 are thirteen years and 36 percent,¹⁵ far below the previous cohort, and similar to the educational level among Israeli Jews.¹⁶

What could explain changes in the educational level of successive cohorts of immigrants from the same country? There are two processes, not mutually exclusive, that are responsible for these changes. First, it is possible that the type of selectivity for immigration has changed over the years. Second, it is possible that the characteristics of the populations at risk (i.e., potential immigrants) in some source countries have changed, mainly due to prior nonrandom immigration to Israel and other countries.¹⁷ Consider, for example, the rise in the schooling of Moroccan immigrants. It is reasonable to assume that immigration from Morocco to Israel until 1972 was negatively selected for education (i.e., immigrants were disproportionately less educated than the Moroccan Jewry from which they were drawn). Apparently, in those years, the more educated Moroccan Jews either stayed in Morocco or immigrated elsewhere, especially to France and Canada (Toledano 1984; Bensimon and Della Pergola 1986). Since the mid-1970s, the schooling of the 12,000 Moroccan immigrants coming to Israel has risen dramatically. It is possible, however, that these immigrants' schooling represents the average schooling among the remaining Moroccan-born Jews outside Israel. There are no readily available data to test this possibility. I

wish to emphasize, however, that even if this is the case, (self)selection processes in the 1950s and 1960s are in large part responsible for the dramatic rise in the average schooling of Moroccan immigrants to Israel starting in the mid-1970s.

Other source countries from which major changes in the level of schooling over time were detected are Romania, Iran, the former Soviet Republics, and the U.S. In both Romania and Iran the first waves were negatively selected for education. In Romania, the selectivity for education improved dramatically until 1983, after which it declined again. In Iran, the selectivity of the first wave (1951) was negative (Hacohen 1994), and a major rise occurred in 1979, at the time of the Iranian revolution. However, it is not clear that positive selectivity brought Iranian Jews to Israel. The more educated and wealthy Iranians emigrated to the U.K. and the U.S. Likewise, in the 1970s the educational levels of Soviet immigrants were relatively high compared to the levels among third-generation Jews. It is unclear, however, whether their schooling was high compared to that of Soviet Jewry. What is known, however, is that Soviet Jews who immigrated to the U.S. during the 1970s were younger and had about two more years of schooling, on average, than those who came to Israel (Schwartz-Shavit 1995). Interestingly, the same pattern is observed among Russian immigrants of the 1990s. Those arriving in Canada in 1990 to 1991 were of higher educational levels than those who immigrated to Israel (Kogan 2000). Apparently, during the 1970s and 1990s, the best and the brightest among Soviet Jewry elected to immigrate to countries other than Israel, where the risks of failure are higher than in Israel, but so are the potential economic gains from successful assimilation in the labor market.¹⁸

In this context the selectivity of U.S. immigrants is of interest for two reasons. First, the U.S. is the third largest source country for immigrants in the post-1989 area. Second, in the U.S. there is readily available information on the schooling level of the population at risk, namely, U.S. Jews. Analyses of the General Social Surveys, suggest that from 1970 to 1990 the proportion of college graduates among American Jews increased by 25 percentage points, from 48 percent to 73 percent. At the same time, the proportion of college graduates among American Jews that self-selected themselves to immigrate to Israel declined by 13 percentage points, from 77 percent among those coming immediately after the 1967 war, to 64 percent among those arriving during the early 1990s. In short, the selectivity of U.S. Jews for immigration to Israel, which was very positive in the first few years after the 1967 war, has deteriorated and become negative over time, as the less educated among American Jews decide to reside in Israel.

Conclusions

Thus far, Zionism has been a demographic success. In 1947, just before Israel was established, only 6 percent of the Jews of the world (about

600,000) resided in the area that became Israel in 1949, comprising less than half the population in that area. By 2000 Israel had become the home for about 5 million Jews, comprising nearly 40 percent of world Jewry and about 80 percent of the state's citizens (CBS 2001). For the most part, immigration patterns are responsible for the three dimensions of Zionism's demographic success—increasing the proportion and the absolute number of Jews in Israel, as well as their share in world Jewry.

With some exceptions in the early 1950s, Israel has always attempted to bring as many Jews as possible to Israel, and there seems to have been no upper limit to the number of immigrants it has been willing to admit in a given period. Moreover, unlike other migration countries that prefer skilled and young immigrants, Israel's declared policy is to admit all Jewish immigrants, with no regard to age, educational level, ethnic origin, and skin color. On the face of it, it looks as if actual migration patterns are consistent with this declared policy. However, when potential Jewish immigrants choose to go to a country other than Israel, Zionist values and goals led Israel to adopt a less humanitarian policy. Such was the case in the 1970s, when Israel asked the U.S. to stop granting refugee status to Soviet Jews who were permitted to leave the USSR, but preferred the U.S. over Israel as their new home. In sum, in the last half-century migration patterns to Israel suggest that the state has been consistently fulfilling the core Zionist mission—populating the land with a multitude of Jews. Whenever this goal contradicted humanitarian goals, such as helping Jews reach safe destinations other than Israel (or, alternatively, when it encountered racist attitudes against immigrants of certain ethnicity or color), Zionist values and goals prevailed.

