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Abstract

This study explores the experience of nonevent among Israeli expatriates. A nonevent is the failure of an expected pivotal life event, or change, to occur. An account of the lived experience of nonevent and its personal meaning has been lacking in the literature to date. This study has attempted to fill some of this lack using a phenomenological case study approach.

A total of twenty Israeli expatriates participated in the study. Individual descriptions of the experience were elicited through intensive exploratory interviews. Following a corroboratory mode of analysis these descriptions were compared with one another and with data from several different sources. These sources included a pilot study questionnaire, two informal group discussions and letters received from other Israeli expatriates. The findings and conclusions are based on the convergence of data from the various sources.

The findings confirmed that non-return was a central nonevent experience in the life of the study participants. The broken expectation to return to the home country entailed a threat to the values, world-view and sense of belonging which were held by the participants as fundamental to the security of their identity. It altered their expected course of life, a range of personal commitments and the way they conceived of themselves, all of which are implicated in the meaning of and the vision for living.

The findings illustrate that the existential entanglement of nonevent emerges in the realm of relatedness. The nonevent separates the person from his or her sense of self as a member of a community, and thus from a personal moral commitment and responsibility for and to the community, which is part of the self. The nonevent experience was dominated by the struggle of the participants to maintain a sense of connection with their society. It brought to the fore the sense that the everyday world is a moral world. The accounts illustrate the participants’ moral negotiation in facing real life obstacles to cultural principles, values and attachments, which were embedded in their definition of self. The essential underlying theme of the nonevent experience is the struggle to maintain a self-respecting, connected, morally sensitive identity. The nonevent put the participants in an emotional no-man’s land. Separated geographically, they are struggling to preserve or recreate their spiritual connectedness to their original community, to reconcile the paradox of being
both separated and connected, and to be a part while being apart.

The findings of this study have important theoretical and research implications. They suggest that in studying nonevent there is a need to understand the phenomenon through its appearance as an absence, and recognize that an absence is not merely nothing, but rather another form of presence. The findings suggest that the experience of nonevent needs to be examined within relational theory, since a sense of connection and affiliation seemed more fundamental than the need to separate. The study also suggests that in order to understand the meaning of a life-shaping expectation and its nonoccurrence to the person, research and theory need to take into account contexts beyond the immediate presenting situation. Furthermore, the strong connection made by the participants of this study between the experience of nonevent and moral identity presents an important focus for further research.
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Without all these people this study would have been a nonevent.
Terrible are the wounds of a murdered dream

Milan Kundera
Life Is Elsewhere
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Statement of the problem

Migration has been described as a significant life event and a psychosocial transition. It is often said to be experienced as a stressful life event by the person who has to master all personal resources in order to face a transition of a significant magnitude (Golan, 1981; Dellarossa, 1978; Reul, 1971; Zwingmann, 1973). This transition, contrary to other life transitions, is described as having little or no prescribed rituals (Sluzki, 1986), and to involve all aspects of being: identity, self worth, autonomy, comfort, security, and meaning of life (Cox, 1977; Fried, 1977; Ishiyama, 1989; Itzigson & Menuchin-Itzigson, 1989; Kolm, 1980; Landau, 1982; McGoldrick, 1982; Portes, 1990; Taft, 1977; Westwood & Lawrence, 1990).

Uprooting may involve equally important transition processes which are experienced as nonevents - those hopes, dreams and expectations that fail to happen, and their nonoccurrence changes the migrant’s life. These transitions have received little attention in the immigration literature. The importance of expectations, hopes, projects, goals and values has been a major theme in existential philosophy. According to Sartre (1956) the very notion of being is to project possibilities, to expect things. Both Merleau Ponty (1945/1962) and Sartre (1956) propose that all human consciousness is filled with expectations which can at any time be thwarted, and therefore existence is essentially open to frustration, disappointment and despair. These experiences of thwarted expectations are experiences of nonevents: possibilities not actualized, dreams not realized, or expectations not fulfilled, which affect and require a change in the person’s assumptions, in his or her definition of self and in the values attached to this change (Schlossberg, 1984, 1989; Markus & Nurious, 1986).

The salience of expectations, possibilities, “ideal selves”, personal projects and goals to peoples’ lives, and their implication as important components of identity, have been surmised by many theorists of self and developmental psychology (Freud, 1925; Gergen, 1971; James, 1910; Kohut, 1985; Lewin, 1935; Rogers, 1951). A similar proposition to that of existential philosophy is implicit in the theory of symbolic interactionists who view the self as always anticipating, always future oriented and continually in need of validation (Stryker, 1980, 1982).
The power of the career dream for men's development has been emphasized by Levinson (1978), who describes the 'Dream' as a personal construction containing the "imagined self" which is associated with goals, aspirations and values, both conscious and unconscious. Studies regarding female development (Roberts & Newton, 1987) suggest that women's lives are guided by dreams as well, though unlike the men in Levinson's work, women's dreams were found to contain family/intimacy aspects as well as issues of work/competency. In theorizing about "possible selves", Markus & Nurius (1986) stress that when we perceive ourselves we see not only our present situation but also our potential: what we hope to do or become, or that which we fear of becoming. According to Gollwitzer & Wicklund (1985) and Schlossberg (1984;1989), our self definition and much of our appraisal of our lives revolve around our goals, ideals, dreams and our imagined possibilities.

While more prominently attended to by novelist and poets, unfulfilled expectations and dreams have been referred to in contemporary research. Levinson (1978) postulated that when dreams are not met, crisis occurs. Markus & Nurius (1986) discuss the anguish of realizing that "a cherished possible self is not to be realized, even though this possible self remains as vivid and compelling as the day it was constructed" (p. 966). Viorst (1986) points out that it is always painful to give up dreams and expectations and yet it is fundamental to existence, a "necessary loss", "the price we pay for living" (p.366). Yet, most of the research on dreams and expectations has been concerned with what people hope to accomplish with their lives and almost no research has focused on what happens when the dream fails to materialize (Markus & Nurius, 1986). No research so far has dealt with the experience of being personally responsible for "breaking" the dream.

The term nonevent has only recently appeared in adult development literature. Most of the research on adult transitions has focused on normative or nonnormative life events, and to a lesser degree on chronic hassles, though the phenomenon of nonevent has been recognized (Beeson & Lowenthal, 1975; Cummings, 1979; George and Siegler, 1981; Neugartten, 1976; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984, 1989), and the importance of studying this type of transition has been stressed (George & Siegler, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989). Nonetheless, there has been only one study (Chiappone, 1984) investigating a specific nonevent, and while Schlossberg and her
associates have been compiling data on nonevents as a step toward a theoretical model (in preparation), a theoretical and descriptive understanding of nonevent is still lacking. Schlossberg (1981, 1984, 1989) has proposed a general formulation of nonevent transitions. She defines a nonevent as a transition which an individual counted on but which did not occur, thereby altering that person's life. The realization that the expected did not and will not occur may alter our self conception, our relationships and our assumptions. Proposed examples for nonevents include the marriage that never occurred; the promotion that never happened (Schlossberg, 1984); or the child that was never born (Chiappone, 1984). The study of nonevent among immigrants has not been proposed.

A nonevent is a unique psychological phenomenon, one whose presence is given as the absence of something. Sartre (1956) has posited that we are not only conscious of the presence of events in our world, but that we are also primarily and frustratingly aware of their absence. Being an absence of an event, a nonevent is often hidden from view, not acknowledged, not celebrated and not ritualized (Schlossberg, 1989). As such nonevents may be more difficult to endure, or they may be perceived as more stressful than the occurrence of normative, expected, and recognized events (George & Siegler, 1981). Yet, according to George & Siegler, the issue has been "logically ignored by investigators employing traditional life events approaches because stress is assumed to reflect degrees of change - and nonoccurrence of an event presumably will also mean non change" (p.34).

The phenomenon of nonevent is significant to the experience of migrating and uprooting which is embedded in expectations, hopes, dreams and their inherent possibility of nonoccurrence. Yet it has neither been studied among migrants in general, nor among specific migrant groups for whom it may be particularly central. The significance of such research lies in its implication for a general understanding of transition and change and in its potential for the understanding of a particular psychological phenomenon which is implicated in a sense of identity, relationships, assumptions, values and the anxiety resulting from unfulfilled expectations. In light of the significance of nonevent to the psychological understanding of migrants, and its centrality to counselling, its neglect as a subject for research is surprising. It is therefore imperative to take a close look at this unique psychological phenomenon.
The present research focuses on identifying and illuminating the experience of nonevent transition of Israeli expatriates. This experience seems to be central to their life, and therefore may present a unique potential for the understanding of the Israeli expatriate on the one hand and the nature of nonevent transitions on the other hand. The Israeli expatriate group seems to present a somewhat 'deviant' case on the immigration scene (Shokeid, 1988) yet it has received little attention in the immigration literature. This study explores how Israeli emigrants perceive their unique reality.

Recent immigration to Canada and the U.S. has included a growing number of emigrants from Israel. One of the most unusual characteristics which distinguishes them from other immigrants is the self-presentation of many Israeli emigrants as "temporarily uprooted" (Peleg, 1989) and their continued stated hope, intention or commitment to return to Israel. No matter how successful they become in their host countries, and although they may remain abroad for their entire lives, many never sever their ties with the homeland and always view themselves as foreigners in their host country (Peleg, 1989; Shokeid, 1988). Despite the fact that their exile is freely elected and self initiated, and that as a group Israeli emigrants are relatively successful professionally and economically, and have a relatively easy time communicating and adjusting to North American life style, they often seem to manifest characteristics which usually describe refugees, and "remain anchored in the past, in a state of permanent collective remembrance, and involvement" with the circumstances which they left (Sluzki, 1986, p.280). Like refugees, they look back to what they have left, and are characterized by ambivalence, longing, guilt feelings and self doubt. Most do not give up their emotional and legal membership in their original society and tend to cling to the myth of return, however unrealistic it may be. They seldom are able to escape the paradoxes, or the ambivalence arising from their cultural moral-ideological prescription which interprets aliya (immigration to Israel) as a rejection of Diaspora and as a positive act, and yerida (emigration from Israel) as a rejection of Israeli life and at least as a subtle form of betrayal of the shared obligation to protect the country (Fish, 1984; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Katriel, 1991; Peleg, 1989,1990; Shokeid, 1988).

Although yerida is not a new phenomenon in Israeli history, it has become a topic of research only in recent years, and is often seen as one of the most paradoxical phenomena in
contemporary Jewish and Israeli experience (Meyer, 1990; Katriel, 1991; Shokeid, 1988). Israel is a society of immigrants, the population of which is comprised of first and second generations of refugees. It is a society obsessed with the very idea of immigration and with a worry regarding emigration. These national obsessions are rooted in both pragmatic and ideological grounds. Israel is a small country whose very existence has been continuously threatened ever since its creation in 1948. A small nation (of 4 million people surrounded by 200 million hostile neighbours), it is painfully conscious of the fact that it can disappear. In this reality where survival is threatened continuously, every loss of person through emigration is conceived as a threat (Sobel, 1986; Shokeid, 1988). One unique characteristic of the Israeli society is the involvement of a very large segment of its population in active military duty, which accounts for the popular saying that every Israeli citizen is a soldier on 11 months annual leave and every soldier is a citizen on duty (Rubinstein, 1977; Gal, 1986). Thus, each male emigrant is seen by Israeli society as one less soldier.

Immigration has been a central national concern ever since the Zionist dream of return to Israel emerged in the 19th century. After the Holocaust it was further perceived as the essential prerequisite for freedom and survival. The Zionist dream of the creation of Israel began with both a loss of faith by Eastern European Jews in Emancipation and the possibility of ensuring Jewish life in the Diaspora, and as a cultural revolt against the traditional orthodox Jewish values of passivity (waiting for the messiah to deliver the people back to their land), a revolt calling for self redemption and construction of a secular Jewish culture (Hasdai, 1982; Meyer, 1990; Shaked, 1986). Israel was thus created as a means to end both the messianic belief of orthodox Judaism and the unfulfilled hopes of Jews to assimilate into their host societies. Above all, the creation of Israel was meant to end the anxiety, suffering and insecurity which have been the existential factors of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and which culminated in the almost total annihilation of the Jewish people in the Holocaust. Therefore, each aliya is regarded as a sort of victory and each yerida as a defeat, both spiritually and physically (Fein, 1978). Intensifying this feeling is probably the fact that the creation of Israel was not without inflicting pain and suffering on the former residents of Palestine, the justification of which was that of no alternative. The new generation born in Israel was to yield a new, secular, free and sovereign kind of Jew who would assure stability,
continuity and normality to the country, and the emigrant is thus seen as turning upside-down the Zionist vision never to return to the Diaspora (Shokeid, 1988; Sobel, 1986). Yet, while accurate figures are difficult to obtain, evidence suggests that despite the fact that no country in modern history has absorbed as large a proportion of immigrants as Israel, the bulk of world Jewish immigration since the middle 1960's has been from Israel (Freedman, 1986; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Meyer, 1990) and that, prior to the recent (1991) influx of Ethiopian and Russian Jews, emigration has outnumbered immigration to Israel.

Those who choose to emigrate from Israel have been exposed to various social sanctions and pressures such as attacks on their reputation and their moral character (Sobel, 1986; Shokeid, 1988). Being patriotic is an important virtue in Israeli society and being regarded as nonpatriotic is one of the main accusations against yordim (a special Hebrew label for Israeli emigrants). The term yordim -- a biblical word meaning ‘those who descend’, is the opposite of the term Olim -- meaning 'those who ascend' (Gen. 12:10, 46: 4). (The latter term is used for immigrants to Israel.) Historically, whenever emigration was perceived as a threat to the existence of Jewish life in Zion, or Palestine, the leaders of the community have used legal, religious or moral sanctions against yordim (Avi-Yona, 1976; Twersky, 1972). Modern usage of the terms still includes a value judgment in which aliya, connoting a rise, promotion and progress, is juxtaposed with yerida, connoting decline, fall, degeneration, and degradation. The special emotionally charged stigma attached to the term yordim is accentuated by the fact that the correct Hebrew word for migrants is never used when referring to Israelis emigrating from Israel. This label and its negative connotation are rarely denied by the emigrants, and their struggle with it may result in identity vulnerability (Fish, 1984; Shoked, 1988).

Ever since the mid-70's Israeli writers, novelists, poets, journalists and politicians have dealt with the topic of yerida. However, there has been only a small amount of professional research conducted on the subject. There seem to be a sort of double obsessiveness with the subject: on one hand, an obsession with “sweeping the issue under the rug” and maintaining a low profile (Shokeid, 1988); on the other hand a preoccupation with immigration/emigration, which at times takes place in the subconscious of Israelis on parallel lines with the two other fundamental preoccupations of the state, viz. the peace/war and the secular/religious conflicts (Freedman,
The academic research on Israeli emigrants has focused mainly on instrumental issues such as academic adjustment and the prospects of returning to Israel (Fein, 1978); resolution of adaptation tasks through adult education (Mastai, 1980); demographics (Kass & Lipset, 1982); socioeconomics and use of social services (Korazim, 1983); migration decision making and relationship with the Jewish community (Fish, 1984); and reasons for planned immigration (Sobel, 1986). Most of these studies allude to moral, emotional and identity conflicts experienced by these emigrants. Yet, by focusing on instrumental issues these studies adhere to a low profile attitude typical of Israelis abroad who seldom publicly discuss the intensity of their feelings (Peleg, 1989; Shokeid, 1988). Shokeid’s anthropological study is an exception. Working as a participant observer, Shokeid (who is not an emigrant himself) set out to explore the nature of the ‘existential dilemmas’ and the anxiety-provoking paradoxes involved in the negotiations of emigrants’ cultural identity and “immigration career” of Israeli emigrants in New-York. This study, which focuses on the focal cultural performance of these emigrants’ “affective ethnicity”, provides us with valuable and revealing information and insight. However, Shokeid did not interview the people he portrays, and his conclusions and interpretations are based only on observation and casual conversations with his acquaintances. Thus, despite the sensitivity of this study an account of the individual experience “as lived” is still lacking.

A common claim of the literature on the subject is that emigration from Israel may provoke a unique emotional distress due to a “peculiar social pathology of over-identification” which is the hallmark of the realtionship between Israelis and their country (Sobel, 1986, p.168). It is often suggested that individual identity, for most Israelis, is embedded in their national identity, and thus separation from the nation may result in an identity conflict (Fish, 1984; Mayer, 1990; Peleg, 1989; Shokeid, 1988). Transitions that change one’s definition of who one is are often regarded in the general literature as the most difficult transitions to endure (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Two related sources of identity ambiguity for Israeli emigrants are suggested in the literature: 1) an ambivalent relationship with their ‘natural’ ethnic group, the Diaspora Jews; and 2) a unique psychological, historical, moral and ideological attachment to Israel.

According to Shokeid (1988), to be born or raised in Israel is an irrevocable act of identity
transformation, one that separates Israelis from other Jews. Meyer (1990) posits that the dilemma for Israeli emigrants is embedded in a perception that one can be a Jew in both the Diaspora and in Israel, but one can be an Israeli only in Israel. Living away from Israel, yet identifying primarily as Israelis, Israeli emigrants are said to suffer from identity conflict (Fish, 1984; Meyer, 1990; Shaked, 1986; Shokeid, 1988).

While Israel is referred to as the Jewish state, the majority of Israelis define themselves as secular, non observant, or non religious (Meyer, 1990; Sobel, 1986). Jewishness often provokes ambivalence for Israelis and “becoming” a Jew may conflict with the emigrant’s Israeliiness. Since their Jewish identity is imbued with a nationalistic secular component, they often find the Jews, whose identity is mostly conceived in religious terms (a conveniently adaptable concept as it is), “too religious” (Fish, 1984; Meyer, 1990; Shokeid, 1988). On the other hand, Diaspora Jews, at times, label Israelis as “militant seculars” (cf. Brandes, 1991). These studies suggest that while religious Israelis living in the U.S.A. can easily integrate into the Jewish community, many secular Israelis do not see this community as a positive reference group. They do not feel a part of it and do not express a desire to feel this way.

Israeli emigrants may also have a difficulty seeing themselves as Zionists in the modern definition of the term as those who support Israel financially but have little connection to the state otherwise (Meyer, 1990). This identification conflict is rooted in the ideology that only being Jewish in Israel is authentic living and being a Jew in the Diaspora is inauthentic (Ben-Gurion, 1953). This ideology was sustained by the Israeli education system which for many years emphasized a negative character of the Diaspora, and the doctrine of negation of the Diaspora (Kaplan, 1986; Yehoshua, 1980). Clearly, the idea of adopting into, and identifying with a group which represents a negative value is likely to create an identification conflict (cf. Weinreich, 1983).

A recurrent supposition in Israeli research is that Israelis may have a hypercathexed national identity such that it represents a cornerstone of the self. Israel is a country committed from its inception to a collective self-determination and to an ideology which emphasizes the needs of the collective over those of the individual. This ‘we’ rather than ‘me’ value orientation stresses that the individual has an obligation or duty to live in Israel, contribute to its development and
share the burden of its defence (Fish, 1984; Moses, 1983; Oren, 1986). A personal loyalty to a primary group is the accepted norm, and the background against which the loneliness of the ‘rebel’ is highlighted. It creates the characteristics of Israelis, connecting them and repulsing them (Rubinstein 1977). The Israeli, posits Rubinstein, “is married to the group. He finds life with her difficult, but he cannot live with out her” (p. 119). Through a “nostalgic education” (Shokeid, 1988) highlighted by such aphorisms as “All Israel stand as pledges for one another”; and “All Israel are comrades”, Israelis are indoctrinated to view themselves as participants in a common identity and thus to use individual’s strength and talents for the common good of the society. The education “we got at home”, says Student (1991, p.89), is that “everything must go to the nation, to the state where we were finally born after the Holocaust, all, including that we may die doing so”.

The memory of the Holocaust, even if not experienced directly, has been shown to have a profound effect on the emotional life of Israelis (Breznitz, 1983; Lieblich, 1983). The effects of a collective memory of the Holocaust, of violent uprooting, and of living in a war zone with unusually high prospects of being killed or losing loved ones as a result of war or terrorist activity, has been shown to account, at least in part, for the fact that Israelis are family and group oriented (Gay, 1982; Milgram, 1982). The family history of many Israeli emigrants includes the memory of the Holocaust or other violent uprooting. Children of survivors have been shown to be highly affected by the hypersensitivity of their parents to loss and separation and by the syndrome of “the impossibility of mourning” (Danieli, 1982).

One central value instilled by the Israeli society, is the myth of the hero, which demands outstanding altruistic deeds for the welfare of the country. This myth is in part a reaction to the tragic consequences of the Holocaust: the creation of a strong Israeli vs. the helpless Jew. “We are all born to be heroes, to fulfil the expectations of generations of Jews out there” explains an Israeli soldier (Lieblich, 1978, p.134). The myth also represents the sheer need for survival in a constant state of war. Studies show a predominant social element in the behaviour of Israeli decorated war heroes. Factors such as group cohesiveness and a sense of mutual responsibility are often the reasons for a soldier to risk his life above and beyond the call of duty in combat situation. “I did it for my friends because I was convinced that they would have done the same for
me” is a common rational given for heroic acts (Gal, 1983, p. 89).

The role of the army in fostering a sense of group orientation, group loyalty, dedication, and connectedness cannot be overemphasized. Conscription to the military at age 18 is an accepted fact of Israeli life and non-service is viewed as a serious departure from the accepted norm. After completion of compulsory service (three years for males and two years for females) men are assigned to the reserve corps where they serve approximately 30 days each year until age fifty, when they switch to civil defense. The reserve units are the largest component of the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) and reflect the nature of the military as indistinguishable from the civilian population, and the nature of Israel as a non-militaristic military society. Even more than the regular unit, the reserve unit becomes like an extended family, since the person may spend many years in the same unit, with the same peers and leaders, in training and during wars (Gal, 1986; Student, 1991). Service in the military, and the kind of service performed, is an entrance ticket to society, and an important biographical reference throughout the life of most Israelis (Ben-Ari 1990; Sobel, 1985). The army, by its very structure, reinforces the importance of group cohesiveness as well as a sense of commitment to the country and to peers. This societal ideal is reflected in the notion of bravery as described in 1989 by (then IDF Chief of Staff) Dan Shomron: “Behind every bravery award there is a story of a real conflict between personal survival and the sense of responsibility. Those who receive the award knew to prefer the needs of the group, despite fear” (Bamahane, Sept. 1989). The individual soldier knows that he can rely on the group and that he will not be abandoned by it. Thus, abstract notions such as motherland and nationhood are personalized and lived in the Israeli society through the medium of loyalty to friends and comrades (Gal, 1986; Rubinstein, 1977).

The myth of the hero is naturally a male myth. Yet women are not exempt from its implications. Israeli women are shaped to be stronger than their peers in other countries, and are expected to support, and at times sacrifice the men in their lives for the common ‘ultimate value’. Many Israeli women are observed to fluctuate between playing the role of the heroine and displaying their needs for support. “To integrate the unfortunate with the heroic in real life”, says an Israeli war widow, “is a process...I have to go through, for myself, in order to appear in society as a human being” (Lieblich, 1978, P.10). They have to cope on an ongoing basis with
fears regarding the safety of their brothers, lovers, husbands and sons. These fears, perpetuated by continuous war, often result in indulgent attitude toward sons and in a strong influence on family ties (Bawly, 1982; Breznitz-Svidovsky, 1982; Elul, 1982; Kirshner, 1982).

It would be unnatural if these values and this way of life did not have a fundamental imprint on the psychological makeup of the Israeli emigrant. Implicit in most of the research on Israeli emigrants is the assumption that their dilemma is related to tension existing between striving for personal development and rewards, and the strong group attachments and loyalties and the commitment to their society norms and values which call for daily shouldering of national burden (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989, 1990; Shokeid, 1988). Regarding the nation as part of themselves, the loss of that part of the self is bound to be very difficult. While speculations regarding this hypercathected attachment to the nation abound, there has been little direct exploration of its meaning to the emigrants themselves.

Another exception to the typical low profile and instrumental focus of the research on Israeli emigrants is Peleg’s (1989, 1990) work. This analysis of association between separation from the homeland and depressive reaction among Israelis in the U.S.A., suggests that the loss of love objects experienced by most immigrants may be compounded in the Israeli case by a unique emotional commitment to a national ideology to return to the homeland. Peleg’s findings suggest that the pressure of these two variables generate depressive experiences in the form of emotional void which relates to self criticism, guilt, suppressed anger and inner discontentment.

The broken commitment to return is defined in the present study as a nonevent, an anticipated, expected life event that did not occur-- a life transition which presents an existential double bind-- the absence of a presence and the presence of an absence. According to Shokeid (1988) and Peleg (1989) the sense of identity, pride and belonging of Israeli emigrants is generated by holding on to their “Israeliness” and the commitment to return. The psychological conflict which may be suffered by Israeli emigrants as a result of the abandonment of the hope to return has been alluded to by a number of researchers and clinicians. This conflict has been associated with the experience of loss, dejection and depression (Peleg, 1990), and hypothesized to be related to feelings of dissonance (Fish, 1984; Fein, 1978; Shokied, 1988), and to feelings of guilt, self inadequacy, ambivalence, and lack of emotional fulfilment (Burger, cited by Peleg;
Perhaps because the conflict triggered by a severed hope or commitment to return home is not commonly found among other immigrants, it has rarely been attended to in the general immigration research (Peleg, 1989; cf. Westwood & Lawrence, 1990). It is somewhat more surprising that most of the research on Israeli emigrants has refrained from exploring the subject directly. Peleg (1989) has identified the *Israeli national ideology of return* (the commitment to return) as a "deeply rooted loyalty and/or emotional commitment of the people of Israel to return and live in their homeland" (p.191). His working definition, however, constitutes mainly ideological, religious and historical aspects of the phenomenon, paying only scant attention to the moral, secular aspects of the severed commitment to return as perceived by the emigrants. Yet, for the majority of Israelis, history, tradition, and even the Bible are understood in their secular transformation (Shaked, 1986). The majority of Israeli emigrants are secular (Sobel, 1986) and thus their commitment to their country may begin with personal loyalties, not with religious dogma. The studies by Fish (1984) and Shokeid (1988) suggest that while the ideological dimension is likely an integral part of Israeli commitment to return home, Israeli emigrants may be more likely to portray their commitment and sense of obligation to Israel in terms of the collective good, and to emphasize the role of national communal identity rather than religion or ideology as implied by Peleg. Peleg's limited definition of the commitment to return, and his choice of methodology (a statistical analysis of a written survey) resulted in narrowing the subject matter and the range of possible questions posited (cf. Tsoi Hoshmand, 1989). Thus many aspects of the phenomenon as "lived and experienced" (Giorgi, 1985) have remained obscure.

In sum, the literature alludes to a unique and powerful commitment held by the Israeli emigrants to their national homeland, and points to strong ideological and moral values which are embedded in this emotional bond. It suggests that the conflict experienced in leaving the homeland and remaining abroad permanently may involve not only longing for love objects but also reactions of guilt, anger, self criticism and inner discontentment brought about by the abandonment of these values, the most important of which is the commitment to return to Israel. While previous research has provided insight and information about Israeli emigrants, still missing is an account of their emigration experience as lived. No research so far has investigated specifically the lived experience...
of their nonevent - the loss of the hope to return home. How this transition is experienced and incorporated into a personal life story by Israeli expatriates is the central concern of the present research.

**Purpose and rationale**

The purpose of this study was to explore and illuminate the experience of nonevent transition among Israeli emigrants. Underlying this work were the following assumptions: (i) The migration experience of Israeli emigrants may constitute a cultural specific version of the immigration transition which may differ from that of other groups. (ii) The experience of yerida (emigration from Israel) may be implicated in issues of identity and communal affiliation, and may provoke profound existential, ideological and moral dilemmas for those who have chosen to leave Israel (which, unlike other countries is not only an objective place, but also an ideal). (iii) The experience of nonevent may be central to the life of Israeli emigrants and may affect their sense of self, and their personal and moral commitments. (iv) While the word yordim is the common noun used to describe Israeli emigrants, it is a label holding a negative value judgment (whether one is conscious of it or not). Thus, except when referring to the stigma as such I use the terms Israeli expatriates or emigrants (the term emigrants is used because Israelis do not often consider themselves immigrants).

Counselling requires knowledge and accurate understanding of the world of clients in order to generate appropriate counselling alternatives befitting their cultural background (Ivey, 1988). Since there is but a limited knowledge regarding the emotional transition experienced by Israeli emigrants in the process of uprooting, we need to seek this knowledge from the emigrants themselves. In this study I personally interviewed Israeli emigrants to gain understanding of their experience of the broken commitment to return to Israel. Previous research has mostly avoided a direct exploration of the meaning of this experience. This attitude, I believe, has derived either from a lack of empathy and an implicit value judgment by researchers vis-a-vis the emigrants, or in other cases, from too much empathy and a reluctance to ask questions which are deemed 'sensitive' or controversial in nature, or which may spell public admittance of difficulties (cf. Mastai, 1980).
It should be clear that as in all national, ethnic and cultural groups, we deal with vast individual differences, and overgeneralization from the material to create a stereotyped Israeli emigrant is strongly discouraged. However, the findings may provide insight leading to a greater sensitivity to the nature of their experience. The insight gleaned from this study may function to serve as a foundation toward construction of future theory of nonevent. It could have implication for developing treatment approaches leading to a better understanding of immigrants’ problems in adjustment to loss as it is related to broken cultural and/or ideological attachments. Since this study is exploratory in nature and constituted an attempt to illuminate an area which has been relatively unexplored, no hypotheses were offered for its findings.

The search

This research grew out of a felt discordance between the experience of being an immigrant as lived by myself, and the theoretical formulations of this phenomenon as advanced by the professional literature. I believe that in order to understand certain complex human phenomena we must look at its lived context, at the experience as lived. Thus, we must explore and illuminate what it means to be uprooted to the person who goes through the uprooting.

I have been self-exiled from Israel for over two decades. It seems though that separatedness is a matter of inner perception, not geography (Viorst, 1986). I now have a North American past that is as long as my Israeli past. I am an Israeli, yet I'm also part American and part Canadian. More and more I feel that I have not escaped my past, that perhaps it is not possible to transcend our circumstances entirely after all, and that the invisible ties connecting me to Israel are perhaps the threads that make up the tapestry of my soul. This tapestry is woven of sounds and smells and strange delicious fruits, the vastness of the desert and the salt of the sea. It is intertwined with songs, myths and memories, with a collective history, with values, a sense of belonging, loyalties and obligations. It is interlaced with the memory of friends, relatives and lovers under their tombstones and with their ghosts hovering all over that country.

Theodor Adorno once warned his fellow refugees that if they lose their alienation they would lose their souls. Hoffman (1989) suggests that he could not have maintained this
uncompromising idea of integrity without the hope of returning home. Yet maintaining the hope may paradoxically create an internal state of exile, the solution of which is found in the magic formula of losing one's alienation without losing one's self. Holding on to the hope, dream, or myth of returning home is part of my need to hold on to what I had and to hold on to my identity. Giving up the hope to return home is an ending, a loss of part of my being. Not a marker event, the death of the hope has been an unfolding, slow realization that this internal and societal expectation has not and will not happen. It is a life event that has failed to occur - a nonevent. It marks a process of change in my conception of my self. A whole system of attachments and values I consider sacrosanct has been shaken apart. Nothing is certain, everything turns questionable, problematic, subject to analysis and doubt. It is a process of pain and acceptance, a sort of letting go, a mourning. It involves guilt feeling, self doubt, inner discontentment and anxiety. And still, after all these years it is an unfinished business. Separated, yet connected, between and betwixt, I often feel the broken dream as a presence overflowing with its absence, like a pregnancy without a possibility of deliverance.

Israel receives an excessive attention in the media. Every news item (and events which are not deemed news-worthy) stir up emotions, often taking over my life. No matter how hard I've tried I find that I am unable to wrench myself away from the place and the people I identify with, care for and still feel responsible to and for. Israel is a peculiar country where every aspect of life is political, where criticism and griping is one of the fundamental forms of self assertion, a birthright, and a favourite "indoor sport" (Levine, 1986; Katriel, 1985). Separated yet connected, my irrevocably political self is constantly frustrated. In the years of my exile I find my homeland to be engages more and more in policies and activities I have difficulty supporting. I also find that it is often the target of excessive and unjust criticism. While my compatriots in Israel are able to protest, refuse, and at least hope to change things politically, my exile renders me politically impotent since as an emigrant I am often barred from my birthright, relegated among "outsiders" whose criticism and opinion are resented and deemed unacceptable by many Israelis. Exile is a hard place for the connected political critic (Walzer, 1988) since "like lovers, critics require some response to their pleas of engagement and concern" (p.211).

With my rational faculties I know that the dream of going home 'for good' will not
materialize. Yet at times, the anxiety oozing from the incongruence between my old self, my memories, my loyalties, my connectedness to Israel, and my reality of physical separation from it, and my not-to-be-realized ‘possible self’ paralyses me, or make me resurrect the dream (never mind its collision with rationality). As I recognize my own responsibility for ‘killing’ this dream, anxiety and anguish cast a shadow over my comfortable life. According to Ahad Ha’am (the founder of cultural/secular Zionism) ‘life in exile, at best, will always remain life in exile’. I sometime think he was not making an historical observation but rather issuing a prophetic curse.

What started out as a sort of opacity (Giorgi, 1984) evolved into a quest to discover, explore, and reconstruct my own and my compatriots’ way of being ourselves in our changed world. This inquiry turned out to entail the exploration of the phenomenon of nonevent; the broken commitment to return home. Does this nonevent exist for other Israeli emigrants, and if so how central it is to their lives; how they experience this transition; how does the connected/separated duality influence their lives; what effect does it have on their sense of self, values, and moral identity. These were a few of the themes I looked for in my search. I particularly wanted to find out how other Israeli emigrants conceive of this nonevent, since not returning home may imply several different attitudes and emotions, such as guilt, shame, grief, anxiety and possibly relief.

In their call for cultural specific approach to research, Nwachuku & Ivey (1991) state that there is a need to start with the experience of the person and use his or her values and beliefs as the assumptive framework. They suggest that this is best done by an individual from the investigated culture who works in consultation with members of that culture—“the cultural informants” (p.107). Some writers go further than this proposition, suggesting that “to interpret from the outside is social scientific arrogance” (Billson, 1991, p.205).

The present research is a collaborative venture between the researcher and her compatriots, the research participants. In agreement with many critics of the myth of objectivity in human science, I believe that there is no observation without bias, and my bias is embedded in my being both an insider in the world I explore and at the same time outside of the phenomenon (being both an Israeli emigrant and a researcher). I believe that “the worst phenomenological sin is not to have bias or preconception, but to be oblivious to it “ (Ryff 1984, p.252). Being like Jonah, “inside the
whale”, and having been influenced by certain general psychological and philosophical theories necessarily affected my formulation of questions and interpretation of findings. My aim was not to eliminate my personal “historicity and sociality” (Giorgi, 1976) or my personal theoretical position, but to be aware of my biases, values and definition of the situation, to maintain a “conscious subjectivity” (Klien, 1983), and to continually ask whether my experience and perception fit that of the participants. My assumption is that since the experience of the researcher and the participants have been influenced by the context in which we have lived, by our common surrounding, shared culture, and our place in history, important parallels in our subjective experience are likely to exist (Billson, 1991; Ryff, 1984). I followed Ryff’s suggestion that the researcher and the research participants could in collaboration differentiate what is unique from what is shared in the meaning of the experience.
Chapter 2 - Review of related literature

The research on Israeli emigrants reflects a variety of academic disciplines including anthropology (Shokeid, 1988), sociology (Kass & Lipset, 1982; Korazim, 1983; Sobel, 1986) and social-work (Fein, 1978; Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989, 1990). Most of the works have focussed on instrumental issues and have not set out to explicitly study the psychological dimensions of this emigration. None have identified the experience of nonevent. Yet, these studies often digress from their stated purpose into considerations, theorizing, suppositions and insights which are relevant to this experience. The purpose of this review is to provide a background for the understanding of this group of emigrants and the nature of their nonevent experience. Therefore it will draw a composite picture from the available literature rather than review each study separately. It also draws upon Israeli studies in military psychology (Gal, 1986) social psychology (Lieblich, 1973, 1983, 1989), political psychology (Linn, 1986, 1989), and Jewish studies (Meyer, 1990). Insight and information gleaned from non-academic work such as journalistic and political essays (Freedman, 1986; Rubinstein, 1977), literary works (Shaked, 1986; Yehoshua, 1980) and biographical accounts (Student, 1991) which enhance understanding of the problem are also referred to.

For organizational purposes the review is divided into three main sections; yet, this division is somewhat artificial since there is a natural overlap among the three foci. Since nonevent does not occur in vacuum but in a life space of the individual, the first section of this review provides a profile of Israeli emigrants. The second section addresses the psychological dimensions of attachment, uprooting and loss, focussing on Israeli connected/separated identity which is deemed to be at the roots of their experience of nonevent. The third section explores the experience of nonevent.

Throughout this review an attempt is made to locate the issues within the broader frame of Israeli identity, "for only an identity safely anchored in the 'patrimony' of a cultural identity can produce a workable psychological equilibrium" (Erikson, 1950, p. 412).
(I) A Profile of Israeli emigrants

(i) Motives for emigration

In searching the unique elements in the immigration experience of Israelis, we need to understand the circumstances that make them leave Israel in the first place. According to Shokeid (1988), Israel cannot be compared to most other countries whose citizens have been pulled towards North America throughout history. Even though the country has been at war for its entire existence, Israelis enjoy a very high degree of political freedom (even compared to the celebrated U.S. freedom). They enjoy a range of social services which are comparable, and in certain areas surpass Canadian social services. The standard of living of many Israelis, while often complained about, is in reality relatively high. What then brings Israelis to leave their homeland, a place created to end the long historical Diaspora of Jews, and a place to which they are said to be inexorably connected?

While Israeli emigrants are usually not pushed out by pressing conditions per se, they do cite various 'push' and 'pull' factors. Reasons cited for emigration include educational pursuits, economic aspirations and the natural limitation on opportunities and mobility in a small country, high inflation, heavy taxation, annoying bureaucracy, excessive government intervention in one's life, and a relative absence of civility in everyday life (Kass & Lipset, 1982; Sobel, 1983). To some observers the economic, professional and academic reasons for emigration from Israel present only a partial explanation of a complex phenomenon which also encompasses issues related to the changing values of the Israeli society, the effects of stress and anxiety of constant wars, and moral conflicts suffered by some Israelis in face of the policies of the Israeli government. Kass & Lipset (1982) and Sobel (1983) see emigration as a resultant of a decline in pioneer spirit and a normalization or Americanization of the country. Sobel proposes that since Israel has lost its uniqueness, or in his terms, its 'specialness', Israelis find it easier to shift from community orientation to self orientation and to opt for the material comfort, greater security and individual freedom in America. Sobel suggests a relationship between emigration and ideological shifts, the collapse of the collective myth in Israel, and the political gains of the orthodox religious minority (cf. Rubinstein, 1977 and Freedman, 1986). Rubinstein points out that along-side democratic Israel, another Israel has evolved. This "occupying Israel" is characterized by extreme right-wing
nationalism, imbued hate, intolerance and a desire for separatism and detachment from the world. This attitude is partly based on religious fanaticism bearing a messianic tone, and partly on antidemocratic and racist stances. Rubinstein suggests that emigration presents an option for those Israelis who were raised upon universal humanism and secularism and find this reality difficult to endure.

While the available literature states that the majority of Israeli emigrants are not pushed out by, or do not cite political factors, military service, physical danger, or other security considerations as responsible for their emigration (Shokeid, 1988; Sobel, 1983), there are suggestions that following the 1973 Yom Kippur war, a cumulative effect of wars may have begun to take its toll, and Israelis began doubting their willingness to accept the constraints imposed upon them by the constant threat of war, the pressure of siege, and the political atmosphere (Kass & Lipset, 1982). Since the creation of Israel out of the War of Independence in 1948, life in Israel has been marked by a continuous state of war highlighted by six ‘official’ wars, 1956, 1967, 1968-1979, 1973, 1982. The Six Days War (1967) was perceived by most Israelis as a heroic campaign and a celebrated victory. The War of Attrition (a period between 1968-1970 in which Egyptian and Israeli forces clashed heavily along the Suez canal) was accepted as a necessary evil. However, the Yom Kippur war (the war that, according to the country’s leaders, was not supposed to happen because Israel was so strong) and its aftermath, were marked by a general feelings of insecurity, dissatisfaction and questioning of previously inviolable value and belief system, and increased criticism of government leadership (Hasdai, 1982). Yet, until the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Israelis, to a great extent, were unified behind the war effort (Och, 1986; Schiff & Ya’ari, 1984). The war in Lebanon led to a protest movement which began during the war and focused on the war’s moral/ideological objectives and social implication. Many Israelis found themselves in want of justification for the war and in a conflict regarding their moral obligation to participate in it (Linn, 1986, 1989). Since the traditional “no alternative” justification of war was perceived by many Israelis as lacking in this war, they began to question their traditional readiness for self-sacrifice (Freedman, 1986; Student, 1991). Israelis now found themselves in the midst of the most extreme ideological-political societal rift in the history of Israel. The Intifada, (the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories) has worsened the criticism
and the rift, and the country has increasingly become a divided nation of bitterly opposing political-ideological groups (Pines, 1990; Lissak, 1990).

While understandably official sources tend to minimize the extent of such factors, surveys show a gradual deterioration in morale among Israelis and a decrease in the number of Israelis who are certain they will stay in the country. While most of those surveyed are certain that they will stay, the number of those who state they would like to emigrate has increased during the Intifada from 18% to 25% (Katz & Levinson, 1990). Findings from recent studies suggest that the war in Lebanon and the Intifada, the “seventh war” (Gal, 1990), have contributed to an increase of emigration (Arian, et al., 1988). This suggestion was recently substantiated by the army’s chief general of personnel, who in an interview to the IDF magazine said that “military duty in (handling) the Intifada leads to ‘burn-out’ among reserve soldiers and causes yerida” (Bamahane, March, 26, 1990).

Another underlying motivation of Israeli emigration is suggested by A. B. Yehoshua, a prominent Israeli novelist. Yehoshua claims that Israeli emigrants who, although Israeli born, are children of Jewish immigrants, embody the ‘Wondering Jew’ vocation; a deeply embedded ethnic ‘neurosis’ or ‘virus’ among Jews who have been conditioned to endure exile, and who despite their hatred of the Diaspora and dreams of Israel are preoccupied with the aim to continue maintaining the hated existence of exile (Yehoshua, 1980). While this thesis is put in poetic terms, it is proposed by Sobel (1986) as a sociological explanation based on the theory that prior migration increases the possibility for repeat migration, and that the children of migrants are likely to become migrants themselves (cf. Petersen, 1970; Berliner, 1977) Migrants flee what makes them unsafe or threatened (both physically and psychologically), they flee what makes them feel uncomfortable, or what fails to satisfy their needs. In this general sense Israeli emigrants are not different than other migrants. However, contrary to other migration movements, emigration from Israel may be seen as “conservative migration” (Petersen, 1970) where “people move geographically in order to remain where they are in all other respects” (p. 165). In a sense, by the loss of the country Israeli emigrants seem to become more Israeli rather than less, as if the loss intensifies their connected identification with the homeland (Kass & Lipsit, 1982, Korazim, 1983).
(ii) Unique characteristics of Israelis as a migrant group

Israeli emigrants present a somewhat deviant case on the immigration scene and contemporary ethnicity (Shokeid, 1988). Most of the literature on the subject maintains that emigration from Israel cannot be explained in the same categories as other emigrations. The term *ethnic group* refers to people who identify with and exhibit a common heritage in the second or subsequent generation after immigration (Berry, 1990). Buber (1963) argued that the Jews elude all classification. Often this uniqueness has provoked anxiety among dominant groups who had a need to departmentalize people, and a frantic desire among Jews themselves to fit into a category due to their inability to bear the insecurity of being set apart (Meyer, 1990). Israeli emigrants, though ethnically Jewish, are remarkably different from earlier Jewish immigrants. They are the first group of Jewish immigrants who come to North America with the belief, or at least the stated intention, that they will return home. They are also the first generation of Jews in thousands of years who voluntarily exile themselves from the Jewish promised land for life in the Diaspora. Countless generations of Jews have traditionally prayed “Next year in Jerusalem”, expressing a longing to return to the Promised Land. Yet, contrary to Israelis, North American Jews do not see themselves as people who belong somewhere else. Their homeland is America. While for most Diaspora Jews the Promised Land is defined in spiritual terms, and is the stuff of epic and religious legends, for Israeli emigrants this mother country is defined on the basis of an existing nation state whose turmoil, tragedies and triumphs are theirs (Meyer, 1990; Kaplan, 1986; Freedman, 1986).

Meyer (1990) claims that the designation Israeli connotes not just a legal status as citizens of the state, but also a category of ethnic identity which separate existence in the homeland from existence in the Diaspora. Contrary to outsiders’ perceptions, the relationship between Israelis and Jews is not simple or straightforward, and is often described as ambivalent (Kass & Lipset, 1982, Meyer, 1990, Shokeid, 1988). While most ethnic groups are said to function in a role of socializing and supporting agents for the immigrant (Kolm, 1980), it does not seem to be the case for the Jewish community in regard to Israeli emigrants (Kass & Lipset, 1982). In his review of the literature on “culture shock”, Taft (1977) refers to a phenomenon of rejection by the local community of the immigrant, which may be paralleled by rejection of the community by the
immigrant. While the relationship between Israeli emigrants and the Jewish community in Canada has not been explored, studies from the U.S. suggest such parallel rejection may be symptomatic of this relationship (Fish, 1984; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Meyer, 1990; Shokeid, 1988). The "understanding" between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora consists of the "arrangement" under which Israelis are to be the guardians of the Jewish state which provides shelter for all Jews whenever they may need it, while the Jews abroad are to provide political and financial support to Israel. The appearance of Israelis in the Diaspora seems to fly in the face of this agreement and to create anxiety for the Jewish community (Shokeid, 1988). The attitude of American Jews towards Israeli emigrants is expressed by puzzlement and at times hostility. Israelis and Jews perceive each other as different in regard to values, mentality and culture, and the Jewishness of each group can only be understood in each respective context. Both groups are caught up in patterns, images, stereotypes and misunderstanding rooted in the past. For the secular Israeli, Jewishness often provokes ambivalence rooted in the historical fact that Zionism was in fact a revolt against the traditional Jewishness of the Diaspora and was supposed to transcend Jewish passivity. Thus Israeli Identity is often seen as "post-Jewish" (Meyer, 1990, p. 73). It is posited that the alienation between Israelis and American Jews is a two way relationship, particularly as it concerns secular Israelis (the majority). Studies show that it is the religious Israelis who feel most Jewish (Fish, 1984; Gal & Miesles, 1990), thus they may feel close to Jews in the Diaspora, while the secular emigrants do not feel wanted and do not wish to belong to the Jewish community (Fish, 1984).

Israelis living outside Israel have been described as immigrants and as self-defined sojourners, yet they seem to fit in neither categories. Immigrants are usually defined as free, voluntary first generation migrants who arrive at a host country with the intention to settle (Berry, 1990; Kolm, 1980). While the immigrant intends to make the host country a permanent new home, the literature and personal observation suggest that Israelis rarely reconcile themselves to the events that ultimately became a permanent move, and, unlike other immigrants, they often present their circumstances as getting "stuck" in the host country as a result of unplanned turn of events. Even when they have acquired landed-immigrant status, (permanent residence in the U.S) or have become citizens of their host country, they maintain a dual citizenship. (This dual citizenship
currently costs them over $100 per person when visiting Israel, because of Israeli taxation. Yet, few give up their Israeli citizenship). Despite their emigration they perceive themselves and are perceived by the government of Israel as citizens of Israel (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989; Shokeid, 1988).

Sojourners are defined as temporary immigrants who arrive for a specific goal and with a time frame for return (Berry, 1990). Since they display some of the characteristics of the sojourner, Israelis abroad have been said to be “self-defined sojourners” (Kass & Lipset, 1982). Like sojourners their reasons for emigrating may be academic degrees, commercial interests, economic advancement, an emotional or a political refuge. They tend to cling to the original culture of their group, and their intrinsic purpose is “to do the job and do it in the shortest possible time”; yet, “In due time the sojourner becomes vague and uncertain about the termination of his sojourn because of the fact that he has already made some adjustment to his new environment and acquired an old-timer’s attitudes” (Sui 1952, p. 34). While most sojourners initially speak of a wish to return, they eventually openly state a wish to remain in the host country. Israelis however, are rarely able to make this transition, or to admit to it openly. Fish (1984) proposes that the difference may be related to the higher degree of psychological discomfort or cognitive dissonance felt by Israelis who never make a total break with their mother country (Fish, 1984). Israeli emigrants also do not develop some other identified characteristics of sojourners, for example, although in certain geographical areas they constitute a community of similar size to that of other newcomers, they have not set up ethnic colonies or cultural areas such as Little Tel-Aviv or Israel Town. Neither do they concentrate in particular professions, economic enclaves, or have evolved easily identifiable ethnic presence. On the contrary; in most countries, both in Europe and in North America they keep a remarkably low profile (Shokeid, 1988). Shokeid suggests that the classification best approximating Israelis abroad is that of expatriates as described by Cohen (1977). In this description the term expatriate refers to “transnational participants”, voluntary, temporary, relatively privileged migrants who are “less fleeting than the tourist and less permanent than the immigrant”. The expatriate is a ‘transient’ who comes for a specific job or project and intends to leave upon its completion. When she or he stays on afterwards, they are usually able to leave for home or another country whenever they wish.
"Hence the expatriate’s... presence in a foreign land is normally characterized by permanent impermanence" (Cohen, 1977, p. 18).

Another first generation migrants are *refugees*, who are defined as people who flee or are forced to leave their homeland due to fear of or actual persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality or political opinion (U.N. High Commission on Refugees, 1971), and who regard their exile as either temporary, living abroad waiting for the day when they may return, or intend to settle permanently in the new country (Kolm, 1980). Clearly, Israeli expatriates are not refugees, yet they often seem to manifest characteristics that usually describe refugees. Like refugees, they seem to begin upon arrival in the host country “an invitation to limbo... the exile” (Westwood & Lawrence, 1990). Integration in a host culture is usually expected to culminate in the migrant transferring his or her emotional membership from the original group to the host society (Kolm, 1980). The one group for whom the changes in cultural loyalty may never occur is political refugees (Kolm, 1980; Taft, 1977). Many Israelis, even those who are reconciled to their life in the host country and no longer consider returning to Israel a viable and realistic option, nonetheless continue to feel a strong sense of uprootedness and a loyalty to the homeland (though not necessarily to its government) (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989; Shokeid, 1988; Student, 1991). Like refugees, Israeli expatriates look back to what they have left, and are characterized by ambivalence since they cling to the myth of return, however unrealistic it may be, or work politically for the ‘liberation’ or ‘liberalization’ of their original country (cf. Kolm, 1980; Richmond, 1988; Westwood & Lawrence, 1990; Zwingmann, 1973). Similar to other exiles (cf. Richmond, 1988; Walzer, 1988) their ambivalence seems to be centred around feelings of shame, guilt and a sense of violation of moral, ideological imperatives or values. “I feel guilty, constantly... almost without being aware of it I find myself justifying and apologizing for staying here... I keep thinking about what would happen to Israel if everyone did what I did” (Fish, 1984, p. 81).

(iii) Ambivalence and guilt

An extensive literature search found no parallel example of a group of voluntary migrants that struggle with ambivalent feelings in regard to leaving and not returning to the homeland as do Israeli expatriates. Some writers postulate that these feelings regarding the meaning of leaving
the homeland are due to the unique history of the Jewish people and the place of Israel in that history (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989). Yet compounding the problem are the nagging guilt they often feel when opting for self interests or attending to "selfish" needs and wishes are pitted against the life-long "selfless" value of duty and a commitment to a community in a struggle for survival; when living an "easy" life is juxtaposed with the life of those who remained in a country which has been labelled "a natural laboratory for stress research" (Lazarus, 1982, p.34). The ambivalence is further heightened since the sense of not belonging is pitted against that of the being a part of a "connected" society. "We are on the cross, hanging there, suffering and bleeding, and we have a ladder which we do not want to use to step down from the cross. I mean that I can stay here in the United States as you can, but I was indoctrinated to feel so much guilt if I am not there with my peers" (Student, 1991, p.143). The "burden of the 'connected' society and its concomitant 'connected identity' is an important theme for many Israeli expatriates and will be elaborated on in the second section of this review.

This ambivalence has been recognized by previous researchers who suggested it is related to cognitive dissonance, or arises from a stigmatized designation (Fein, 1978; Fish, 1984; Shokeid, 1988). While recently attitudes have begun to change somewhat, for many years Israeli emigrants could not escape being derogatorily judged by Israeli public opinion and government officials. Israel is a country where citizenship is considered as altruistic and most people have been accustomed to seeing themselves as being called upon to sacrifice all, including, if necessary, their lives for the sake of national survival. Thus, those who choose to leave often have been labelled egoistic (Shokeid, 1988). The negative connotation of the term yordim is rarely denied by the emigrants themselves, and according to Shokeid (1988) is a source of behaviour incongruity similar to Goffman's (1963) description of identity ambivalence among stigmatized individuals. As if 'not wanting to belong to the only club that will accept them', many of the expatriates observed by Shokeid expressed little sympathy toward other Israeli expatriates, they were able to "neither embrace [their] group nor let it go" (Goffman, 1963, p.132). The failure to identify with ones ethnic group, or a rejection from that group is said to contribute to identity conflict (Ruiz, 1990). Whether or not this presents a psychological characteristic of Israeli expatriates has not yet been verified. Fein (1978), for example, suggests
that they may seek the company of other Israelis in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance caused by the act of emigration. There is a need to return to the concretely lived experience and to the meaning it has for the expatriates themselves in order to discover whether we can in fact corroborate these observations. Yet these “sensitive issues” have often been avoided by researchers claiming that the personal burden of self-criticism, shame or guilt, is rarely acknowledged publicly and is seldom a topic of conversation (Mastai, 1980; Peleg, 1990).

While it has certainly become more “normal” to emigrate from Israel, the literature and personal observation of Israelis, both in the U.S. and Canada, suggest that whether denied, rationalized or acknowledged, the derogative connotations attached to yerida remain a source of identity conflict for many. Most of those who have been abroad for 10-20 years still carry the memory of morally embedded criticism such as “yerida is not much different from the cowardly flight from the battlefield... they shall be cast out by their children and friends” (Gothalf, 1976, p.19). “The yored is a miserable figure, a one dimensional man... oriented toward one goal--material gain” (Bar-Yosef, 1976, p.84). “I can't really blame you-- I too am often weary, bitter and filled with doubts... But you have given up a dream, a most beautiful dream, not only of the Jewish people but of the entire human race... You are, in fact, a deserter” (Keinan, 1982, p. 25). This attitude which was often expressed by Israeli writers and politicians, was most strongly exemplified by a comment, one that few expatriates are likely to forget, made by then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who on the Day of Independence 1976 in a television interview referred to yordim as the refuse of weaklings. While emigration has surely been viewed in less than neutral fashion in other countries, to my knowledge no other emigrants in modern time have been labelled in as judgemental a fashion either by the government or by the people of the original country.

In recent years the Israeli government has attempted to tone down its aggressive, negative reproach of the expatriates. There is official talk about maintaining ties with them “since they might be Israel’s best reservoir of future olim (immigrants)” (Katriel, 1991, p.108). Efforts to encourage a ‘return home’ focus on sending emotional, moral signals of return, such as “Israel calls you to come back home”. “It is time to reflect, to weigh one’s deeds, to take moral stock, and to assume personal and national responsibility... we need each and every one of you here in Israel”
(Bamahane, September, 1989). It is often through the children that immigrants become aware of the threat to the continuity of cultural identification, and of the need to make a clear decision regarding it (Kolm, 1980). It has been suggested that Israeli emigrants experience guilt feeling for bringing their children up outside of Israel (Fish, 1984; Shokied, 1988). Not unaware of this fact, the Israeli government has been sending them a message to come back for the children’s sake; “If your children’s future is important to you.....an Israeli school is the best guarantee for a speedy and comfortable absorption” (Yisrael Shelanu, September, 8,1985). To win back the expatriates’ children, special, often subsidized, academic curricula within Israeli boarding schools have been designed to fit the north American school system. Programmes such as summer adventures in the framework of the paramilitary youth organization have been created, and special concessions have been recently made in the draft regulations for “Israeli kids born abroad” (who under Israeli law are Israeli citizens and thus subject to military conscription). Through these and various other programmes the Israeli government which obviously does not consider its emigrants, or their foreign born children, to be permanently lost to the homeland, is trying its best to lure them back home. At the same time, through these messages the government is continually touching upon the ambivalence of these people, reminding them of their attachment and moral commitment to shoulder the burden of national obligation to the survival of the nation, thus possibly enhancing their guilt and existential dilemma.

Another source of ambivalence is embedded in the relationship between Israelis and their ‘natural’ ethnic group. Not wanting to encourage emigration from Israel, and fearing tension with the Israeli political establishment, many American Jews have joined the Israeli chorus of condemnation of Israeli expatriates. Until recently the American Jewish institutions, noted for extending extensive aid, affirmation and affect to various Jewish immigrants, have regarded Israeli emigrants neither as Jewish immigrants to be supported, nor (despite statistics claiming Israelis constitute over one-tenth of American Jewry) as people with the potential to enhance the growth of this demographically declining ethnic group (Fish, 1984; Kass & Lipset, 1979,1982). As if following the partial shift in the attitude of the Israeli government toward the expatriates, several Jewish communities have recently attempted to reach out to them; however, the ambivalence is still prevalent (Kass & Lipset, 1982; Meyer, 1990). Israeli expatriates are thus the
first group of Jewish immigrants to North America (and perhaps the only group of immigrants in general) who find themselves having to justify their immigration, both to themselves and to their local ethnic group (Sklare, 1971).

For many secular Israelis emigration is accompanied by an often unexpected reevaluation of their Jewishness, as well as their Israeliness. Many are said to feel conflicted regarding what ethnic identity to pass to their children, and through which avenues to transmit their values. It is commonly claimed (Fish, 1984; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Meyer, 1990; Shokeid, 1988) that they are ambivalent about sending their children to Jewish schools, opposing the schools religious emphasis or feeling that this is not their heritage. “I am an Israeli, I cannot become a Jew” protests one of Shokeid’s participants (p. 132). Growing up in a country where Jews are the dominant majority, Jewishness for most Israelis is a natural state of affairs, and not something one thinks about. For many Israelis, being religious often connotes a negative association with efforts by the orthodox establishment in Israel to ‘Judaize’ the state on the basis of Jewish law, and the messianic, reactionary politics of Jewish religious extremists (Freedman, 1986; Meyer, 1990). Not having experienced this “oppression of religion”, most Diaspora Jews are often puzzled by and misunderstand the reaction of Israelis, dubbing it as a militant secularism (cf. Brandes, 1991). Identifying themselves as Diaspora Zionists may also cause ambivalence. Modern Zionists are often viewed as those whose connection to Israel consists only of financial and political support of the state. Many Israelis, while highly appreciative of this support, cinically view it as a way by which Jews tend to their guilty conscience for not moving to Israel and sharing in the national toll (Shokeid, 1988). Raising money for Israel, according to Meyer (1990) is “so clearly a mark of Diaspora Judaism” that for an Israeli emigrant to do so “would mean symbolically moving to the other side of the table” (p. 78).

War and security are central issues in the Israeli society and necessarily occupy the expatriates who do not see themselves as rejectors of Israeli values or society, though they may be highly critical of them (Fish, 1984). Since the entity of the nation is tied up with family and national symbolism, a historical legacy, myths, morality, ideology and religion, “it is not surprising that the support for the nation is seen as sacred duty and failure to provide such support can be a source of profound guilt” (Kelman, 1969, p.258). Fish reports that Israeli emigrants
express guilt feelings in regard to their responsibility to contribute to the support of the nation. Even when they object to the policies of the government the sense of personal responsibility continues to haunt them. "Carrying the anger, and yet feeling guilty for not being there to be sacrificed to the insanity of the political process...I totally and honestly distrust the political leadership...and yet I feel responsible" (Student, 1991,p.144).

There is a widely held dictum in Israel that the proper place for criticism is at home, thus the question is often raised whether outsiders have the right to publicly criticise Israel. The issue is more problematic as it concerns the expatriates. According to Kaplan (1986) the deepest alienation is to be a stranger to oneself. One’s ‘political identity’ is of considerable weight and seriousness in Israel (Sobel, 1986; Levine, 1986). and its importance is unlikely to cease upon emigration. Criticism is a striking characteristic of Israeli mentality, a ‘trademark’ of Israeli society (Katriel, 1985). Griping, according to Katriel, provides a major context for members of the society to construct and validate personal identities and to reaffirm their communal connectedness. Not only in the media, literature, theater and other public forums, but also in private living rooms, around every family table, in army units, in coffeehouses, or any place where Israelis gather, they openly criticize their government, social norms, policies, erosion of values, abandonment of traditions, military procedures, Hebrew usage, driving habits - no subject has immunity against this favourite “indoor sport” of griping (Katriel, 1985; Levine, 1986). While some consider much of Israeli self criticism to be exaggerated and perhaps to reflect a pathology, most agree that it reflects loyal criticism (Heydemann, 1991). Criticism is always moral in character, yet it is not always guided by a passion for truth as much as by passionate caring (Walzer, 1988). The Israeli critic does not resemble the separated, detached hero of de Beauvoir (1968) and Sartre (1975), but is rather just like other members of the complaining public (Katriel,1985; Levine, 1986).

Israel is a very military country yet it is also very unmilitaristic. This duality is the outcome of the blurred distinction between the military and the civilian population, and the extreme sensitivity to casualties and human losses. This exceptional sensitivity stems both from the nature of the population and from the lack of anonymity in the small, closely knit society, where every soldier that is killed or wounded is known to many. Therefore, every military action and every casualty elicit widespread questioning and criticism reflecting a revulsion of violence among a
large part of the population. Those who demonstrate demanding resignations of ministers involved in military blunders, those who called the war in Lebanon an unjust war, those who demand changes in policies in the occupied territories, are often themselves combat soldiers (Gal, 1986; Levine, 1986; Linn, 1986, 1989). During the Lebanon war the following scenario has been frequently observed - reserve soldiers returned after a few months of active duty in the war, they went home, changed into civilian clothes and joined the demonstrations protesting against the war (personal observation; cf. Gal, 1986; Levine, 1986; Oren, 1986).

While some in Israel regard criticism as seditious, most Israelis believe that “loyalty must acquire criticism, and criticism must maintain responsibility” (Levine, 1986, p.28), and that no Israeli can be absolved of this birthright - the obligation of participation - even if she or he is opposed to Israeli policies. The expatriates however are at times excluded from exercising this basic right, and are relegated among outsiders whose criticism is resented by many Israelis. Yet, the irrevocably political Israeli may not be able to deny his or her identity, political attitude and moral responsibility upon leaving. Severing their physical and geographical ties with the country many nonetheless do not become detached or able to become ideal, objective or impartial observers. A few manifestations of this connectedness are observed in the literature. According to Shokeid (1988) they bring with them from Israel an obsession with news. Many regularly read the weekend issue of Israeli daily papers, regularly listen to Hebrew radio programme (available in N.Y.) and frequently communicate with people in Israel by telephone. “As an Israeli living abroad, I’m thirsty for any information regarding the state. When and by what means can I receive the Voice of Israel Broadcast” (from a letter to the editor, Bamahane, April, 1991). Every news item regarding Israel stirs up strong emotions and criticism arising from the feeling of responsibility for those they identify with. Since griping is a culturally ingrained outlet for pent-up tensions and frustrations (Katriel, 1985), it is common for Israelis expatriates to ‘share’ their numerous opinions, beliefs, analyses and proposed solutions regarding each news item. Shokeid observes that they demonstrate the same soul-searching and emotional involvement as expressed on similar occasions in Israel where social gathering are easily swept up into vibrant debates on ideological and political issues. Yet, the underlying rule of Israeli griping is that it can “proceed undisturbed as long as there are no outsiders, i.e., non-Israelis”. The very same talk that is
legitimate loyal criticism among Israelis is considered malicious slander when uttered in the presence of an outsider (Katriel, 1985, p.375). This implicit rule of private criticism may be a fundamental reason why these emigrants maintain a low profile in their host countries. As parents we do not criticize our children in front of others, but only when we are alone with them. Faced by criticism of Israel, they may be feeling the same impulse to refrain from publicly taking a position which may be interpreted as disloyal. Unable to give voice to their critical political selves their sense of exile and alienation may be exacerbated.

The ambivalence associated with emigration from Israel is experienced not only by the emigrants but often also by researchers. All those who have conducted research on emigration from Israel are personally connected with Israel (they are either Israelis or are married to Israelis), and most seem to be wrestling with personal feelings toward the subject of emigration and toward the emigrants. Shokeid, a native Israeli, states in a self reflective introduction to his book (1988): “our stay in New York in the company of Israelis... was a permanent test of our loyalties”. Further, he says “For whatever the yearning (to a people, views, a climate, and a way of life, to the notion of duty, the imprints of a sentimental education, and to self punishment) that made me return, I do not hold anything against those Israelis who have chosen to stay away and whose experience I describe in this book. As much as I was observing them, I was observing myself.” (p. xiii).

Sobel’s (1983) study on reasons for planned emigration provides an example of both researcher’s and participants’ ambivalence. Contrary to the common assumption of the literature, Sobel claims that present day Israeli emigrants no longer suffer from moral distress, dilemmas or doubts as did those who emigrated in the past. In assessing this statement we need to keep in mind a few factors. First, Sobel’s subjects were Israelis applying for immigrant visa to the U.S. while still living in Israel. These people differ from most expatriates, who usually arrive in the host culture on nonimmigrant visas (as students, tourists, businessmen) and only later change their legal status (Kass & Lipset, 1982; Shokeid, 1988). Sobel’s interpretation of statements made by his subjects may reflect the discomfort these people felt in being interviewed. Having taken a direct action for which they may feel shame or conceived as illegitimate (since it is inconsistent with their society’s shared values) they may have felt compelled to reduce the tension this
dissonance creates by down-grading the state and its values, and by upgrading their decision (cf. Yalom, 1980). Second, the presentation of self of these potential emigrants, which is often contradicted in their statements, may reflect a tendency among Israelis (male in particular) to repress their feelings of pain, ambivalence, and doubt, and to present a facade of strength, omnipotence and invulnerability (Lieblich, 1978, 1983, 1989; Moses, 1983). Third, Sobel’s interpretation may reflect his own ambivalent feelings regarding emigration from Israel which are rooted in his values and personal history. Sobel, who believes that “desertion” on the part of Israelis presents a personal and communal threat to the existence of Israel (p. 8), admits that during the task of interviewing he often had to overcome feelings of regret, hostility and bewilderment toward his subjects (p. 9). A long-time American immigrant to Israel, Sobel’s decision to move to Israel was likely “weighted against the decision of Israelis to leave” (Katriel, 1991, p. 95).

(II) Connectedness, uprooting and loss

In this section salient themes arising from the literature on the uprooting experience of Israelis will be reviewed. This experience has been described as often leading to personal suffering, even when the transition to the host country has been relatively successful (Shokeid, 1988). The general immigration literature has described the stress, the feeling of loss and depression, or the ‘culture shock’ experienced by the immigrant in the process of uprooting. The stress has been related to the loss of external and internal sources of validation, and to experiences of failure or limitation in daily coping. This stress is said to be accentuated by a sense of isolation, loneliness and longing for the familiar past, and feelings of worthlessness, helplessness and meaninglessness (Golan, 1981; Mirsky & Kaushinsky, 1989; Ishiyama, 1989; Itzigsohn & Minuchin-Itzigsohn, 1989; Taft, 1977). Israeli emigrants are not exempt from the stresses experienced by other migrants, yet they seem to be facing some additional sources of anxiety which are unique to this group. Underlying most of the literature on these emigrants is the assumption that the unique experience of this group of migrants is directly related to the historical, political and existential reality of the state of Israel, and to the unique relationship Israelis have with it. That individual identity of Israelis is inseparable from their national identity is often suggested.
as the cornerstone of this relationship (Fish, 1984; Meyer, 1990; Peleg, 1990; Shokeid, 1988). According to Sandel (1982) identity can not be considered as independent of the person's attachments and goals without a "great loss to those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are... that is as members of this family, community, nation or person" (p.179). Although a comprehensive analysis of the Israeli psychological background is beyond the scope of this review, key issues deemed important to the understanding of the anxiety related to the particular connectedness of Israeli expatriates to their mother country will be briefly highlighted.

(i) The loss of mother country

"Patriotism... is a devotion to something that is always changing and yet is felt to be mystically the same. It is the bridge between the future and the past" (Orwell, 1968, p.539). Whether explicitly or implicitly, most of the research on Israeli expatriates assumes that for Israelis, uprooting means not only the loss of love objects but also the loss of mother country. For Israelis, mother country is a highly affectively charged notion which may arouse various emotions including nostalgia or bitterness, insecurity, messianism, patriotism, or nationalism. However, it almost never provokes a feeling of indifference (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1989,1990; Shokeid, 1988; Sobel. 1986). The notion of mother country may be significant to many immigrants (Gold & Paine, 1984), yet its meaning has received very little attention in the literature. Little research has focused on the inner conflicts generated from the continuous attachment to the country of origin, from the loss of historical continuity with ancestors and the ancestral place, or on the moral conflict generated by the act of leaving the mother country. The literature suggests that all these issues may be implicated in the emigration experience of Israelis. The reluctance to explore the subject may stem from a general feeling that attachment to a nation or its ideology may not be as emotionally invested or as common as the attachment to love objects (Peleg, 1990). This feeling may have its roots in Freud's claim that attachment to love object is an invested emotional energy which exist a priori to the loyalty to a nation (Freud, 1917). However, history and recent world events seem to question the claim that nation is "a shadowy concept" (Tajfel, 1969) onto which the attachment to love objects is displaced (Freud, 1917). As any Israeli, Palestinian, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Latvian or other recently (1992) emerging
nationals will attest to, love for a nation, or nationalism, is not a secondary, abstract or vague emotion.

Many studies on Israelis address the notion that individual identity for many Israelis is embedded in a national identity (Fein, 1978; Fish, 1984; Meyer, 1990; Rubinstein, 1977; Shokeid, 1988). While Israel in certain respects is like other western countries, Israelis relate to their state in a connected way unparalleled by other nationals. Sobel (1986) describes this relationship as a peculiar social pathology of over-identification in which the Israeli feels that everything done in the country is done in his or her name, and that when “anybody in Israel is assaulted, or in some way attacked, that a part of me has undergone the same treatment” (p.168). This over-identification, according to Sobel, may be the resultant of the newness of the Israeli existence or of the ongoing threat to its survival. Kass & Lipset (1979) suggest that the Israeli feels a link to his or her original country in a deeper, more emotional way than a person raised in a society whose existence has not been called into question. Peleg’s (1990) findings suggest that the love, loyalty and commitment of Israeli emigrants to the mother country are firmly enmeshed in their attachment to love objects left behind.

Like many works on the psychological effects of migration, Peleg’s (1989,1990) study on reactive symptomatology of depression among Israeli emigrants was guided by theories of separation and loss (Freud, 1917; Marris,1973, 1982; Parkes, 1971). According to Marris (1973) exile is essentially a loss of the structure of meaning since the unique quality of the relationship with those persons and places which are experienced as irreplaceable “seem to embody most crucially the meaning of our lives” (p. 185). The feeling of loss stemming from being uprooted is said to include loss of most significant and valued objects; people, things, places, language, culture, climate, sometimes profession, social and economic milieu etc. All of these, as part of the self, are associated with memories and intense feelings, and the attachment to them is also subject to loss (Dellarossa, 1978; Golan, 1981; Zwingmann, 1973). Peleg’s findings are consistent with the above theories in illustrating a highly significant correlation between the attachments of Israeli emigrants to love objects remaining in the homeland, and depressive subscales of dependency and self criticism. It confirms that the attachment to love objects in the form of people, places and things in the homeland is a profound emotional investment (Peleg, 1990). Yet the attachment to
love objects in the Israeli case seems more complex than the general theoretical description. Peleg suggests that the loss of love objects experienced by most immigrants is compounded in the Israeli case by a unique emotional commitment to a national ideology to return to the homeland. The major finding of his study suggests that the high level of emotional investment to love objects in the homeland, and to the national ideology of return, is associated with high levels of dependency, and that a high level of self criticism is related to the experience of depression.

Peleg’s statistical findings show that the two independent variables of the study are highly correlated, with the ideological commitment to return being weaker in its contribution to depression. The author concludes that this findings is in agreement with various theoretical theories (e.g.; Freud, 1917; Murphy, 1947; Tajfel, 1969) which claim that attachment to love objects is a primary cathexic concept while love or loyalty to a nation is secondary. Yet, the author also suspects that this result may have been a function of the stigma attached to not returning, which may have created a defense mechanism in the form of denial, decreasing the correlation between the commitment to return and the depression subscale of self-criticism. While this suspicion is highly likely, there are grounds to suspect that an additional problem may have been rooted in the validity of the definition of the commitment of Israelis to return home. Peleg’s working definition, which influenced the content of his questionnaire, constitutes mainly religious and ideological aspects of the commitment, paying what amounts to lip service to the commitment’s secular and moral dimensions. Therefore it may have had a questionable validity regarding the experience of many of the respondents (the largest number of which were non-religious). Aware of the demographic fact that the majority of Israelis are secular, Peleg is quick to explain that secular Israelis are in fact religious, though they are unaware of it. Citing a choice selection of strongly nationalistic songs and responses to historical events as proof of this idea, he claims that “in times of great stress and tension related to survival, Israelis tend to return to the deeply emotional commitment embedded in a religious bond both to the homeland and to religious duty” (p.202). The results of the study show that subjects of orthodox religious background scored significantly higher on the scale of ideology to return than the rest of the subjects of that study. Peleg concludes that this finding is consistent with the nature of the ideology of return, “in that those who are deeply religious would be more motivated to return because their religion is
strongly interwoven with the ideological dimensions of return” (p.25). It is likely however, that this finding is the resultant of the religious emphasis in the working definition of the commitment to return.

According to Peleg “the return to Israel is a fulfilment of the Biblical prophecy inherited by the Jews from God, which asks them to return to the promised land” (p.25). This definition ignores the historical fact that while Zionism and the creation of Israel could not have been possible without the millennial hope of return nurtured by Judaism throughout the ages, the inspiration for establishing the Jewish state, and later the ingathering of Jews in Israel, came neither from the Bible nor from the later Jewish teaching, but from the necessity of the time (Nordau, 1897/1987; Meyer, 1990; Shaked, 1986). Peleg’s definition excludes important aspects of the meaning of the commitment to return for perhaps the majority of Israeli expatriates, whose “Israeliness” is unlikely to be synonymous with “Jewishness”, and their commitment to their mother country is not directly parallel to the thousand of years of Jewish longing for eretz Israel (the land of Israel) as implied by Peleg (despite comments by his subjects such as “I feel that (not as a Jew) I failed myself by not going back” (Peleg, 1990, p.38)). Moreover, while the ideological dimension is likely an integral part of Israeli commitment to return home, qualitative studies (Fish, 1984; Shokeid, 1988), as well as an autobiographical account (Student, 1991) illustrate that while Israeli emigrants seem to have accepted and internalized the ideological “baggage” of Zionism to some degree, only very few define their commitment in a strict ideological sense, but rather as an emotional, moral identification. Peleg’s rigid definition of the commitment to return and his choice of methodology acted to maintain a surface level of understanding of the experience. The reliance on a mailed questionnaire with fixed responses, and on statistical analysis (compartmentalizing and separating, rather than integrating variables), have likely caused many aspects and nuances of the phenomenon as “lived and experienced” (Giorgi, 1985) to remain obscure.

The need of Israeli expatriates to identify with the mother land is a need for rootedness, connectedness and belonging. In his anthropological study, Shokeid (1988) sensitively observes the wrestling of these people with their cultural identity and their painful reassessment of their Israeliness and Jewishness. Focussing on the performance dimension of their conflicted cultural
identity, Shokeid identifies the phenomenon of ‘sing-along’, an Israeli tradition whose roots go back to the country’s infancy, as the most salient and most expressive performance of Israeli identity on the part of these emigrants. He observes that this communal singing provides them with a possibility to transform reality for a few hours, and an occasion to “act out an existential predicament rooted in a state of social and cultural liminality in both American and Israeli societies” (p. 125).

However, just as they are not necessarily religious or strictly ideological, the ties of Israeli expatriates to Israel are not simply nostalgic ties. The psychology of secular Israelis is said to be implicated in a definition of self as inextricably connected with peers and family, to be sensitive to and influenced by political social events, and to be embedded in a moral worldview (Levine, 1986; Dolev, 1990; Student, 1991). Therefore the loss experience of Israeli emigrants may include a sense of connectedness, loyalty and responsibility to a people, to cohesive units of friends, comrades and birth cohorts, and to the idea of the nation, all of which are components of the self. The sense of discordance between loyalty to friends and country and the need to pursue personal projects creates, according to Fish (1984), “an almost moral dilemma for many who have left Israel” (p. 46). A corroboration of this observation would concur with Flanagan’s (1990) suggestion that one of the main sources of moral conflict lies at the point where obligation to do what is right from an objective point of view meets obligations that arise from personal projects, needs and commitment. It would also be in agreement with Yalom’s (1980) view of moral conflict as a paradox of living which consists of daily confrontations with our choices and with alternative courses of living.

Immigration has often been described as a life crisis or transition with many dimensions. The word crisis has its origin in the Greek krinein - to separate. Regarding the nation as part of themselves, Israeli emigrants are bound to find separation from that part of the self very difficult. “There is something about Israel that connects...it is very hard to become detached from Israel” claims an Israeli emigrant (Fish, 1984, p.131).

(ii) Connected identity

According to Kelman (1969) the relationship of a person with his or her mother country is a cornerstone of self awareness and the sense of identity. Israel is a country committed to the
value of collective self-determination. An Israeli lottery advertisement slogan “You win & Israel wins” reflects the societal value that attainment of the national goal should be the vision of every citizen. This value orientation stresses that the individual has an obligation or duty to live in Israel, contribute to its development and share the burden of its defence (Fish, 1984; Oren, 1986).

Implicit in most of the research on Israeli emigrants is the assumption that their dilemma is related to tension existing between the value of personal development and national welfare. Not going back home may spell a sense of failure, since one has failed to fulfill one's own expectations as well as those of family, society and history (Peleg, 1989).

The Israeli society is a group-oriented rather than an individualistic oriented one. It is made up of small hevrot (friendship groups) which are cohesive and restricted. One has a tremendous affinity and attachment to one's group, the mark of which is a personal loyalty for and an intimate closeness with the group members, in sorrow, happiness and suffering (Rubinstein, 1977; Student, 1991). This group orientation is cultivated, reinforced and mythologized by the country's educational and organizational structures. Throughout school life a cohort of children remains together, structured around a stable home room, where strong friendships develop and often continue with a deep sense of commitment throughout an entire life (Katriel & Nesher, 1986). For the majority of first generation native Israelis (the population of this study), another important element of socialization took place in the youth movements where a sense of group cohesion, a feeling of belonging and of solidarity with a set of others was perpetuated. A period of military service beginning at age 18 constitute a normative transition for Israeli youth - the transition into adulthood. Its culture specific version is that the majority of youth undergo it in similar way (three years for boys and two years for girls). The army, by its very structure, reinforces the importance of the group. While their North-American peers make their first steps toward separation, exploration and individuation, Israeli youth become part of a cohesive group with an ideological mission having its basic motivation in historical, social and normative elements. For many Israeli youth, the army service involves participating in war and living with the effects of such experience. The war experience often leads to changes in self perception and ways of relating to the world, life and death. Consequently, Israeli youth are said to go through a rapid maturation process, which necessitates grappling with dilemmas belonging to
the period of ego integrity and despair before they resolve issues of intimacy and generativity (Lieblich, 1989; Yarom, 1983).

The transition to adulthood for Israeli youth differs in a number of ways from what is depicted in the literature as a universal norm. While the military service functions as a maturation right of passage, and soldiers report experiencing growing responsibility and independence, by its nature as a military (as informal as the Israeli version may be) it fosters dependency, connectedness and shared responsibility. Themes such as occupational identity and a movement toward economic independence are not part of the experience of these young people. Forming a meaningful heterosexual relationship is not always possible despite the tenacious Israeli myth that the military is Israel’s greatest “match maker”. On the other hand, men may develop a unique intimacy with other men, a tight ‘buddy system’ which develops during long periods of fighting together, and is built upon a basic, deep trust and loyalty which comes from sharing the deepest fears and panic (Lieblich, 1989; Student, 1991).

While said to be very non-militaristic in disposition, the military identity is a central element in the Israeli male identity. Despite events in the last decade, for most Israeli men the military service (both mandatory and reserve) is still perceived as a right and duty, a participation which defines the degree of individual belonging to the evaluation and compensation system of the society (Ben-Ari, 1990). Upon completing mandatory service men become part of an active reserve forces where during peace time they spend the average of 30 days a year in service (though often the actual time exceeds this). Since one may spend two or more decades in the same unit with the same core group of peers these units often become like an extended family. (Gal, 1986; Student, 1991). Student hypothesises that the Israeli togetherness may serve, to a degree, as a protection against wartime trauma, “We grew up together. We fought together. Had fun together. Our informal system, not only while we were serving, but also in civilian life, kept protecting us” (p.96). However, it has also been proposed that for an Israeli male to admit a burnout may cause a feeling of shame and endurance of social degradation from others, since the image of being a man in Israel is still tightly connected with overcoming military demands and the horrors of war ‘with flying colours’ and with the supposed willingness to sacrifice all, including one’s life, as if without fear (Levy, 1990; Lieblich, 1983). Clinical data suggests that the
price paid by Israeli soldiers and their families for the on-going process of war coupled with the Israeli celebrated toughness is an emotional burden which permeates Israeli society, and is similar in its symptoms to a chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Student, 1991).

An important aspect of the Israeli 'connected identity' is the cultural specific meaning of independence. The concept is often assumed to have a universal meaning, yet, the literature shows that while Israeli norms espouse independence, achievement and performance, in the Israeli context these terms have different connotations. The North American conceptualization of the person whose autonomous self actualization is paramount is at odds with the Israeli norm. One unique difference is the notion of independence from parents which is considered a major task of this age group by general theory. Impressionistic and research evidence show that the transition to adulthood in Israel is not accompanied in the breaking or even weakening of family ties. While often geographically distant, Israeli soldiers remain emotionally highly attached to their parents (Lieblich, 1989; Student, 1991). Lieblich suggests that in Israel independence from the nuclear family necessitates a much lesser degree of emotional distancing and less efforts on the part of youth to establish a differentiated identity. While ‘individuation’ is culturally enhanced in the military service, ‘separation’ is delayed in comparison to other western cultures.

A small society under immense pressure, a basic stress of Israeli existence is that a strong sense of connectedness is in constant tension with a need for separatedness. From the family, from the army, from the nation there is a message of obligation which at times may be felt like an ‘oppressive connectedness’. Leaving the country may be seen as a flight from the strain of connectedness (Rubinstein, 1977). yet, the literature suggests that many expatriates are unable to make the final break, to give up his or her identity group. The sense of being separated yet painfully connected is most likely deepest during war times. Indeed, evidence suggests that it is during war that many return home (Sobel, 1986).

The insecurity of Israeli life is a given. One can either attempt to master it or flee from it, but one cannot ignore it. Many Israeli novelists and poets depict the constant state of war, the price of heroism, the ideology that has become increasingly convoluted in the course of constant wars (each more morbid in its consequences than the previous one), the notion of sacrificing sons as an inexorable necessity, and the ‘oppression of connectedness’ as components of the inner
conflict for many Israelis (Shenhar, 1991). By remaining outside of Israel, the expatriates may avoid the war and the tension; however, they seem not to be able to escape the state of inner conflict generated by the need to identify with the homeland.

(III) Nonevent transition

The transition from one culture to another is often conceptualized as an end to one way of being and the beginning of another. The present research suggests that Israeli emigrants perceive the event of arrival in the host country as neither an end nor a beginning, but as an interval since the goal is to eventually return home. Thus, life in the host country is marked by a permanent impermanence. The literature reveals that Israeli emigrants, despite being voluntarily uprooted, tend to cling to a commitment, or an expectation to return home. Indeed, many are observed to invest considerable energy, hopes and dreams into this event that, consciously or unconsciously they know may never happen (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1990; Shokeid, 1988).

The present work conceptualizes the broken commitment to return as a nonevent. While very little research has been conducted on nonevents, it has been suggested that nonevent, “the failure of an expected event or change to occur” (Beeson & Lowenthal, 1975) may alter the person’s definition of self, and may spell a change in assumptions, commitments and values (Bridges, 1980; Chiappone, 1984; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984). According to Beeson & Lowenthal (1975) a nonevent is different from an anticipated or expected event (e.g. marriage, childbirth, retirement), an unanticipated event (e.g. death of a child or a spouse, getting fired, divorce), or a chronic hassle (dogged, slow to change problems of daily life). Unlike other types of transitions in which the event occurs and thus has to be dealt with concretely, a nonevent, by its nature as an absence of an event, may go unrecognized or denied for a long time since there is no ritual to signify its non-occurrence (Chiappone, 1984; George & Siegler, 1981; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984, 1989). Pearlin (1980) found that problems to which a tangible end cannot be seen are inimical to positive self concept, and can lead to depression. George & Siegler (1981) propose that the nonoccurrence of an anticipated event may be more stressful than its occurrence. Since the broken dream to return home involves both the nonoccurrence of an anticipated event and a problem to which there is no tangible end point, it may be perceived as
very difficult. This nonevent may be particularly difficult for Israelis because it involves a loss which is often unrecognized by their host society and judged severely by their original one.

Hanging on to a collective myth of return to the country of origin has been seen as a moratorium technique. It has been suggested that clinging to this hope cannot last for long as the fantasy would eventually collapse in the face of reality, triggering a major crisis (Sluzki, 1986). The conflict between the emotional, moral and ideological commitment to return and the reality of remaining in the self imposed exile has been clinically observed to put at least some long-time Israeli expatriates at risk of feeling guilt, self inadequacy, a sense of betrayal and an identity crisis which may lead to depressive reaction and to lack of emotional fulfilment (Burger, 1985 cited by Peleg, 1990). Studies show that in order to overcome a stressful transition people seem to need 1) freedom from negative attitude toward self, 2) possession of internal locus of control, and 3) presence of favourable attitude toward one’s self (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Slavin, et al., 1991).

According to Shokeid (1988), the negative connotation attached to emigration and to the failure to return, and the stigma of the designation yordim are sources of ambivalence and identity incongruity. Fein (1978) and Fish (1984) suggest that Israeli emigrants show signs of dissatisfaction and psychological pain which are related to the experience of dissonance. According to Festinger (1962) since people strive for consistency and the feeling of dissonance (inconsistency) is psychologically uncomfortable, they will be motivated to try and reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance (consistency) (P. 32). While dissonance is often described as a feeling regarding a specific objective, Israeli emigrants seem to be dealing with a multidimensional dissonance regarding deeds done and future possible acts. These authors suggest that attempts at resolution of dissonance are expressed by self presentation as temporary migrants and by a sense of helplessness (transferring responsibility).

Nonevent transitions, the loss of an expectation, a hope, or a dream have been implicated as a trigger for identity reevaluation and a change in relationships, assumptions and commitments (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Schlossberg, 1984, 1989). Peleg (1989) speculates that the feeling of belonging generated by holding on to the commitment to return, conflicts with the guilt generated from not being an integral part of life in Israel and sharing its burden. On the other hand denying the commitment also generates guilt due to a sense of betrayal, and the fear of not belonging. A
corroboration of this speculation would concur with theories suggesting that the pressure to extricate oneself from the feeling of dissonance may be accompanied by as powerful an urge to maintain the dissonance - by deliberately maintaining awareness of the conflict (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Biling, et al., 1988).

Since the broken commitment to return home implies a loss, Israeli expatriates may experience grief reactions (Schwartz, 1988). Dellarossa (1978) and Sluzki (1979) suggest that the depression felt by immigrants is similar to the depression which follows bereavement. Marris (1973, 1980) identifies a grief syndrome that uprooted people go through in resolving their predicament. These authors state that one needs to mourn the loss and to resolve complex feelings from shock and denial through anger, guilt and grief. Moses (1983) proposes that only by mourning and letting go, by giving up patterns, rights and benefit of the past, can the person adapt successfully to the loss so as to be able to grow and enjoy different privileges which encompass new obligation. Schwartz (1988), in an exploratory study of the grief-like reaction among Israelis in Los-Angeles hypothesizes that the more total the break with the mother country the more likely is the immigrant to experience grief-like reaction. Though statistically nonsignificant, Schwartz's results imply that those who perceived their cultural loss as irretrievable were more likely to experience grief-like reactions than those who perceived their cultural loss as retrievable, or experienced no loss at all.

A change which is held to be temporary is likely to be perceived differently than one regarded as permanent. Lack of commitment to a permanent stay on the part of the emigrant may limit the likelihood of going through the 'grief work' of transforming the meaning of the relationship to the loss. The Israeli emigrant may remain in the no-man's-land of temporary uprootness for many years, may always be "sitting on the suitcases" (Shokeid, 1988), stuck in an inner entanglement. Thus the ability to transcend the loss, to cease to be bound by the power of the loss, and to extend beyond the grief may be hindered.

The lives of men and women described in this review have been shaped by war and hope, by dreams and shattered dreams. At the beginning Israel was a mere traumatic dream of a traumatized people. When they promised normalcy, the founders of Israel were shaping a dream of peaceful, normal life, like that of most nations. The generation of 1948 believed that the war of
independence (1948) was to be the last war. Few of them believed that during 44 years of statehood the reference point for the present would always be a war. Yet in the Israeli reality one always finds oneself before, during, or after a war, and no one can predict if and when this existential nightmare will change (Ben-Eliezer, 1971; Levy, 1990; Och, 1986). Life in Israel is embedded in an ongoing tension between being and becoming, between dream and reality, and thus it is often experienced as a mere potential (Levine, 1986). Yet life in Israel is also embedded in shattered dreams, broken myths and unfulfilled expectations. It is a life saturated by nonevents.

Life experience, particularly traumatic experience, often serves as a justification or support for people’s beliefs. The Israeli society is saturated with public and personal traumas which put it in an “honorary” place in the stress scale of the western world: 50% of Israeli citizens report loss of a close person; 60% of Israelis of European decent have experienced the Holocaust personally or through their parents; 30% of those reporting loss have lost their loved ones in the Israeli wars or terrorist acts (Carmil, 1991). Considering this existential background, Israeli expatriates present an enigma in that they choose to bring upon themselves another loss experience, and another nonevent.

(IV) summary

Israeli expatriates seem to represent a particular type, though possibly not a unique case, of an immigration community. The literature suggests that the stresses identified as involved in painful losses experienced by most immigrants in uprooting are exacerbated in the Israeli case by anxiety and longing triggered by a powerful sense of connectedness to the mother country. This connectedness is expressed by Israeli emigrants’ stated emotional, ideological, or moral commitment, hope or dream to return home. For many this dream becomes a nonevent since it does not materialize. This has been a neglected area of study. Very few studies have focused on the psychological effects of nonevent in general, or specifically on the broken commitment of migrants to return home. The literature on Israeli emigrants provides information ‘about’ this experience, yet it has not identified it in terms of nonevent. Neither has it explored what is ‘inside’ the experience for the individual emigrant. By employing a phenomenological mode of enquiry the present study attempts to fill the gap in our understanding of both the experience of nonevent
and of the Israeli emigrant.

"Psychologists will probably gain enormously by focusing more attention upon issues that are of major concern to the individual... what the person selects as important in his past and his present, what he hopes to do in the future, what he predicts will occur, what strategies he elects, and what meanings he attaches to time, life, and death. In short, psychologists would do well to make greater use of the person himself as the reporting and predicting agent" (Neugarten, 1977, p.639).
Chapter 3 - Method

Rationale and general procedure

This study is concerned with the illumination and understanding of the subjective experience of nonevent among Israeli expatriates. To date there has been but a limited and mostly vicarious knowledge regarding this group, and regarding the experience of nonevent in particular. In such circumstances, and when the literature is replete with biases and omissions, a qualitative paradigm such as a phenomenological case study is deemed a particularly suitable mode of inquiry (Giorgi, 1985; Yin, 1984). The case study method which is used in this research addresses ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. It is an empirical inquiry in which multiple sources of evidence are used to investigate, describe and articulate the meaning of lived experience to the person who lives the experience (Bromley, 1986; Burgess, 1984). Nonevent transition is viewed in this study as being the person’s own perception of change and the meaning he or she attaches to this change (Schlossberg, 1984). To adequately understand the meaning of the target phenomenon it was necessary to obtain information about the life circumstances in which the experience takes place, the personal significance of the experience, the reasons for it being personally significant, and the ways in which the person reacts to it (Thomae, 1987; Vossel, 1990). In contrast to a step-by-step preformulated research process, phenomenological case-studies evolve out of a complex interaction between the researcher, the participants and the phenomenon’s clearing horizons. The methodology is thus continually redefined by the researcher and at times by the participants.

To facilitate formulation of the research problem a small pilot study was conducted. A semi-structured questionnaire was circulated among several Israeli expatriates (following a lecture by a visiting Israeli scholar that they attended in which the nonevent issue arose spontaneously). The information gathered from the completed questionnaires helped clarify my conceptualization of the experience of nonevent. The next step in the research process was a dialogue with individual Israeli expatriates regarding their experience of nonevent. The guiding theme of this dialogue was to discover the “essence of things” by going back to the experience itself and
emphasizing the meaning of the experience for the experiencing person (Giorgi, 1985). The aim was to explicate the “the sense of what is lived through by oneself or by another” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.64); to describe how the elements of the phenomenon inter-relate to form the gestalt of the experience. This type of dialogue requires abandoning traditional subject / researcher relationship and replacing it with a situation of trust and respect in which the research participants are considered experts on their experience and competent partners in the research process (Collazzi, 1978; Thomae, 1987). Casting the participants in this role, my aim was to empower them and also to give them the opportunity to indulge in what I know first hand to be an Israeli common indoor sport - talking about Israel and generalizing about Israelis.

Following are principles recommended for conducting case study research which were applied in this study:

1. Use of multiple sources of evidence - converging line of inquiry. The primary sources of information - individual descriptions elicited through intensive exploratory interviews - were brought into ‘conversation’ with one another and with additional sources of information. This practice avoids risks that stem from reliance on a single source of data. The issue of validity is addressed this way by the process of triangulation, i.e. the same phenomenon is approached by different participants and by data from different sources - patterns are compared, matched and corroborated. The findings and conclusions are based on on the convergence of the various data and the congruence among the multiple perspectives (Yin, 1984). The additional sources of data included: 1) the original questionnaire data, 2) two informal group conversations with Israeli expatriates (who were not individually interviewed), 3) letters received from other Israeli expatriates, 4) poems, folk-songs, Biblical and Talmudic quotations, literary sources and newspaper clippings which were referred to or given to me by the participants, 5) my own personal experience of nonevent as an Israeli expatriate.

2. Trustworthiness or credibility - the reflection of experience in an honest and accurate manner. This requires that the researcher acknowledge her assumptions, biases and perspectives for interpretations. This way the researcher communicates to others the attitudes that she assumes with respect to her descriptions. Following Giorgi (1975) the idea is that if any other researcher assumes the attitudes described by the researcher, then he/she should be able to perceive and
understand the same meanings. One does not necessarily have to agree, but one must be able to understand what the disagreement is about. My own experience of nonevent as an Israeli expatriate has been noted in the introduction chapter. The attitude I hope to convey in this work is that of critical appraisal combined with a ‘search’ orientation. Since the aim of this study was to discern the meaning of the experience to the participants, my stance towards the accounts involved a suspension of questions regarding ‘objective reality’ or accuracy. My position was that while we continually revise our stories, the way the story is told and its particular content becomes the psychological reality of the teller. The credibility of a case study is often gained through participants verification. I had planned to give each participant a written summary of her or his interview for verification, correction or addition. However, the consensus among the participants (typical of Israelis) was “show me the final product”.

3. **Generalization**: As a phenomenological case study this research does not seek to generalize the results from a sample to a population as in statistical generalization. It seeks an analytical generalization. It is meant to serve as an analogue, providing test for other accounts and leading toward a deeper understanding and hopefully a more adequate theoretical conceptualization of nonevent experience (cf. Yin, 1984).

4. **Flexibility**: the strategy of the research may be changed in line with what is dictated and required by the process of the research. This is elaborated on in the section on confidentiality below (p. 50).

**Selecting the research participants**

Selecting participants for this study was complicated by two factors: 1) There is no official list of Israeli emigrants which can be accessed by the public. (The Israeli embassy in Toronto has a partial list, however they do not release this information.) 2) Many Israeli expatriates are reluctant to speak about this experience. Therefore, personal contact seemed to be the only viable way to gain participation in this study. Initial access was derived from three personal contacts in the Israeli expatriate community and selection proceeded in a ‘snowball’ fashion such that participants led me to other potential participants. A variety was attempted by asking participants for referral to other Israelis who they knew to have either similar or different experience from
their own. This procedure proved successful in that the final group of participants constitutes a varied group of people, most of whom were not known to the researcher prior to the study.

The fundamental criterion for participants' selection in a phenomenological case-study is the person's ability to further the knowledge base and the understanding of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the participants met the following criteria: The first criterion was that of nationality. In this study an Israeli was defined as a person who was either born in Israel or has lived there since childhood. The second criterion was the duration of stay outside Israel. Following Cochran & Claspell (1987), this study assumed that participants must have enough distance from the experience to allow a complete description. It was also assumed that ample time is needed before the integration of the reality of this particular broken dream can even be attempted. Therefore the time span from departure from Israel to the present was set at a minimum of 8 years. The third criterion for participation was the person's ability to articulate his or her experience. In conducting a phenomenological case study, the number of participants depends on the developing research process. The general principle determining the proper number of participants was that data collection continues until various aspects of the phenomenon have emerged. I stopped recruiting new participants when new instances of the experience of nonevent did not lead to any new abstractions. The findings reflect the accounts of 20 participants.

**Interview procedure**

The primary source of data for this study were transcripts of 10 recorded interviews and hand-written notes taken during these interviews. The interviews took place on an individual basis at a mutually agreed upon location. An informed consent agreement was signed by each participant prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew. The number and length of interviews depended upon the needs and comfort of the participants and lasted on average from two to four hours.

The in-depth interviews focused on each participant's perceptions, thoughts and feelings regarding his or her experience of the broken expectation to return home. Exploration and elaboration were encouraged by open-ended questions and probes. While some specific questions varied according to the particular dialogue, the main focus was consistent for all interviews. I
opened the interview by explaining to the participant the nature and purpose of the research and asked each to describe in as much detail as possible, “as if you’re telling a story” his or her emigration experience. While the interviews were largely open-ended, some questions were targeted at clarification, resolving ambiguities, or at expansion of the participant’s ideas or description. (e.g. Can you tell me more about that, What do you mean by --? Can you elaborate on this?). Some probes were needed at times to circumvent lack of explicitness arising from perception of my latent identity as ‘one of us’ (e.g. How do you define yourself to yourself? How do you define yored [Israeli emigrant]?). Some questions were aimed at comparison with information gleaned from additional sources (e.g. Was there a specific marker which made it clear that the expectation to return was not going to be realized? How did you view yourself and others at the beginning? How do you view (feel about) the broken expectation now? What does involvement with the Jewish community mean to you?). While some participants needed very little encouragement in telling their story, these questions helped stimulate the dialogue, particularly with those participants who were not as comfortable in telling a story: “Please ask me some questions, it is easier for me”.

During the interview I initially focused on developing trust and rapport with the participants. This in many cases involved an initial reversal of roles in which I was being interviewd by the participants. Israelis are often reluctant to disclose details of sensitive issues or painful experiences. Many also feel that their obligation to their society does not permit them to talk about certain things (“I always have to consider the national implication of what I say” was one refrain. Another was “who is the intended audience of this research”). Questions regarding my position of insider/outside were often addressed during the initial contact, and further explored by the participants at the beginning of the interview session. I had to gain the participants’ trust as an insider (an Israeli expatriate). This involved answering questions geared to assess my position as an insider (e.g. “where are you from? (what city), what school did you go to? where did you serve in the army? do you know --?”, and most commonly: “how long have you been away from Israel? Do you live here or are you going back soon?”.)

Demographic information was elicited from each participant after the interview was completed. The dialogues were audio-taped and later transcribed. Translation from the Hebrew to
English were done by the researcher (who is bilingual) and verified by the research supervisor.

Confidentiality

The participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. However, special concerns regarding confidentiality which are unique to the participants had to be addressed. These concerns were first encountered as I was recruiting participants. A number of people declined to participate because “I have to go on living in this community” “There is no way you can disguise my identity in such a small community”. A number of those who did consent to participate were also not reassured by standard procedures of confidentiality and anonymity. These concerns reflect the particular nature of the Israeli expatriate community as a small connected group, and the obsession of these people with insider / outsider differentiations. In a few cases it was evident that it also reflected the notion that what these expatriates do or say becomes common knowledge in Israel (a small, connected society). My initial reaction was that of frustration, yet throughout the research process I discovered just how small the community indeed is. For example, while talking to a prospective participant whom I’ve never met we discovered that she knew my late father rather well. Being ‘interviewed’ by one of the participants we discovered that he once knew my husband. Fortunately, the principle of flexibility in case study methodology allowed me to change strategy from an individual case study analysis to a comparative conceptual formulation of the finding. In accordance with the participants’ concerns for anonymity, in the final form of this research all participants’ names and identifying information were disguised, their biographical stories are not detailed, and verbatim transcripts are not appended. The original data were accessible only to the researcher and her research supervisor. The final description in the next chapter develops the themes of the original stories into a conceptual description which utilizes the participants’ key phrases to reveal the essential meaning of the nonevent experience.

Analysis

This study assumes that though each individual Israeli expatriate’s experience may be unique, similarities can be found. This assumption is based on the thesis that individual perceptions are not just idiosyncratic but also are rooted in the historical, cultural and social
circumstances of the person, and are embedded in the shared worldview, values, ideologies and expectations of a shared national identity. Thus common themes can be found in the participants’ accounts, through which the essential meaning of the experience may be revealed.

This research employed a qualitative descriptive and inferential procedure for data analysis (see Collaizzi, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mishler, 1986; Kval, 1988; Yin, 1984).

The participants’ descriptive narratives were listened to and read carefully with the goal of attaining an overall feel for the experience as lived. Listening to the language used with its tone and nuances was particularly important. Key phrases, themes, perceptions or patterns which appeared to characterize each participant’s experience of nonevent were identified and documented. The meaning of statements were formulated to reveal the psychological unfolding of the experience of nonevent. In most cases the meaning was explicit and clear, which facilitated direct quotation. In some cases, however, the meaning was implicit. Implicit meaning includes information which is concealed or omitted, and subtly expressed connotations and colorings. This may refer also to the way a participant feels toward the researcher and the research project and to non verbal behaviour — “the impression one gives and the impression one gives off” (Goffman, 1959, p.8). Comprehending and formulating the meaning in such cases involved an inferential leap in order to “illuminate those meanings hidden in the various contexts and horizons of the investigated phenomenon” (Collaizzi, 1978, p. 59). Imperative in the assigning of meaning to statements was that this meaning was embedded in the original descriptive account. As individual meaning themes were identified they were checked and compared against other accounts. All identified themes were studied regardless of whether they contradict or support one another.

Triangulation, refinement and elaboration of the various data continued until a pattern of meaning emerged which was deemed to yield a sufficient degree of cohesiveness and completion. As saturation was reached related key phrases or themes were collapsed under more abstracted concepts moving the finding toward a conceptual formulation. It was then possible to describe the parts while attending to the whole. The data was integrated into an exhaustive description of Israeli emigrants’ subjective experience of nonevent. This description is a restructuring of the many stories told by the different participants into a conceptual thematic description highlighting the meaning of nonevent as experienced by the participants. A conceptual thematic approach was
chosen for presentation of the finding because it seemed to best convey the essential meaning of nonevent experience while remaining respectful to the participants’ special requests for confidentiality.

One of the main features of phenomenological case-study interview is the researcher’s general stance of openness; an emphatic immersion in the lived experience to which the participants refer. This was relatively easy for me since the phenomenon under study reflects the experience of the participants as well as my own. It is clear to me that my identity had affected my approach to the study. Consequently, I cannot make any claims to absolute objectivity. However in this type of descriptive / inferential research “The personal experience of the researcher constitutes a legitimate, necessary and meaning enhancing dimension of the qualitative data base” (Van Hesteren, 1986, p.208).
Chapter 4 - Findings

(I) Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the description of nonevent from the perspective of the participants in this study. Although the participants' experience of the broken expectation or commitment to return home varied in many aspects, their accounts reveal a shared essential meaning of the experience.

A brief demographic and experiential group portrait of the study participants is presented to familiarize the reader with their general characteristics and salient aspects of their shared experience of nonevent. A number of themes in the experience of nonevent were identified. The major part of the chapter which follows then expands on these themes in constructing the meaning of this pivotal life experience. The words of the participants have been used to illuminate the experience.

(II) The participants

Of the 20 participants, 11 were women and 9 men (5 of 10 in the primary group). With the exception of one 33 years old and one 65 years old, the participants' ages ranged between 39 and 48, with a mean of 45. Most (80%) were Israeli born, with the others immigrating to Israel as young children from European countries; 70% were of European descent (Ashkenazi), 10% of Middle Eastern descent (Sephardic) and 20% were of a mixed origin; 85% were married and 15% divorced; among those married, 55% were married to Israeli expatriates, 25% to Canadian Jews and one to a European gentile; 75% had adolescent and older children, 20% had only young ones; 65% came from the three major cities in Israel, 20% from cooperative farms (moshav), 10% from kibbutzim and one from a small town; 95% participants had served in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). A large majority (90%) were secular, the other 10% traditionalist.

The participants presented a well-educated group: all finished high school, 75% had some college education, 30% had postgraduate education with 20% having a PhD. They represent a variety of occupations including students, merchants, professors, school teachers, building contractors, medical doctors, gardeners, social workers and computer programmers.

At the time of the interview 95% of the participants were still Israeli citizens, 90% had
Canadian or American citizenship; the longest duration since leaving Israel was 35 years, the shortest was 8 and the average was 19 years. A desire to see the world and a wish to get out of the constant pressure were the most often mentioned (75%) reasons for departure from Israel; 40% combined this wish with a motivation for academic pursuit (of either self or spouse); for 20% of the participants the primary reason for departure was their marriage to a non-Israeli who wished to return home; only one person reported economical pursuit as a reason for departure. For a large majority (95%) the central issue of their emigration experience was the broken expectation to return home. Many (90%) related experiencing some broken dream in regard to Israel (economical, political, professional, personal, or spouse related), but only 20% reported a connection between this broken dream and emigration. For 55% of the participants this broken dream was connected to the unfulfilled expectation to return home.

Most participants (95%) left Israel with the clear expectation and intention to return and 40% of participants had made an active attempt to return to Israel(!) (the average duration of the return was 1 year, though 2 participants remained in Israel for 4 and 5 years, returning to Canada thereafter). Most (90%) claimed they could not completely let go of some hope to return one day; 45% were still planning in principle to return. However, 55% said that they had learned to live with not returning.

None of the participants had named their Canadian-born children by non-Israeli names. More than half of the participants (65%) still speak Hebrew with their children, though only 30% reported their children still responded in that language. Economically the participants represent a relatively well-to-do group: 95% are home owners, and all are employed and can be generally described as having middle to high income.

The most rewarding elements of life in their host country was described by 80% of the participants in terms of peace of mind and stressless life; 55% cited professional or career opportunities and growth; and 55% cited financial comfort. Despite the fact that their departure was freely elected (35% self-initiated, 35% spouse-initiated, 30% both) and that as a group they are relatively successful professionally and economically, they expressed ambivalence, longing, self doubt and moral conflict. When asked for the meaning of being an emigrant, the majority (95%) reported a strong sense of not belonging and alienation; 90% said that they had to learn to live with
ambiguity and pain; 65% felt sad that things had worked out so that they ended up as expatriates;
40% reported that the most difficult thing about being an Israeli emigrant was feeling that “I’ve
done something wrong”; 85% of the parents felt that their children were paying a price in loss of
roots and sense of connection to a nation, 65% added also the loss of an extended family; and 40%
reported that they had lost something of themselves due to not returning.

The participants experienced a strong ambivalence regarding relationship with the local
Jewish community: 40% were instrumentally involved (mostly through work and children
attending Hebrew school), 40% were not involved at all and only one said she was very involved
with the Jewish community; for 45% involvement with the local Jewish community meant buying
into a “not me” identity; and 80% felt that there is a basic rift between Israeli emigrants and the
Jewish community.

Growing up in Israel, 70% participants felt they had had a meaningful bond with a
cohesive group of friends (“hevreh”); at the time of the interview, 70% still missed the feeling of
social “togetherness” and style and depth of Israeli relationships, 70% still felt attached to family
and 90% to culture and language. Living away from Israel, a large majority of the participants
(85%) felt a need for Israeli company, explaining that there are things that only Israelis understand
and that there was a feeling of common ground and background. Family was the most difficult to
leave for 85% participants; by not returning, 75% thought they were disappointing their family
most; still, 65% felt close to their family in Israel and only 30% felt “very close”; in 80% of the
cases, the family’s reaction to the non-return was a sad acceptance; at the time of the interview
none of the participants reported their family to be angry, blaming or happy. The living parents of
all participants were living in Israel and did not join their kids in exile(!).

The stigma of being an Israeli emigrant (highlighted by the negative label yored) was still
hurting to most participants: 75% felt that this label still upset them and 55% felt that the most
difficult thing about being an Israeli emigrant was the stigma of yored. The collective history and
its moral implication on emigration was an important theme to the participants: for example, 80%
revealed being troubled by the thought of “what would happen to Israel if everyone did what I
did”, 60% felt that by not returning they were failing the collective memory; 50% felt that they
were failing their selves.
Although the participants' accounts of their nonevent experience varied in a number of aspects, the essential meaning of the experience was clearly similar. The many stories told by the participants were reconstructed into a conceptual thematic description. The themes identified in the accounts were given short titles and were roughly divided into two major clusters: i) the nonevent, and ii) constructing the nonevent's meaning.

The nonevent cluster consists of the following general themes and subthemes:

1) Fabled return to the homeland
   a) life in a "waiting-room"
   b) attempts to return
   c) painful acknowledgement of return as a nonevent

2) Living with return as a nonevent
   a) loss of self
   b) spiritual connectedness
   c) a connected / separated self

The cluster of constructing the nonevent's meaning consists of the following general theme and subthemes:

1) Anchoring in moral domain
   a) moral language
   b) moral pain
   c) facing the audience

(III) Expansion of the themes

"And Jacob went down to Egypt and dwelled there... and they said to the Pharaoh: For to sojourn in the land we come" (Genesis, 47:4). This means, tell us the sages that "Jacob our father did not go down to Egypt to settle there but only to stay for a short while" (the Passover Haggada).

[ Jacob, as it turned out, stayed in Egypt until his death for 17 years. His descendants eventually returned to 'the promised land' 400 years later]
(i) **The nonevent**

A nonevent is a transition which an individual had counted on but which has not occurred, thereby altering that person’s life (Schlossberg, 1989). The accounts of the participants reflect a life of people diverted from the taken-for-granted path of existence by the nonoccurrence of an expected event. While their emigration was an elected act, the expected outcome of this act was to return home. Not returning home was experienced as a thwarted expectation, a possibility not actualized, or a dream not realized.

“I've been here 17 years too long. 17 years longer than I had expected, planned or wished...we were going to return within a year, and here I am...every night, for 17 years I go back home in my dreams... but you know, a dream is something you wake up from....” (Nira, female, married to a Canadian Jew).

Not returning home was experienced as the central and most difficult aspect of the participants’ emigration career. According to the participants, it changed the expected sequence of their life and was often perceived as a threat to their values, commitments and assumptions about self and world. Since these were held by the participants to be essential to existence and sense of identity, the unfulfilled expectation often led to feelings of anxiety.

“We did not intend to stay away from Israel beyond the few years needed to accomplish my academic goal. Israel is not a country that you can just leave, that you want to leave... you know, it was only a matter of time...and suddenly you wake up to see that your plan didn’t materialize, that you did not go back, that it is not likely to happen. It’s a very difficult thing to deal with. You know it seems like it’s a choice but there really is no choice, you’re stuck. Your temporary stay has become a permanent uprootness... it’s hard to accept, everything is in flux, in conflict, who you are, what you believe in, where you belong and with whom... and you feel guilt, maybe shame...why? because not returning is turning upside down everything that we were taught to see as right and good. It’s like a betrayal of the entire national history, and a betrayal of my family values and of a sense of loyalty to the country... but it’s a personal issue not a societal one, because all that stuff is part of me” (Yonatan, Male, Married to an Israeli, 23 years away).

(1) **Fabled return to the homeland**

Ever since Biblical times the love, yearning and hope to go up to, or to return to, Israel ‘the promised land’ has been a major emotional theme for the Jewish people. For generations of Jews in Diaspora this hope and spiritual connection has provided a source of strength and purpose in times of despair and persecution. The ideology of Zionism, weaved upon Biblical themes, was that the national homeland was the only viable alternative to the insecurity and persecution embedded in Diaspora existence. In order to make Israel a viable place, return was stated as an obligation for all Jews. The participants, all first generation of independent Israel, often reflected on the fact that they were considered by their nation as the “dream generation”, the native, free generation that “will not be uprooted from their soil”. They were raised with the ideology that to live away from
Israel is to be untrue to yourself, and disloyal to the people, the nation, the history, and the future viability of the state. Yet they ended up the first group in the history of the Jewish people to voluntarily exile themselves from the Promised Land which they refer to (as do all Israelis) as ha'aretz, meaning 'The country'.

The centrality of the fabled expectation to repatriate in the life of the participants is emphasized by the following refrains which spontaneously arose at the outset of all the accounts:

"We left with a definite intention and expectation to return. We planned to stay for a while, like others, you know, until we can be better off economically and then return. It has been already 35 years... I had a key that I took with me and it's always in my wallet. Now it's like a habit, I transfer it every time I change wallets" (Mika, female, married to an Israeli).

"Not only I never said that I'm leaving, I never thought that I wanted to leave, I just needed a break, like the kids now who are going to the Far East after the army. I would not have left had I known the consequences. It was, you know, from year to year, and things happened, and it just dragged on, you don't realize, and then there was, like, no way back" (Miron, male, divorced from an American Jew, 24 years away).

"I left with a very specific goal, to get my Ph.D. It was in an area that was just beginning to develop in ha'aretz and which had a promising future. Getting this education was supposed to make me more employable in ha'aretz. Returning was something I always promised myself, I counted on it in planning the direction of my academic training. It was a natural continuation of my life plan. I didn't think much of it, it was the expected future unfolding and then, it did not happen. Paradoxically, the attainment of this career goal blocked my way back (Michael, male, married to an Israeli, 20 years away).

"I left believing we are going on a trip, a visit. Later, I found out my husband did not intend to return. It didn't occur to me at all that I may not return, it didn't occur to me to leave, I didn't feel bad in ha'aretz, I felt at home there... I don't think I would have left had I thought it may be a life-long trip". (Ruth, female, divorced from an Israeli, 19 years away).

"The intention was to return. I didn't even think there was any other option, certainly I was going back, all my professional development both in Europe and here was geared toward applying it in ha'aretz. I thought we'll stay here a few years and then return... no, definitely, I didn't wish to stay here, and that was the intention... then I find myself stuck (Emanuel, male, married to a European gentile, 18 years away).

"We left for a specified period of one year. It turned out... you know... it stretched out, but, categorically this was not the original intent... we didn't come with the thought or the intent to stay... the intent was to get out of the pressure, to enjoy a sabbatical year. We fixed our house before we left, everything was arranged with the expectation of going back home" (Yigal, Male, married to an Israeli, 12 years away).

"We left with a very specific purpose, so my husband can do his internship, so we can return with something to offer and contribute professionally. It was definite that we are leaving only for a limited time... We've heard that some others in the field cannot return, but I was certain it would not happen to us (Ofra, Married to an Israeli, 8 years away).

All participants had the definite intention to return. The one participant who originally "broke off, wanted to get out of that 'land that eats up its inhabitants'" went back to live in Israel for a year:
"I did it reluctantly, for family reasons, but living there again, something happened, I realized how empty my life had been while I was escaping, hiding from who I essentially am, that is a part of this society, or denying that I wanted to go home. So I also became afflicted with the ‘disease’ of yordim - the dream of returning to Israel” (Noa, female, Married to an Israeli, 21 years away).

The participants’ expectation to repatriate is rooted in an emotional connectedness, in cultural, ideological and moral commitments:

"why return? because I was born there, because my parents were Zionists...because I buried a lot there; friends, relatives, acquaintances... and above all because I don’t want to live in exile” (Noa).

"Because my parents were pioneers, because they had built ha’aretz for me, so that I do not have to live as a persecuted minority... so that I don’t have to live in exile” (Nira).

"I don’t know, I belong to what I belong. I’m a part of ha’aretz, I have no other identity. My parents, refugees from Morocco had another identity, an identity of anomaly, of not belonging, in Israel the issue of identity was put to rest. I’m an Israeli, I felt you can be an Israeli only in ha’aretz [The country], and yes I felt it was my duty to return” (Miron).

"A large part of it, I think, has to do with my parents being Holocaust survivors. The theme of their return to ha’aretz is very powerful, and our upbringing was saturated by it. Because we were born after that war we were raised with the notion that ha’aretz is the solution to the Jewish problem. And my friends, also those who were killed, they constitute a powerful peer pressure to the notion that ha’aretz is very important and its difficult to extricate yourself from all these feelings” (Emanuel).

"It’s not a rational thing, we were raised like this, it was dripped into our heads, ‘this is the Jewish state’, and its our responsibility to be there... and there is the family and the sense of being a part rather than apart... and the inability to accommodate to being in a minority group” (Yigal).

"Because the war in the Middle East is a demographic war, you know, the number of Israelis vs. the number of Arabs... sometimes I think what would happen to ha’aretz if everyone did what I did, it makes you feel not too good, right?” (Gil’ad, male, married to a Canadian, 26 years away).

"I felt I was in debt to my mother, to the memory of my father who was killed in the Six Days War, even to the Kibbutz, though we were not going to live there, and I guess, yes, to ha’aretz” (Ronit, female, married to an Israeli, 23 years away).

"It is the feeling of belonging to something larger than us, the land, the community...it is also the ability to make a difference as an individual...to leave my mark” (Gabi, female, living with an Israeli, 13 years away).

The accounts reveal that the expectation to return is implicated in self perception, self presentation, a sense of historical connection, a history of persecution, a moral obligation, loyalty to the country, loyalty to the parents, living as part of a majority, myth and ideology.
(a) Life in a waiting room

Since all the participants expected, counted on the event of returning home, they held on to a self presentation as temporarily uprooted and prepared for the return home in various instrumental and emotional ways. The participants' accounts speak of years lived as if in a "waiting room" with "suitcases ready to move", feeling that life is not here but elsewhere.

"You plan for years for this to happen... I had a shipping container full with stuff, for years, ready to go back. Everything was ready. You gamble on years of your life... and then it doesn't happen. Every Israeli is first afraid to go without some accomplishment, then when you can go, economically, you're too old or something " (Avi, male, married to an American Jew, 19 years away).

Nira echoed many others when she described how for years she made sure that everything she bought could be used in Israel.

"You know, you go into inordinate amount of trouble to find appliances that have a double voltage, you don't buy what doesn't fit the Israeli system".

For Yigal this meant that

"for the first 5 years we didn't even buy a cake blender, you know, a $12 worth of a hand blender, because we kept thinking: we're going back home next year".

The yearning to return home was experienced by the participants at various degrees of preoccupation. For some it came to define their way of being. Some immersed themselves in "getting the job done" and accomplishing their goals ASAP.

"That's all we did for 5 years, there was no time to waste. We only associated with Israelis, mostly with Israeli colleagues whom we had known before and were also there. We didn't get to know too many local folks, and it didn't bother us, we were going home, not trying to create a new life" (Ofra).

Others reported the opposite behaviour arising from the same source. In Emanuel's words:

"In the first few years I didn't know or sought out Israelis. I knew I was going home soon and I saw this time as an opportunity to expend my horizon, to really get to know how other people see things, behave and think. I didn't miss Israelis because I knew I had my friends back home and would have a whole life with Israelis upon my return".

With various degrees of success, most participants initially attempted to speak Hebrew with the children with the specific goal of sparing them the trauma of not being able to fit upon return. Most gave their Canadian-born children Israeli names, most of which are difficult to render in English. The reason often cited for this was the anticipation of imminent return.

"I saw my life here as a temporary situation, I did not perceive myself as an immigrant, I was trying a different life-style, wanted to taste different and varied tastes, to compare and gain a perspective, but in no way to leave... and you see I gave my son an Israeli name which is problematic in English... because I
knew that I will raise him in Israel. That shows you how incapable you are of thinking in this direction of yerida [emigration]”. (Rina, female, Married to an Israeli, 13 years away).

Relating to this theme, Moshe (male, divorced from an Israeli, 20 years away) said:

“It is really interesting, most of my old friends in Israel gave their children yerida oriented names, like Sharon, Tom, Shirley and Ron. On the other hand we the so-called deserters, the yordim, we name our kids these distinctly Israeli names: Yaron, Asaf, Timra, Yuval, Rotem and Ofra. I think all of us probably had the same intention when they named our kids, we were expecting to go back and we were sure they would grow up there. Now we have to live with this broken dream, it’s hard, as you know, and the names are a constant reminder of what we expected and did not happen. Sometime, as I roll my tongue with my daughter’s name in my Israeli accent or I hear how she teaches her local friends to say the impossible Ya’ara, I think maybe there is still a hope, the same one which was embedded in her name”.

Many participants attempted to “keep the hand on the pulse” by remaining in contact with people in their field back home. Going on visits, Emanuel

“would check, investigate, talk with people and businesses, to make sure that what I’m working on would be applicable”.

A most significant common element in the the experience as revealed from the accounts is the clinging to the expectation or hope even when the finality of its nonoccurrence was becoming clear.

“I knew he [husband] wasn’t too keen on living in Israel but I was always hoping he would change his mind, I couldn’t and still can’t see myself spending the rest of my life here. I believed it was only a matter of time”. (Dorit, female, married to a Canadian Jew, 18 years away).

Nira sums this common sentiment in her description of “living in a waiting room”.

“You know, you wait and you hope and you plan your life around this, and waiting and hoping become like a habit that makes every moment significant for what it does not contain.”

The first years away of all participants were spent “with the suitcases packed” in anticipation to return soon. However, the illusory nature of the temporary sojourn is eventually challenged by time.

(b) Attempts to return

At some point the participants started to realize the threat of time as a possible obstacle to fulfilment of their yearning. While some identified this marker in actual chronology “after 5-6 years”, for others it related to completion of their original academic or professional goal. For some the realization was associated with the birth of children or with children entering school. Another marker was the death of a parent in Israel, or the realization that parents were getting old. The
following statement exemplifies the powerful sense of commitment which pervaded those participants who actually attempted to return:

“The idea of remaining here on a permanent basis, of becoming a yored was antithetical to my perception of myself...I had a promised to keep, to myself, to my parents, to my friends, though I never told them ... so I went back, but it did not work out, and we ended up back here” (Moshe).

All those who returned to Israel were aware of the difficulty inherent in that attempt and the possibility for failure, yet they felt bound to try:

“Deep inside me I knew it may not work out, maybe I knew it would not work out, but I couldn’t resign myself to not trying” (Emanuel).

The decision to re-emigrate was not taken lightly, it was often described as a heart-wrenching agonizing sense of no choice.

“It was not an impulsive decision; for me, the 5 years in Israel were the best of my life but for my husband things were getting worse and worse, I felt that I was fighting windmills... it got to the point of no choice: It was either to break up the marriage or to make a personal sacrifice...and I... it doesn’t sound fair, but on some level I feel I’ve made a sacrifice.... I also felt I owed him since he returned only for me, and has done the outmost to make it work...and it did not” (Rina).

(The very idea of comparison and choice between personal loyalties and loyalties to to the country - ha'aretz - is not extraordinary in the Israeli world-view.)

Whether the attempt to return was a physical or emotional one, in all cases there was no way back.

“The hardest thing is to attach a sense of finality to something you expected would naturally happen...you leave hoping to return and contribute by fulfilling a part through your professional training and expertise... and you find out that the road you took is a one-way street, you face a large no-reentry sign, you cannot go back home (Michael).

At first there was an expectation for an impending return. This was followed by preparation and attempts to return. Eventually, however, the reality that this event not only has not happened but also is unlikely to happen slowly settles.

(c) Painful acknowledgement of return as a nonevent

Referring to the Biblical forefather, Noa said:

“Abraham had gone through two tests of attachments. The first test was the uprooting from his place to a foreign land, the second was the burnt offering of Isaac. It is often assumed that the sacrifice of the son was the more difficult test, but it isn’t so. The first test was more difficult. The test of the burnt offering lasted only an hour, but the ‘get thee out of thy country’ lasted a whole life time. This is the most difficult of all tests”
The broken expectation to repatriate confronted the participants with finiteness and contingency. Yet, the accounts reveal that this nonevent can go unrecognized and denied for a long time since there is no acceptable, tangible event to mark its finality, and no tangible loss or endpoint. Some participants remained in a state of uncertainty or indecision for extended periods of time. Gabi said:

"When we arrived here in December of 1978 we did not have any intentions to stay. Therefore I did not feel any guilt. I was too excited to even think about what I was leaving behind. Even when we both got married in order for us to become Resident Aliens, it did not even cross my mind that we will stay here for so long. Yet for a long time we did not decide on a date for return. I needed to finish school first. Then I needed to build a career...life evolved...As I mentioned, we hardly ever spoke about going back to Israel during the first 8 or 9 years...it was granted that we would some day"

The sense of no tangible marker is reflected also in Gil'ad’s statement:

"Time has this odd tendency to fly by, you know you’re going back so you don’t think about it; 8, 10 years go by and then suddenly it feels like you’ve crossed a border, like you didn’t notice the warning sign that said ‘danger! Border crossing!’ and then there is no way back”.

For some, life in the shadow of the nonevent felt like living in the real presence of something that is profoundly absent.

"You know it’s like being a mother of an MIA soldier...when a soldier is killed, there is a physical reality, there is a funeral, a grave, you can start grieving, you sit shivaa...with an MIA nothing is certain, you have nothing to hold on to, what do you make of a possible death, a possible life, the memories and the forgetfulness. This is what not returning is like, there is nothing objectively certain about it. You can’t put it behind you, bury it. There is an on going feeling of being not here and not there or both here and there...it can go on forever.”

Accepting the finality of the situation may also be avoided because it may mean confronting one’s own mortality. Indeed, while not always confronted consciously, the sense of mortality laces the accounts. For example, Enmanuel said:

"I still feel very ambivalent, I haven’t yet completely accepted that I’m going to live here until the end of my life...I try not to think about it, I try to live from day to day...I try not to think that this is really the way my life is going to be until I die...it hasn’t fully sunk in”.

Many of the participants were aware of a feeling of “time running out” as seen in Noa’s reflection:

"Your parents are getting older, you start attending to the possibility that they may die while you’re so far away...you start thinking I’m getting older too, how long are we going to sing ‘Od lo avda tikvatenu’?” [our hope is not yet lost - a line from the Israeli national anthem].

Gabi said:

"A. and I have never been in a better place. We both work and make a good living, and are pretty happy with our jobs. Yet, we have made up our mind that we will try to return to Israel by the end of 1993...we have to try now, because time works against our chances of adjusting back".
Nira concluded

"Maybe all that is left is time for Ecclesiastes, you know, vanity of vanity, all is vanity, one generation passes away and another generation comes; but the earth abides'. Maybe its time to realize that 'everything goes to one place; everything is of dust and turns to dust again'."

A powerful facet of despair was sensed as being on a never stopping emotional roller-coaster.

"Until you decide that you have exhausted all avenues to return, or that you just have to go on with your life, you can remain stuck in a roller-coaster" (Nira).

For Yonatan the situation was experienced as

"An entanglement, from which I saw no exit, no solution...like being inside a terrible paradox, a multilayered bind...and all the 'resolutions' you make are only postponements...for another month, another year...before you face the finality of the situation".

At some point most felt a powerful need to alter the expectations and fantasies surrounding this event that did not occur.

"After a long time riding on this roller-coaster you have to get off, or at least to alter the expectation... to acknowledge the reality that the return home has not occurred and may not occur" (Moshe).

Many felt a strong need to face and learn to live with the presence of what was felt as a painful central absence in life.

"It was like a powerful emotional roller-coaster, a kind of emotional game you must quit. As long as we said 'next year' we couldn’t get near the subject emotionally, a sort of self-deception. When we finally said, that’s it, enough of this self-torture, it was possible to start attending to and living with the painful absence and losses. It still hurts you know, but kind of less so" (Michael).

Attending and learning to live with the absence took many forms. Some felt that since there was no 'solution', a sort of rational resolution was called for:

"You must find some realistic resolution, make the best of what there is, otherwise you’re stuck in this inner conflict for many years, you’re forever holding on to this dream and not living your current life" (Ofra).

"You learn to live with the reality that you have not gone back. The issue of return is something we’ve locked away, well, that at least I have locked. I realized that if I continue to think every year if I’m returning next year, I’ll never get anywhere, I’m only torturing myself. This is something I have learned, to live with the fact that this story is not finished. I’ve developed this philosophy of 'as a professional, I’m here for now' because I found out that otherwise I do not live, I do not write research proposals, I do not start long term projects, and I do not supervise students, because you see, if I’m returning home next year, or even maybe returning, how could I responsibly embark on anything?' (Yigal).
On another level this need for normalcy in life was expressed as the need to confront the “fine line between dream and illusion” (Ronit). This is indeed a very fine line. In exploring the accounts it was often difficult to interpret with utmost certainty whether what was expressed was a form of denial or a form of acceptance of conflicts and paradoxes as a part of life’s existential nature, without trying to hurry solutions. Some participants acknowledged that they have essentially decided not to make a final decision and seemed comfortable living with a non-ending. they seemed to have a strong tolerance for ambiguity, and to be determined to accept and live with questions which have no ready-made answers.

“Its a never-ending story, There are many more questions than there are answers, but you learn not to insist on perfect, round answers. You learn to live with more questions than answers” (Noa).

Yet, holding on to the self presentation of temporarily or indefinitely uprooted may suggest denial or avoidance of the finality inherent in the situation. “I may go back tomorrrow” said Etti (female, married to a Canadian Jew, 18 years away). Etti, who despite acknowledging that her husband would not be willing to move to Israel has continued to live “as if” she could move back. Rationally she knew it would not happen, yet she has lived her life behind this dream which numbed the pain and the self-disappointment, shielding her from depression.

“Actually, I go back all the time... and I live both here and there...I have not left there and I have not left here...I live both here and there...maybe I live neither here not there...I don’t know sometimes” (Gil’ad).

Not to decide may be seen as avoidance, rationalization or denial, it may also be seen as a decision to decide not to decide:

“The only way to live with it is to not think about this conflict. You don’t make a decision that now I came here...immigrated here...so as to die and be buried here, but rather you say: for now I have to do this for professional reasons. What requires energy is a decision to change, not a decision to continue doing the same old thing. There was no a-priori decision to remain here, and even now we haven’t made such a decision... if for example things changed drastically, suddenly...someone said: come, and the conditions offered were such that you don’t have to continuously chase your tail, maybe it will happen...it’s a possibility that always exists, that never vanishes” (Yigal).

A similar sentiment was expressed by Avi:

“because there always is an open door, there is always the option to get on a plane and return... If you ask me if I’m here for the rest of my life, if it is final, I don’t know...the future should remain open...I don’t close this chapter in my life, nothing is carved in stone, tomorrow I can go back...the door is open, even if it’s only the back door”.

Attending to the notion of ‘hope’ which permeates the accounts sheds a different light on
the fine line between dream and illusion. For a large majority of the participants a hope of returning remained even when the reality of non-return had been acknowledged. What is the function of hope in a situation whose essential definition is the loss of hope? I asked. Ronit said:

‘Even if there is only a shadow of hope, I will not stop hoping. It’s not in vain that The Hope is both the title and the content of the national anthem of Israel”.

Listening to the following statements it seems that hope may not necessarily reflect another facet of denial of the nonevent but rather another type of reaction to the threat aiming to negotiate or mediate it.

“The expectation that after the internship we will go back had been blown up, but I still hope...all the time that in the end, somehow, we’ll go back... there are a few who manage to do it” (Ofra)

“It is unrealistic for me now, and perhaps it’s unrealistic, period, but I still hope, I think there is still a good chance that in 10 years when my children are older I’ll go back” (Ruth).

“There are times, even though the situation is final, and clearly so, you still have this crazy belief, hope, dream... you look for, you search for that sliver of chance that says; it’s still worth trying (Noa).

“You can’t stop hoping, even when, or perhaps because reality hits you in the face, I often have this dream that I come back with lots of money and I buy million cans of paint...and I paint all the old houses in Tel-Aviv” (Miron).

“I told my husband, I don’t want any idle talk about returning, if and when you are serious about it, tell me the day and the flight number, I’ll be on that plane” (Nira).

Hope seems to have protected many participants from depression. The accounts reveal that when one has lost hope depression ensued.

“When I realized we are not going home I was in shock, I never wanted to leave Israel to begin with... and there, slowly, not going back seemed more and more like fait accompli. I lost all hope and I became extremely depressed, I did not have the guts, I did not want to go back alone, so I stayed... It was very difficult... I had no hope” (Ruth).

Holding on to, or developing a hope may be facilitative to working through conflict and despair.

“Look, neither one of us is stupid. Not only that I accept my situation, and I live it. I even like it. It’s interesting, it gives me special opportunities that I may not have had. It had opened things for me, and I’m comfortable, and content, though this situation also locks me in a conflict and pain, because after all, despite it all I believe, or I hope, or I deceive myself, you see, I change my mind all the time, yes I have this hope and paradoxically it’s what makes things not fall apart, it prevents me from feeling depressed” (Moshe).

The hope expressed by the participants often included exposure to the threat and pain through the struggle to deal with them. Contrary to crude optimism which is not based on realistic
assessment of hurdles and tends to minimize them, their hope often seemed to be embedded in reality, yet it did not require immediate, concrete satisfaction or tangible fulfilment. It seemed more like a way of being than a way of acting.

(2) Living with return as a nonevent

The failed expectations are built into our lives
Like stones which can no longer
Be pulled out without everything caving in...
And there are pain scratches on the soul like on a record
And there are longing-lines on the palm of the hand
Not character-lines or future - or destiny -
The water softens the despair
The water carries hope like floating leaves
The water we drink and the water we weep. (Yehuda Amichai)

Lines from an Israeli poem.

The accounts reveal that it was not unusual for the participants to be in transition for many years as they continually reevaluated, reconsider, attempt and hope for the fabled return to occur. Facing the non-return, becoming aware that this expected event has not and will not happen starts a process of dealing with what the participants perceive as a painful sense of separation and loss and the presence of a central absence in their lives. Often it was perceived as a symbolic death:

"In French there is a saying - Partir c'est mourir un peu - to leave is to die a little. For me, to not be able to return was do die a lot" (Moshe).

"When I realized that my expectation for returning home was not going to happen, something died in my heart" (Dorit).

Yonatan described acknowledging the reality of non-return as "A cruel awakening to someone else's morning". For Nira, the realization of the finality of it all meant "To learn to live with a personal sense of lack that changed me like from a homeowner to a permanent guest". The initial confrontation with the broken expectation to return home evoked pain, anxiety, a sense of loss, and a feeling of personal fragmentation. A sense of vulnerability, insecurity and incompleteness was often overwhelming:

"you feel suspended in the air, like you're someone that was supposed to be and is no longer, and yet actually is... You talk about it and you cry, and then all that is left is silence. A silence that moves in the narrow impossible path between the yearning to change the absence and the knowledge that it's not changeable. And every day was the longest day of the year. And the next day was even longer" (Ronit).

The participants often described this experience as a concrete presence, using metaphors
such as a pain, a wound, a severed limb, a scar.

"It was as if someone had amputated my leg...I felt that I no longer had a spinal cord, I couldn't tell anymore what was right and wrong" (Ruth).

For Rina the experience felt like an internal wound:

"you see, your intention was for something else, your image for the future, of yourself and your children all fell to pieces, and in the place of these plans and hope, in your soul, there was now an open wound... unfortunately there is no bandage for the soul".

Unable to make the return a reality, or to give up on this dream, some found themselves poised in a 'life on hold'. Caught in an existential conflict, in limbo between two worlds and the incongruent sense of self they imply, some retreated into an emotional no-man's land.

"I learned to live in a dream, in a time out of time, and to create a fictional story of my life in real time" (Ronit).

"something closed off inside me. I unpacked the suitcases. I arrived at a decision that from now on my life depended on pretence...I knew I needed to try and not to hope for something unrealistic. I don't see how a change will occur. I remain here with my life that is not my life." (Nira).

Some reacted by a deliberate thought stopping.

"I dropped a sort of curtain, I made some rational switch regarding things that bothered me, hurt me, I mean, I detached the painful feelings about not going back from what needs to be done on a daily basis. I try to invest in the present, to live with where I am now, not what I was or may be" (Ofra).

This strategy however was often found to be only partially effective.

"It hurts for years... you can't shake yourself from it, you try but you cannot ignore it...then it kind of gets better it becomes like an old wound, it still hurts, but less so, and then every once in a while the wound reopens." (Rina).

"You see, the truth is that the wound has not healed. Like a good physician I have sutured and covered it, but underneath it continues to fester" (Moshe).

A number of participants described a chronic state of grief or depression. For example, Ruth recalled living under a dark cloud of depression and chill; Dorit says she has never been able to come out of her depression. Nira described living in apathy and a frozen state:

"I'm no longer depressed, nor angry, I'm not even sad, I'm just frozen... its like I put myself in an old shoe box with all those things that I cannot throw away, old shoes, my children's toys, memories".

Other became very obsessive about their work and career: "I became a workoholic, it was really out of character, yet I couldn't stop it" (Moshe). Others became obsessed with accumulating material goods, as if
to fill some great emptiness. The non return often gave rise to ambiguity regarding collective values, and sense of moral obligation and connectedness which was reflected in a shared need on the part of the participants to justify their non-return. The justification involved disappointment, anger, blame, bitterness, feeling cheated, feeling humiliated or rejected. Sometimes it was directed at the spouse who was considered at fault, at other times at Israel, Israeli institutions, quality of life (or lack thereof) in Israel, the economy, lack of basic civility, or the aggregate Israeli.

"The only reason I’m here is because my husband lied. I did not come here out of free choice, I felt I was cheated, it was apparently very true, and it hurt me a lot, this feeling of not being in control, and the helplessness and hopelessness” (Ruth).

"Only in Israel you need to conduct a national campaign to explain why you leave or not come back, they instilled this guilt in us as if you’re deserting a sinking ship, I don’t buy this any more. We are here because we do not have a choice...I’m OK here, I’m not suffering and I know I may have to give up a lot if I return, but I sometimes feel sort of bitter...why does the country pushes me not to return, it’s very frustrating that I don’t have the choice.... why does ha’aretz encourage people to study professions that make them have to leave? you see the return is in our hands, but it’s not really in our hands and since I don’t have an alternative I can’t even know what I would have chosen.” (Ofra).

"The main reason we are here is because the working conditions there are not conducive to work. There is no benefit to paying the bills, you know you work and contribute and create and the system feels no obligation to acknowledge your efforts and contributions” (Yigal).

In a few cases this need for self-justification led to generalization and to stereotyping of others who are thus relegated the ‘just’ stigma yordim:

"I can’t stand the lack of basic social civility, [in Israel] and the absence of politeness and the crazy driving of Israelis, I don’t really have a common language with them. I’m not saying that I’m better than they, they live with war all the time, they are very edgy, I understand. And besides I like living with civility. Justly or unjustly that’s the way I am. Also yordim, they are not like you or I, they, some of them are frightening. they look like from the Mafia, I don’t know, their style, maybe it’s not true, I don’t know them at all. Look I do meet many Israelis, but those that I know are special. My best friends, my only friends actually are Israelis” (Mika).

At times these feelings turned inward and created an intrapersonal crisis. "What did I do wrong”. "Why me?” “I could have done better” “If only”.

During the attempt to come to terms with the reality of the “never”, pain, sadness, guilt feeling, ambiguity, conflict and acceptance are experienced on several levels, and at times simultaneously. Some immerse themselves in the entanglement, some resign themselves to pretense, and some attempt to manage by dissociating themselves from the dilemma. Yet they all must face constant remainders of the reality of not returning. One such remainder is the excessive,
and in the eyes of the participants often uninformed and overtly negative, media attention given to Israel. Their political affiliation notwithstanding, most participants felt this was very difficult to deal with. Frequent visits to Israel were another painful remainder: “When we visit I always think: we got to try harder, before it’s too late” (Etti). On various occasions most participants had experienced the sentiment echoed in Nira’s words:

“When I go to Israel I go through an emotional hell, I get resurrected there, and then I dive into deep depression a week before departing. I always break down at the airport, I call it my ‘Lod syndrome’ [Lod is the location of the Israeli international airport]. I cry myself back into a frozen state all the way back”.

Their children and parents are also a common reminder of unfulfilled hopes and wishes.

“You know, by raising my children here I rob them of a meaningful relationship with their grandparents. I didn’t have any grandparents, and I missed it, and my kids have young grandparents in Israel and they don’t benefit from it.” (Ofra)

“To be at such a distance from the family is difficult, you know that you’re hurting them, although this was not the intention. My parents came to ha’aretz, they weren’t brought there. They created this country for me, built a place for me to belong to, and I left. Their life-dream is constantly being broken in many respects, and the fact that I left has a significant part in this” (Michael)

For a few, the comparison with those who did not leave Israel resulted in bitter feelings and regret, particularly when idealization and fantasy about Israeli reality was the basis for comparison. For example Avi has constructed for himself a picture of Israel that makes his life in Canada pale in comparison.

“Here you live on a much lower economic level than in Israel. All my friends in Israel are 95% more affluent than Israelis here. Economically I could have done twice as much in Israel and I would have worked less. You see, very few people will admit this, but it is a lot easier to make money in Israel. Israel is a very industrialized, productive country, unlike Canada which is only a service society. Here the top is to sit on some tenure, that’s it, there people apply what they learned in university in creative economic endeavours. Here I did not find paradise, I worked my ass off, I still do, and in Israel you don’t work so hard.”

The need to see Israel in highlighted colours was evident in a few accounts. Dorit said:

“here nothing happens, it’s true that there are wars in Israel, but they are our wars. Here I’m afraid for my son, I feel safe when he goes to Israel...there is no livelihood like in Israel. You could feel better and more fulfilled there”.

Gabi said:

“It is also the ability to make a difference as an individual. Here I can start a business of any kind and no matter how original I am, there will be others. In Israel there is still a hope that I could start something, and make a difference in my field. I may be able to leave a mark.”
As if catching herself in what may be a fantasy, she adds: “But then again, do I have the energy to deal with the rest of the shit?”.

The seemingly opposite tendency, that is, to colour everything in Israel in negative tone was evident in other accounts (see also Mika’s statement on p. 71).

“Israel has disappointed me, every visit I get more and more disillusioned, It didn’t stay the same, everyone leaves, everyone looks after themselves. I feel it took the wrong direction so I feel fine about leaving. I’m much happier here. I can fulfil myself” (Tamar, married to a Canadian Jew, 11 years away).

“Often I think, why is it that there is a deliberate effort to embitter your life, to make your life miserable in Israel” (Miron).

Idealization and anger towards the country seem to serve the same function; the participants need to both maintain the connection and to separate. Both idealization and anger put the country in a place separated from the person (by making it either illusory and inaccessible, or destroying it) and at the same time by occupying the person, the connection is preserved.

While a few have remained in a state of chronic grief, most of the participants have, in time, found a way to “live with” the thwarted expectation. The different levels of accommodation, or modes of resolution typically ranged between a sense of helpless resignation and a sense of acceptance or tolerance of ambiguity as exemplified by the following statements.

“People tell you that things become easier, with time, you know, you think maybe things will change, but for us it will not. and you can do nothing about it. In the beginning I counted the years. I don’t anymore…it only gets longer.” (Ronit).

“It wasn’t supposed to turn out like that, but it did. I didn’t return, and the reality is that I may be here for many years. Realistically I don’t see how, in the near future, things change enough in Israel for me to go back. Yes, there are times when I can’t get away from feeling sad and ambivalent, particularly regarding my parents who are getting old, and who hurt my not returning. Yet for me the only way to live with what didn’t happen is to live well with what does” (Michael).

What was shared among to the participants was the sense that their experience of nonevent meant a “never-ending story”. For example in his summary of the interview Emanuel said:

‘Even though I feel, it seems that I will not return, I definitely feel that the story has not ended, I’m definitely not closing it off’

Or in Noa’s words: “this is the way it is, and this is the way it will be, it is a never ending story which you learn to live with” (Noa).

Without the commitment to go home, the future seemed unmarked. The participants often
described feeling unhinged, losing their footing in what was a more or less secure psychological/social world, and a prevailing sense of alienation and loss. While individual modes of resolutions were evident, the overwhelming feeling of the participants was that not returning home, even though it was something that did not happen had both changed their emotional/social world, and called into question their image of themselves.

(a) Loss of self

Listening to the emotional language the participants used to describe their experience of not returning home, it appears that their central loss was a loss of self.

“I lived by forgetting myself, but I may have to account for living someone else’s life (Yonatan).

“If I could only bridge between here and there, if only someone would invent a bandage for the soul” (Rina).

“My soul was not here, maybe it was in a coma. Here I only had a body. In order to preserve the body I anesthetised the soul, sedated it.” (Moshe).

“I felt a terrible emptiness... I knew who I was, where I belonged and what I wanted to be or felt I should be, but it was no longer a viable self-image, I felt very lost.” (Ronit).

“In the middle of this rain forest I found myself in a desert. I tried but I was unable to move from one life to another life simply by crossing the ocean. I tried to get rid of the past, I tried to immerse myself in forgetting, and erase all footprints, but I couldn’t because it was my self I was losing, my own footprints which were being erased. This is the nature of the wound, it’s like a life-sentence. Sometime I need to go back home to visit, in order to return to my self. Now I’ve managed to distance the dream, but not to erase it” (Noa).

“Every step I take is a threat to my identity” (Dorit).

The accounts reveal a strong sense of suspended identity, a feeling that the self was homeless. In elaborating these feelings the participants always associated the metaphor of self loss with what can be termed an enlarged sense of self, a self that includes and identifies with the society. That society is implicated in the very identity of the participants can be gleaned from the ways in which they defined themselves. Despite their emigration, and for the majority despite taking on a new citizenship, the participants continue to define themselves primarily as Israelis:

“I’m an Israeli. It has to do with a place, a language, a history. While there is a lot of diversity and factions in Israel which don’t particularly see eye-to-eye, there is also a unifying basic sense of belonging, you know, belonging to a group, a nation, a people, whatever, and you can’t stop belonging, it’s a way of being.” (Gil’ad).

“I’m a 100% Israeli. Ha’aretz is the place which says everything about me and my sense of alienation arises
because you always feel the connection to where you come from” (Ofra).

“My identity is of an Israeli, the identity of the family is of Israelis who live in Canada. Particularly it is not...none of us will say we’re new Canadians, but Israelis who live here, even though according to official definitions we are new Canadians” (Yigal).

“I belong to what I belong, I’m a part of ha’aretz. I have no other identity... We were indoctrinated with this issue of betrayal, the ideal, the national survival, etc. I’m an Israeli, not Canadian, not American. Yes I have a Canadian citizenship so what, it’s a piece of paper. And I’m not giving up my Israeli citizenship. I curse and pay the exit-tax every visit” (Miron).

“I’m very much an Israeli. My patriotic sense is very strong. No matter where I live, I could never change that. I feel a strong sense of belonging to ha’aretz, I wouldn’t want to change it. It is who I am.” (Rina).

These typical statements reveal that the participants’ sense of self is to a large extent defined through a sense of belonging to the homeland, which for its part does not consider the participants permanently lost to it. While the country judges her expatriates negatively it never ceases to remind them of their possible ‘redemption’ via their return to the communal bosom. In not returning an existential change took place. This mutually agreed upon meaning of connectedness and belonging is fractured, and the expatriate’s emotional/moral position within this relationship was called into question

“Sometimes I think, I don’t know who I am, and what I am, maybe I’m not an Israeli anymore, but this is what I’ve always been, this is all I know how to be. You know, like, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?... and I’m not a yored, although maybe this is my designation in Israel, and I don’t feel Canadian, I don’t feel a sense of belonging here. I’m kind of in-between, in self limbo” (Moshe).

The attachment the participants felt toward their homeland was not merely functional, but rather it was implicated in the foundation of the participants’ identity. In not returning, previously taken for granted self-images and meaning of the participants’ self/other identity became severed from their familiar mooring. The sense of belonging to a place, family, friends, nation and a set of values became ambiguous. Regarding the nation as part of themselves, the loss of that part of self was felt as most difficult by the participants. Indeed the dominant theme in the accounts constitutes a struggle to maintain the ties to the community. The yearning to belong while feeling the threat of distance to this fundamental sense of belonging was experienced as an inner struggle to reconcile the polarities of belonging and alienation.

Where does this sense of belonging, and the expressed need of the participants for
rootedness and connectedness comes from? The accounts reveal that while the participants often recognized that Israel is a country of factions and divisions (political, religious, ideological and ethnic) their overwhelming sense of it was of a connected society. The dominant feeling was a strong sense of belonging to a group from which they find it hard to distinguish themselves. This sense was described as contextually and historically embedded. Born a few years before the official declaration of the independence of the state of Israel, Yigal described himself as a typical product of the society of the time:

“I do not think there is any doubt that we have, as a group of individuals, a strong sense of belonging to and identification with ha'aretz. The national identity is an integral part of the personal identity of our generation, at least of a particular segment of the population...and the way we grew up or were raised, with the values, the myths, the history, and the memories of not belonging that pulled or pushed our parents to immigrate to Israel and create ha'aretz. And the perpetual security problems, the wars, etc. All this combined to instil in us a strong sense of belonging, a sense of personal loyalty and care, a sense of duty or obligation and responsibility”.

Similarly Emanuel said:

“Because we grew up after the war [WWII] and the education we got, a strong national identity is deeply ingrained, you can’t easily shake it”.

An instance of the participants’ recalled existential atmosphere of connected orientation which was characterized by a sense of ‘togetherness’ and personal loyalty is exemplified by Ofra’s description of her “old group”:

“I grew up like everyone else, I had a core group of close friends from high-school, we were a very consolidated bunch. Throughout the army we kept in touch, then we all went to the same university. It has always been my reference group, my support group. I took this solidarity for granted, its meaning came only when it was lacking, when suddenly it became very, very important. It’s a feeling of home, of belonging, its very different from what my children have here”.

Even when a participant remember not having such a personal ‘old group’ or when Miron had found himself in a ‘lesser valued’ ethnic group the sense of belonging or shared fate seemed to prevail:

I don’t miss a particular group. I never really liked groups much. I didn’t stay in touch with too many of the old friends who are still alive. What I miss is a feeling, the sense of group responsibility, the sense of belonging to something larger than your little silly life...and the unspoken language or coded expressions by which we instantaneously understood each other, the no need for prolonged explanation or detours.”

(Noa)

“Look, it’s kind of strange, many people here assume I’m better off here. They say: look, here everyone is equal and in Israel you were discriminated against. Yes, I grew up on disadvantages, and on the negative connotations of being Moroccan; you probably had more advantages than I did, but look, you either gripe and become bitter, or you look at what is really important. In the final analysis, we all belong to the same
thing. When it comes to questions of life and death, which is the main issue, or to... yes, even to being called yordim there are no Ashkenazi or Sepharadic, we are all in it together”. (Miron)

For some of the participants this belonging orientation which meant variously a sense of deep connectedness to particular groups or the larger society, was accentuated by a personal history of not belonging.

“As someone who as a child had immigrated to Israel from there [WWII Europe], I can’t forget that Israel was the only home I ever had, the only place where I felt acceptance and belonging and a commitment to, and maybe paradoxically, considering the continuous war situation, it was the only place I felt safe. For me a sense of belonging is the most important human need”. (Rina).

“Even though I wasn’t born in Israel, and I didn’t even grow up in a Zionist home, I’m very attached to ha’aretz. Immigrating at age 10, It took a long time to adjust to that very connected atmosphere. It wasn’t easy, but I have made it, and after that I never felt like an outsider. I have felt and I still feel it is my home, my country, and where I belong...even now when I have little respect for what happens there politically, the sense of belonging is most important...it’s the greatest absence in my life here” (Ruth).

Since these participants remember having had to win this sense of belonging, they were acutely aware of having to maintain it.

“I think losing this sense of belonging is different and harder for me than for you [a native Israeli] because I’m a Holocaust survivor, because I was an immigrant, I had to fight for this inclusion, to buy into it. For you it was a given”. (Rina)

While the fear or threat of losing the sense of belonging did not seem less painful for Israeli born, the accounts do reveal that because the sense of togetherness, belonging, group attachment, affiliation and loyalty was a natural part of their lives, most of the Israeli born participants had never given it much heed. ‘Belonging’ became a meaningful construct only in its absence, or in the threat thereof.

“I don’t think I felt the Israeli “belonging”, that is how much I had it, until I left... It was not something of concern as long as you were there. When you leave you suddenly feel its absence.” (Gil’ad).

“It never crossed my mind while I was there, I never thought about myself in terms of belonging or not belonging. I always felt that was the only way to be, nothing remarkable about it; until I was away for a few years” (Mika)

Against this perception of togetherness and connected identity, The non-return was seen by the participants as placing them into a situation were they feel a strong threat of alienation or marginality.

“Here I’m more like a permanent tourist, I have not become Canadian. You can’t integrate, you live here, but not integrate. It’s hard to know what to integrate into. Israelis always look for very deep connection,
deep relationships, you know, that special form of Israeli togetherness. But here the notion does not exist. Everyone is separated, unconnected, independent?” (Ofra).

“I do have complaints and gripes, but I don’t always voice my opinion because here I feel like an ‘alien plant’. I’ll always feel like an alien plant here” (Ronit).

The broken commitment to return put the participants in an emotional strange land. While they defined themselves as Israelis when speaking to others, the large majority claimed that internally they defined themselves as “Israelis in exile”. Separated geographically and feeling rejected from the group with whom they feel a sense of unity of fate (peoplehood) and a collective awareness of this unity (nationality), they feel that the taken for granted sense of belonging can no longer be easily assumed. Exile invades the house of intimacy.

“You cannot live in two places, so the end result is that I live in nowhere” (Nira)

“It is a paradox, it is my Israeliness that prevents me from ‘self actualizing’. I live in a pervading sense of foreignness. I’m an outsider here, but I’m also regarded as an outsider in ha’aretz” (Noa).

The emotional nature of this exile was perceived in two ways. As reversible (at least theoretically) or as painfully irreversible.

“Yes, home is there, as far as the heart is concerned I feel better there; the friends, the family, the sunshine, the sea, the food, the connections. Everything is there and not here, you miss it because it is your language, the way you are, even what you don’t like. Here my life is peaceful, comfortable. But I always belong there. If I could, I’d go back” (Gil’ad).

“You can’t stop being connected to ha’aretz, but you slowly become separated. You continue to belong but there is a growing gap. You have to make an effort not to be separated” (Yonatan).

“I think the correct definition for what I feel is that we are displaced, uprooted from all places, not belonging anywhere any more. It is an inner sense of exile. I don’t feel belonging here, even after all these years, even though it is ever so beautiful here, even though my life is comfortable and I have peace of mind… but it is not mine. When I go away I sometime find it hard to visualize this place. But then, while I’m emotionally connected to ha’aretz, I no longer really belong there either. Israel is changing so fast, the makeup of society, the values, the way of life. That which I’m nostalgic for no longer exist except in my head. So I no longer belong there and I do not belong here, I’m a citizen of two countries and I belong to neither” (Michael).

“In a sense repatriation is no longer a viable option, yet my life here is saturated by a feeling of permanent impermanence and of not belonging. We were raised to believe that you can’t be a vicarious Israeli, but you can’t undo what you are, I can’t stop being connected to ha’aretz. I remain an Israeli in Canada which is a contradiction. It’s also a personal heart-ache because in many respects I don’t really belong there either” (Moshe)

The word exile was imbued by the participants with historical and contextual connotations.
A common sentiment among the participants was an explicit differentiation between being in a Diaspora and being in exile. “The Jews are in a Diaspora, we are in exile.” (Dorit).

Elaborating on this distinction Ronit said:

“you know there is a difference between being in the Gola [Diaspora] and being in a Galut [exile]. The Jews in Diaspora are not foreigners in it, they are at home, they never felt they belonged anywhere else. On the other hand I’m in exile from a real place where I once belonged... Except in a physical way I’m not at home here.”

Another aspect of the distinction was given by Moshe:

“The connection of the Jews in Diaspora to Israel is to a metaphor, a spiritual place. For us, Israelis, the connection is to ha’aretz - an idea which is also a very physical place that carries a very personal meaning”.

Insisting on this difference seemed connected to the participants’ perception of their Israeliness as more than a legal status. They often perceived it as an ethnic identity which separates existence in Israel from existence in the Diaspora. In this perception they rely on principles embedded in their society’s world-view. Not only they perceived an essential difference between Diaspora and exile, the majority of the participants also felt alienated from what is conceived by others as their natural ethnic group.

“I don’t feel comfortable in the Jewish community, I don’t know exactly why. I don’t like it. Maybe because I have guilt feelings, being an Israeli here. I don’t know. I don’t feel that I belong, or could be a part of this group.” (Emanuel)

A common sentiment in the accounts was that there is a “basic rift between Israelis and Jews”. (Aviva)

Even Etti, who said she is very involved with the Jewish community which provides her with “a connection with my culture, a bridge between past and future, between my life and that of my children” saw Israelis and Jews as “two separate entities who meet occasionally”.

“There is a fundamental difference between being an Israeli and being a Jew. Sometimes I have to correct people, I mean that my Identity is more Israeli than Jewish. Of course because I’m an Israeli from a certain segment of the population I’m also from a Jewish extraction and I have certain values which I suppose are Jewish values and we celebrate certain Jewish holidays. But Jewishness does not figure in my identity. The differences in values between me and the Jewish community are not less substantial than the differences between me and other local communities of different religions. Perhaps it is because we are so totally non-religious. Maybe if I were religious I would have felt differently.” (Yigal).

Growing up in a country where Jews are a dominant majority, Jewishness for most of the participants was perceived as a natural state of affairs, a genetic given, and not as something one thinks about. In uprooting some found themselves in a new role of “keepers of tradition”.

Searching for ways to fulfil this role some felt that the only way to give their children a sense of
historical continuity was to join the Jewish community, despite feeling that it represented “buying into a non-me identity”. While many felt that “becoming a Jew in the North-American sense was in conflict with my identity as an Israeli” (Gil’ad), some felt that joining the community was necessary, for “it justifies my life away from Israel” (Aviva).

The participants shared the perception that Jews and Israeli expatriates perceive each other as different in regard to values, mentality and culture, and described the relationship between them as that of mutual exclusion.

“Neither group wants or attempts to reach out to each other. The Jews resent Israelis for being here...unless like me you married one of them. As far as they are concerned there is a definite division of duty. Israelis need to stay in Israel and make sure it survives, and the Diaspora Jews are obligated to ease their conscience by supporting Israel financially” (Nira).

“Part of the problem is that immigrating to Israel is at the heart of the Zionist dream, which some of the local Jews like to harbour. An Israeli emigration directly opposes this ideal, making it look, or exposed as unrealistic. This hints at hypocrisy, and no one likes to be exposed as such” (Michael).

“The community doesn’t acknowledge us as viable Jews. We don’t understand them, and feel as alienated in their midst as in a Catholic church. As secular Israelis we can never belong or feel comfortably affiliated with them. So in the end you don’t really have an ethnic group, because Israeli-Canadian would be the opposite of the whole idea of Israeli. So, you’re kind of stuck.” (Gil’ad)

The psychological make-up of the participants reflected their membership in a dominant group. They felt liberated from the minority mentality which typified their parents’ generation as well as most Diaspora Jews. Thus being an Israeli as a part of a minority presented an ambiguous state of being. Many participants related to this theme as the cost of their non-return which was borne by their children.

“The main thing I robbed my children off by not going back home is the feeling of being a part of a majority group, rather than a minority” (Dorit).

Even as they accommodated to their life in exile many felt like Etti a sense of frustration and loss seeing their children become more Jewish than Israelis.

The pain of the “cost” borne by the children was a shared theme among the participants. Often it came into a sharp focus when they compared their upbringing and that of their children:

“The children are lacking many things we had, like growing up outdoors, like group fun, like the kind of friendships we had. It’s sad. It seems to us that they are very lonely. Maybe they don’t feel this way, because it’s the norm. It’s difficult for us to see because they don’t have the togetherness, the connectedness, the carefree sort of relationships that we had.” (Ofra)
The hardest thing in not going back home is that you impose on your children a life-style that you feel is less valuable than what they may have had. They are alone, little individuals, they have no sense of community. I remember growing up, I would come back from school, do, or not do, my homework and out I would go to play with the other kids. If you didn’t have friends, you always could find them out there” (Moshe).

Unable to adopt into the local ethnic group identity, and unable or unwilling to organize themselves into a viable group added to a painful sense of exile and not belonging. The past, when one belonged, becomes a painful reminder of its absence in the present. Since the non-return was perceived as an end which was bound to the future, the participants found themselves with a sense of an amputated past and an uncertain future. The non return acquires an additional meaning.

(b) Spiritual connectedness:

And there is no end to this road
The ends of the roads are only yearning
(Nathan Alterman)
From an Israeli poem

The separation of the participants from Israel was not a complete separation. No matter how long they had lived in a ‘foster homeland’ they did not seem to stop feeling a fundamental attachment to the Moledet (literally meaning the birthing country), to which they felt deeply connected, and to which they felt a strong sense of loyalty and commitment. In exile, their emotional and spiritual self was continually shaped by these primary loyalties. The participants’ spiritual connection was revealed by a courage to look within and to trust a deep sense of belonging while facing the consequences of their non-return and its implications to their sense of self.

A sense of nostalgia permeated the accounts. The word Nostalgia comes from two Greek sources: Noostos = return home, and Algos = pain. In its modern use nostalgia means a non-conflicting temporary clinging to the past in a situation of sweet rumination. In their nostalgic expressions the participants often ‘went back’ to situations, people, places or experiences from the past. Nostalgia was experienced as a return home which encompasses both pain and sweetness. The participants expressions of nostalgia were different from their expressions of longing or yearning. In contrast to longing and yearning which exemplified individual experiences of object
loss (e.g. longing for the landscape, the climate, food, missing a specific person), The nostalgic experience as expressed in the accounts seems to serve the participants' need to be a part, to recreate a bridge between past and present. It was highlighted by references of the participants to Israeli folk songs, and had a tendency toward a collective direction (sense of togetherness, friendship, feeling of belonging, loyalty). "We are both from the same village", "because this sort of friendship your heart cannot ever forget" are two examples of key phrases often used in the accounts. Both are taken from popular Israeli songs and have become a code of speech.

Asked why he participated in Israeli sing-a-long evening Yonatan said:

"The songs remind me of my youth, they remind me of the feeling of togetherness that I miss so much...they somehow, maybe paradoxically they make me sad and they give me strength"

Some of the participants suggested that the songs both rekindled their pain, and alleviated it. Noa said she often listened to old Israeli songs and often sang them to her child because singing them felt like a sweet sadness. However she did not take part of communal singing activity because:

"It is hypocritical. How can they sit here and sing songs like 'the country where we were born, the country where we will live, no matter what'... maybe it's not hypocritical, maybe it's just pathetic".

The participants who concurred with the above sentiment felt that there was a need to find the fine line between self-deception and hope. A need to face the reality that they cannot dissociate themselves from their connectedness since it gives them strength, yet that "this connectedness is also a sort of pain... and to detach yourself is sometime a temptation" (Moshe).

For the participants, the non-return which resulted in a self-imposed exile did not necessarily entail an ability to forge a new identity, to become detached from their connectedness, or to choose some other, more suitable, homeland. They were unable to refuse the society within themselves. They continued to define themselves in terms of their attachments, affections and social identities and often sought out to find others who "share the attitudes of their roots". The need to associate with other Israeli expatriates was typically explained as the feeling that "there are certain things only Israelis can understand" (Aviva). "Israelis invest more in friendship, the Israeli friendship style is more intimate, more honest, deeper" (Ofra). Yet most participants did not confine their circle of friends to Israeli expatriates alone, nor did they befriend Israelis indiscriminately.

"Sometimes you associate with other Israelis, but then again - Do I like all Israelis in Israel? I certainly do not associate with Israelis here just because of their nationality". (Gil'ad).
As it became more apparent that not returning was an absence one has to live with, the participants' spiritual connectedness was essential to the struggle to maintain the broken ties with the homeland since it seems to nurture the present without dragging it back.

"Maybe it has something to do with emotions, things that are left from childhood...some essential sense of belonging to a group of friends, to the other meaning of the word friend (a member of a group), to some remnants of myths... Maybe from my army service, which contained much of the myths, and the sense of togetherness and connectedness and loyalty. That is something which becomes part of you, part of your soul, you cannot say no to your roots. You accept them, you don't fight them, they make your life here richer without making you depressed" (Yonatan).

This sustained connectedness gave the participants strength and allowed for self healing. It encompassed awareness of relatedness with the past, with ancestors, family, the country and the culture. Yet it also brought into awareness the multi-layered dilemma of their connected and separated self. Indeed a powerful theme in the participants' shared experience was that of the tension between the need for connectedness and the need to separate which often appears as a conflict between collectivity and individuality.

(c) A connected / separated self

"If I am not for myself, who will be? and if I am only for myself what am I?" (The Talmud, Avot 1:14)

While the participants' world-view, goals, expectations and choice of words to describe their experience were individualized, they tended to be also distinctly social, since they were derived from the themes, myths and world-view of their particular society and historical context. Coming from a society which has been committed from its inception to a collective self-determination, the central stage which the connected metaphors took in the accounts is not surprising. The participants often related to the fact that Israel was a group oriented rather than individualistic oriented one. Many talked about their hevre - a restricted, intimate, cohesive friendship group, to which they had felt a strong affinity, attachment and loyalty. The longing for a community perceived as connected was shared even among those participants who no longer felt a strong connection to a particular group. The accounts reflect a subjective reality of a connected sense of self rather than the sense of the autonomous, bounded individualistic self more typical to
their host society. Yet this sense of connectedness was not without conflict.

While the participants’ central struggle seemed to be related not so much to separation but rather to the desire to maintain or renew the ties with their community, many also realized that the forms of connectedness they were nostalgic for had not always seemed so desirable. Connectedness at best was associated with harmony, yet it also had connotations of a sense of over-involvement, sometime denial of individual differences and various forms of enforced conformism, i.e., oppressive connectedness. While yearning for the togetherness typical of their homeland, many revealed a fear of being smothered by it. Recalling growing up in a connected society these participants said:

“I felt a tremendous pressure to be like everybody else... I started to realize that I don’t want to be like everybody else and I became very critical...I did things to separate myself and to test the loyalty of my friends to me, this proved very destructive... Over here it is much easier to be who I am, that is probably what kept me here for so long” (Gabi)

“Growing up in this group orientation was both good and suffocating. While the togetherness protected you from loneliness, it was very difficult ever to be alone. You kind of had to conform to the group because it was the norm. We all had first person plural dreams. While I now see the advantages, I remained kind of leery about groups” (Noa)

“I don’t remember ever being alone....we grew up together, but it also has some negative aspects because I still don’t know how to make decisions. I find decisions very difficult, maybe it’s a personality and maybe it’s because I grew up in a group and I never had to decide on my own, there was always a group decision. You are always with a small close group, playing, studying, fighting, living and breathing together. I’m not sure what is better, my daughter is learning to be more independent than I was, or maybe it’s just a different kind of independence.” (Emanuel).

Although the participants were yearning for the sense of connectedness, most revealed that a desire to “get out”, to breathe, to detach (if only for a while) was an essential aspect of their initial departure from Israel.

“I was confused and I needed time out to figure things. The easiest solution for me was America ... California, where I had been...seemed to have more freedom. Moreover, anywhere would have more freedom than Israel, a small community that seemed to behave like an extended family” (Gabi).

The encounter with the North American ethos of individualism and self actualization was initially felt like a “breath of fresh air”, yet in time a sense of loss crept in.

“There you are so involved, not just the political involvement but also personal involvement, the family, the neighbours. When you leave you are happy to get out of it because it all starts to suffocate you, but after a while you start missing it, to see it as a great loss. It’s as if there is no middle ground; there it’s too much, and here there is none.” (Ronit)
Feelings regarding the family were most symbolic of the participants' sense of connection, affiliation and care. The families of the participants lived in Israel and did not join their children in exile. The family was reported to be the most difficult to leave and to separate from. The participants shared a sense of loss of family togetherness, support and care.

"I did not expect that I would miss my family so much... It was as if someone had amputated my leg... we were a large family... I did not realize before how much the family and the community were a supportive structure, how could I? I lived there, I just took it for granted". (Ruth).

All agreed that the most painful price their children were paying for the non-return was the separation from an extended family.

"By living here they miss the important experience of growing up with an extended family, growing up not just with a mother and a father, but also with grandparents, and uncles and aunts, and cousins. I didn't have any of that, and they do in Israel. I didn't and I really wished I had. I was very envious of my friends who had that. And I took my children away from this" (Rina)

Many of the participants grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and violent uprootings from Middle-Eastern countries. Many grew up in torn families with only the memories of grandparents. An extended family was often a idealized family myth that many hoped to make a reality for their children.

Although the participants present themselves as family oriented, the connected/separate theme was reflected in this domain also. While most said they were close, and a few claimed to feel very close to their family, the topic of family connectedness, affection and affiliation almost always arose hand in hand with reservation about that closeness.

"The family was the most difficult to leave. I was very attached to my family, maybe I was even dependent on them, maybe there was a feeling of freeing myself when I left" (Ofra)

"The most difficult thing about not returning, to be separated from the family, is also the most positive. In some sense it helped me, it gave me a privacy that I didn't have there. I don't know how I would have managed some of the things I have gone through here had I been surrounded by the supporting structure of the family, I may have not had the guts to do them. (Ruth)

"The family aspect plays only a small role in the decision [to return] although our mothers are getting older. I love my family but I got used to being without them; without the family pressure and family events. As a matter of fact I get the shivers when I think of that... If anything, the family is almost as much a deterrent as it is a reason to go back" (Gabi).

While realizing that connectedness was not always a synonym for harmony, and that care wasn't
always bliss and often a burden, most participants did not embrace the view of the autonomous, detached individual as a model for psychological health. Particularly among the participants who had gone back to live in Israel for a while, there was a shared sense that as mature adults boundaries were easier to establish. Even when the sense of connectedness to community and family was perceived as a burden, on balance it was seen as a “positive burden”, and its absence as impoverishment of their present life.

“Even the family over-involvement, and the intrigues, often unnecessary and undesired are an integral part of life which is important to live with. You also learn to be less critical. Maybe it’s in the genes that we feel we must care for one another. So even if yesterday my next door neighbour called me anti-Israeli because of our differences in politics, today if my son came back from school crying and I was still at work, she’d take him home and cuddle him, and make him feel better until I got there. Here you don’t have either; you don’t have the passion of political affiliation which divides and you don’t have the compassion that unites” (Rina)

“It’s the sense of ‘care’ and involvement which is missing here, and a sense of belonging to something larger than yourself for which you care.” (Noa)

The individualistic, bounded, family- and community- isolated self was a strange and threatening image when it figured in regard to the children

“What most frightened me about re-emigrating to Canada was the lack of community feeling, the essential lack of belonging. Here you don’t have to be a part because nobody is. But I want to be a part...because it’s not right. And I want my children to be a part, not isolated individuals with no community responsibility. Everyone needs to feel a sense of connectedness. Its such a primitive, human need. The family connection is important, and so is the sense of community” (Rina).

“I grew up surrounded by friends. I was raised in a Moshav [cooperative farm] and grew up outside rather than at home, I was always with others, never alone, youth movement, the army. We were never on our own. My daughter is growing up alone. Yes, she does have friends but its not the same, it’s not a spontaneous togetherness” (Emanuel)

“By not really living here emotionally all these years, I thought Canada could not hurt me. Now my son has gone away to school, and like his friends maybe he’ll comes home for Christmas? No one here understands it when I hurt his departure. When I grieve the separation from my unborn grandchildren. They have to separate, to individuate, right? Why can’t they individuate, become autonomous and independent within the family? I did. (Nira)

The participants felt that there was a certain security and comfort in the Israeli closeness, however, they revealed that a price was paid in measures of stress and strain, and a sense that at times since everyone was stewing in the same pot, ‘familiarity breed contempt’. Leaving the country may be seen as a flight from the strain of connectedness. Yet the accounts reveal that most participants were unable and unwilling to make the final break, to give up their connectedness to
their identity group. Physically separated, many found themselves oscillating emotionally between the poles of connectedness and separatedness.

“I’ll always be fundamentally connected to Israel, because for better or worse it is part of who I am. This connection is also sort of heavy, every so often it’s tempting to detach yourself, to throw in the towel and say I don’t care any more... don’t other do it all over the place? but I guess it’s something I can’t do, so I live with this duality” (Miron).

The participants’ self definition was embedded in their society’s ‘we’ orientation. This connected ‘we’ orientation entails an obligation or duty to live in Israel, to contribute to its development and to share the communal burden. Both explicitly and implicitly the participants related to the notion that often in the connected society one was always obligated. The participants talked of a moral ethos they were raised upon; you belong, you are obligated. This in turn led to a sense of moral ambiguity in facing the non-return, as a negation of a central value and its concomitant threat of the loss of belonging.

(ii) Construction of the nonevent’s meaning

The accounts describe the experience of living with the consequences of a nonevent - the broken expectation to return home. Living with the non-return was implicated with a preservation or reconstruction of the integrity of personal identity. The broken expectation to return home entailed a threat to the values and world-view the participants held as fundamental to the security of identity. It threatened their expected course of life, a range of personal commitments and the way they conceived of themselves, all of which are a part of the meaning of and the vision for living. The failure of the expectation and commitment to return home was often experienced as a failure to live up to the expectation of the community through which the participants have gained their sense of identity, and in which they were emotionally embedded.

“When I didn’t return I disappointed my family, the collective memory, myself and the community” (Aviva)

“As an Israeli and as a Jew I have failed myself by not going back” (Dorit)

This common sentiment often encompassed a sense of failure to be accepted, or a feeling of being rejected by this community, a feeling which lead to a threat or a damage to a sense of self. The non-return involved the past self, the now self, the future self, and the crumbling of a long-held, taken-for-granted image of a possible (ideal) self. It entailed questioning and doubting the
possibility of continued engagement with the world according to values and assumptions embedded in the known ‘I’. Therefore the unfulfilled expectation brought forth an existential conflict and its concomitant anxiety.

The accounts reveal that the broken expectation to return home was a nonevent of many dimensions. Yet the essential underlying theme of all these dimensions was the embeddedness of the meaning of the experience in a moral domain; in the participants’ struggle to maintain or reconstruct a self-respecting, connected, morally sensitive identity. Whether the recognition of the anxiety and pain as representing a moral conflict was explicit or implicit, the anxiety was often explicitly present on the surface of the accounts.

(1) Anchoring in moral domain

“It is forbidden to emigrate from Palestine and go abroad, unless one goes to study the Law, or to marry a wife, or to rescue property from heathens, and then return to Palestine. So too, one may leave on business. But one is forbidden to make one’s home abroad, unless there is a famine in Palestine...But though one is permitted to emigrate, if one does, the act is not in conformity with the law of saintliness. Remember Mahlon and Chilion! They were the two great men of their generation. They left Palestine at a time of great distress; nevertheless, they incurred thereby the penalty of extinction”. (from Maimonides’ writings on the Jewish laws, Twersky, 1972, p. 218)

The experience of the broken expectation brought to the fore the sense that the everyday world is a moral world:

“It’s something I had to learn to deal with, I think, in terms of right and wrong” (Ronit).

The non-occurrence of this pivotal life event conflicted with the participants’ taken-for-granted way of participating in the world, with a fundamentally felt connectedness with particular people and a community to whom they felt linked by a set of affiliations, affections, obligations, a sense of care and responsibility.

“Sometime I think, what would happen to ha’haretz if everyone did what I did, it makes you feel not too good, right?” (Gil’ad).

The unfulfilled expectation to return home was perceived by the participants to result in, or to cause anxiety, since not returning presented a threat to basic values, world-view, moral and emotional commitments and a sense of real or ideal self.

“Not going back was the opposite of everything I was raised upon. It went against my sense of who I was and what I believed was right for an Israeli to do.” (Miron)
"Not returning home, staying here, you lose self respect as an Israeli. You live as if against your values. I haven't become a Canadian citizen, I couldn't face this humiliating ceremony, it goes against some internal rule of what is right." (Dorit)

"Each one of us had a particular, individual situation for not going back. It's not a general social one, but it is actually social because it's already very difficult to separate between the I and the country; we were educated to fulfill ourselves through the homeland. This is true for the whole generation of pre-1967 with all the myth and the guilt trips... The idea of remaining here on a permanent basis, of becoming a yored was antithetical to my perception of myself." (Moshe)

The accounts reflect the wavering of the participants between acknowledging, denying, accepting and rejecting this anxiety and its implication to their sense of self. The wavering and contradictions within the accounts are seen as reflecting the participants’ moral negotiation in facing the real life obstacles of right/wrong cultural principles which were embedded in the participants’ definition of self.

"Now after 22 years I'm very happy here, I have my life here, I'm content...my involvement with the Jewish community justifies my existence out of Israel". (Aviva)

The accounts reflect the existential dilemma of the participants’ self which bears the moral responsibility for the implications of the thwarted expectation:

"I guess I’m paying a surtax of sadness. I use to pay a surtax of guilt. We were brought up to follow a particular path, to feel regret but to stick with the dream paved for us by history via our parents, to believe in the dream because we were the dream, a generation which was a nurtured wish fulfillment. And by not returning we broke the dream. Now that I think about it, maybe I’m paying a surtax of love" (Moshe)

"When I take off all the masks and the jewellry, like when you peel an onion to the core - often what’s left is the mistake and the regret and the pain... for, although unintentional, we inflicted pain on others, the family, friends, as well as on ourselves. It was a conflict of two bad alternatives - to go back and hurt my husband, or to stay here and watch from a distance my mother aging and my sister carrying all the burden" (Ronit)

The participants had moved away geographically and built a new life but they carried with them the attitudes, perceptions and values of their roots. They conceived of their commitments to the norms and principles of their roots as also commitments to others from whom or with whom the norms have been learned and by whom they were enforced. These commitments, beliefs and goals have become unconsciously or subconsciously accepted as right and correct. They have become an integral part of the participants’ enlarged sense of self (a self that includes and identifies with one’s group).
"It is difficult sometimes to tell with certainty whether the feeling of guilt is in you or external to you. I think I have internalized so much of what we were raised on that differentiating like this is no longer possible" (Yonatan).

"I was surprised how much I missed the sense of community, the language,... and you know later I got used to it, but for a number of years, because the values are so different here, I felt as if I no longer had a spinal cord, I couldn't tell any more right from wrong" (Ruth)

Despite being geographically separated, they found they could not follow the Sarterian rule and refuse the society in themselves, neither could they choose some other 'more suitable' homeland. Unable to separate, yet blamed for it by their compatriots, they occupied an emotional no-man's land of sort.

Language shapes and gives meaning to experience. Listening to the particular language used by the participants provided access into seeing a shared meaning of the experience of non-return.

(a) Moral language

A striking element in the accounts was the participants' consistent use of moral language. Key phrases such as "I don't feel guilty", "I don't have the right", "you have an obligation" "we ought to" "Is it justified?", "Justly or unjustly this is the way I am"; and words such as duty, right, wrong, care, concern, responsibility, betrayal, loyalty, sacrifice, selfish, honor, shame, justification, and failure, interlaced all the accounts. The participants use this moral language to represent, explain, assess and describe themselves in relation to the experience of non-return. The centrality of the moral connotation of the non-return was highlighted by the participants' shared initial refrain "I did not intend to stay here" which was always appended by descriptions of the emotional consequences of the non-return; by feelings of sorrow, shame, guilt and protestation of continuous loyalty, as well as by the protest "and thus I felt no guilt". This protest was almost always voiced at the outset of the interview, and reflected one example of the participants' need to account for their situation and defer an anticipated judgment.

"When we arrived...we didn't have any intentions to stay, therefore I didn't feel any guilt" (Gabi)

"My situation was better than other yordim because I had no guilt feelings, I had no choice" (Dorit)

"When I think of the conflict that I was raised and educated with the imperative that we have to live in Israel and be a part of the national enterprise, and you probably heard it from others, that when an Israeli goes abroad and stays there it is seen as, I would put it between quotation marks, as a kind of betrayal of an
Moral themes seemed inseparable from the participants' sense of identity and were implicitly or explicitly tied with parental and cultural approval and disapproval. They were essentially connected to the cultural norms by which the value judgment of self as a good citizen, a good wife, or a good son are made. In the Israeli atmosphere, notions such as right, wrong, justice, friendship, obligations and duty, as well as the personal implications of adhering to or deviating from them are clearly defined. Reflecting on this atmosphere Noa said:

"I just finished a new Israeli book. One sentence stuck in my head, it describes Israel as a country above which hangs a large warning sign stating: Beware! justice rules here! This is what it’s all about."

The participants shared the perception that their commitment and loyalty towards their society had evolved through internalization of accepted social norms, historical legends and myths, shared values, goals and assumptions about life.

"All this combined to instill in us a strong sense of personal loyalty and care, a sense of duty or obligation and responsibility" (Yigal).

Despite their emigration the participants did not withdraw emotionally from the society to which they felt a spiritual obligation. The notion of belonging to the group and the moral obligation this connectedness entails are an integral part of the Israeli society’s moral atmosphere. In this atmosphere the implicit understanding is that the absolute value of friendship and group loyalty is higher than the abstract foundations of justice (e.g., when a