While Israel actively attracts and accepts all Jews, not all Jews chose to immigrate to Israel. With time, however, the demographic success of Zionism manifested itself also in the type of people who chose Israel as their destination. In the early years of the mass migration and the North African migration, many immigrants were stateless refugees. Others fled repressive regimes in Eastern Europe and Arab states that were in conflict with the new Jewish state. Many of those who could have gone to a more developed state went there rather than to Israel,¹⁹ or left Israel after a short stay. Those residing in developed countries in Western Europe, North America, and Australia did not consider immigrating to Israel. Consequently, the immigrants arriving in Israel in the first twenty years after statehood had lower educational levels than the resident Jewish population of Israel.

Following the 1967 war the type of immigrants choosing Israel as their country of destination changed. For religious, ideological and economic reasons, immigrants from Western Europe and America, mostly highly educated, have begun coming to Israel. Immigrants arriving from the Soviet Union and other countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia were of higher educational levels than their predecessors coming from the same countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Apparently, Israel of the post-1967 period

has become a more attractive destination for educated immigrants, although not as attractive as the U.S., as evidenced by highly educated Soviet Jewish emigrants in the 1970s preferring the U.S. to Israel as their country of destination. To be sure, it is not a simple matter for a conflict-ridden, less affluent country such as Israel to compete with the U.S. and other Western countries for skilled Jewish immigrants. Yet one of the main demographic achievements of contemporary Zionism is not only attracting Jews to come to Israel, but also retaining immigrants and their offspring, including the highly educated, in the country.²⁰

The current demographic picture, however, is more complex. Since 1992, the immigrants coming from the former Soviet Union (and since 1970 those coming from the U.S.) are of lower educational level than their predecessors, and if the decline in the schooling of immigrants continues, Israel will soon face immigrants whose educational levels will be lower than that of native Israelis. More troubling for the Zionist mission is the monotonic rise in the proportion of non-Jews among immigrants from the former Soviet republics. Moreover, as in other labor-importing countries, many temporary workers who were recruited by Israel since 1993 have rapidly become undocumented, that is de facto permanent residents. This being the case, contemporary migration patterns are not as conducive as previous patterns to winning the demographic race with Israel's Arabs. In addition to about 1.2 million Arab citizens and three million Arabs under occupation (some of them in the semi-autonomous territories ruled by the Palestinian Authority), Israel now faces a challenge it has never faced before: dealing with over 300,000 (and growing) non-Jewish, non-Arab residents (some of whom are not citizens). It is ironic that Zionism's very success—military, economic, and demographic—has led to an incipient challenge to the original mission it set out to accomplish.

Notes

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1. Between 1882 (when Zionist immigration to Ottoman Palestine first began) and 1900, the Jewish population of Ottoman Palestine increased from about 25,000 to 50,000. It reached over 80,000 before World War I. During the war, net migration was negative, leading to the estimated figure for 1919 (Bachi 1974).
2. This figure is obtained using Bachi's (1974: 401f.) estimate that in 1947, 778,700 Palestinians and 630,000 Jews resided in the area that would become Israel in 1949.
3. "The very essence of Zionism," says David Ben Gurion, in 1944, "is populating. To populate Eretz Israel with multitudes of Jews" (Weitz 1994: 81).
4. Goldscheider's estimates are based on CBS statistics for first- and second-generation Jews, and on his estimates regarding the ethnic origin of third-generation Jews.
5. These estimates include only first- and second-generation immigrants (CBS 2001). Since there are likely to be third-generation Moroccan and Romanian immigrants, the sizes of these groups are larger than reported above.
6. In 1995 the share of U.S.-born in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza strip (4.0 percent) was approximately 4.1 times its share in the Jewish population. In 1983, when the settler population was smaller, yet more ideological, the share of U.S.-born in the territories (4.3 percent) was 4.8 times their share in the population (the respective figure among those born in Western Europe is 2.3). These figures, which are based on my analyses of Israeli censuses of 1983 and 1995, are underestimates, as they include only the territories defined by Israel as "Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Area." These do not include territories that were annexed to Jerusalem in 1967, nor the occupied Golan Heights.
7. In the last general elections in 1999, Shas—a religious-Mizrahi party—received about 500,000 votes. Apparently, the party's insistence on being both Jewish-religious and Mizrahi (all its seventeen parliament members are religious Mizrahim) is central for explaining its success among poor Mizrahim (Peled 1998). Unfortunately, it is not known how many third-generation of Mizrahi ancestry voted Shas.
8. In 1970 the Law of Return was amended to include not only Jews, but also non-Jewish children and grandchildren (and their spouses) of Jews. See Weiss in this volume.
9. Until 1994 the basic classification of the population was according to religion, between "Jews" and "non-Jews." The latter were further classified into Muslims, Christians, and "Druze and others" (CBS 1994: table 2.1). In the 1995 Statistical Abstract, when the word "Arabs" first appeared, the basic distinction was between "Jews" and "Arabs and others," whereby "others" included a few hundred "Buddhists, Hindus, Samaritans etc" (CBS 1995, page 21). With the increase in the number of non-Jewish immigrants, the original "others" were reclassified, and together with the new "others" were added to the Jewish group. Thus, beginning in the Statistical Abstract of 2000, the basic classification is between "Jews and others" and "Arab population" (CBS 2000: table 2.1). See Lustik (1999) for the difficulties of the CBS following the rise in the number of non-Jewish immigrants.
10. The total number of labor migrants in Israel's labor market (including Palestinians from the occupied territories) is estimated at about 290,000, comprising 13 percent of the labor market (*Haaretz*, 4.4.01).
11. Special pooling of the 1983 and 1995 censuses enabled researchers to estimate the proportion of Mizrahim and Ashkenazim among some birth cohorts of third-generation Jews. Analyses provided to me by Yossi Shavit, suggest that in 1995 Ashkenazim outnumbered Mizrahim by a ratio of roughly two to one among those twenty-seven to thirty-four years old, but only by a ratio of four to three among those twenty years old.

- in that year. It is thus reasonable to assume that the proportion of Mizrahim is higher among younger age cohorts.
12. Only 37 percent of Israeli-born Jews residing in the U.S. in 1980 chose "Israeli" as their first ancestry (Cohen and Tyree 1994). The respective figure in the 1990 census was appreciably the same (Cohen and Haberfeld 1997).
 13. Mizrahim suffered from discrimination in many spheres of life, including the labor market, where both the state and private employers valued their human capital as inferior to the human capital of Ashkenazim. Khazzoom (1998) have demonstrated that in the 1950s the educational levels of immigrants from some Mizrahi source countries were very similar to the educational levels of Polish and Romanian immigrants. Nevertheless, the Romanian and Polish immigrants fully assimilated in Israeli economy and society, while the educated Mizrahi immigrants failed to do so.
 14. The findings regarding trends in the educational level of successive immigrant cohorts are based on Cohen and Haberfeld (2000) who compared the schooling of recent immigrants from twenty source countries to a benchmark of third-generation Israeli Jews ("natives") of the same ages.
 15. There are no differences in the schooling levels between men and women immigrants from the former Soviet Union, nor between Jews and non-Jews. Those coming from the Asian republics have somewhat lower schooling levels than their European counterparts (Haberfeld, Semyonov, and Cohen 2000).
 16. While experts are in agreement with respect to the economic assimilation of the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Sikron 1998), there are debates regarding their social and cultural assimilation. Some (e.g., Lissak 2001) argue that this immigrant group views Israeli culture and society as inferior to Russian culture, and resists cultural assimilation. The evidence for such attitudes are survey research, the number of Russian-language newspapers (including the contents of the articles published in these newspapers), the success of Russian political parties, and the continuing connections between the immigrants and their country of origin. Others (e.g., Smocha 2001) expect the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union to integrate into the Ashkenazi middle class in relatively short time. The Russians, argues Smocha (2001), do not want to become a distinct sector in the Israeli society. They do not demand that Russian become an official language, nor do they ask for a special educational track. Without a state-supported school system, Smocha concludes, it is nearly impossible to maintain the original culture. The demands of the Russian parties are far from being separatist. Rather, they ask for resources and integration into Israeli society.
 17. The mean schooling of populations of source countries rises also due to expansion of the educational systems.
 18. These preferences are consistent with economic migration theory (Borjas 1994), which expects skilled immigrants to prefer high inequality countries such as the U.S., where skills are compensated generously, whereas less skilled immigrants prefer more egalitarian countries (such as Israel), where they are protected by a net of social services.
 19. Only about 40 percent of the Jews in DP camps during the period from 1945 to 1951 immigrated to Israel (Grodzinsky 1998).
 20. See Cohen and Haberfeld (1997, 2001) for the number of Israeli Jews in the U.S. in 1990 (less than 130,000), their high rate of return migration to Israel, as well as for evidence that those returning to Israel are of higher educational level than those staying in the U.S.

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PART TWO

CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION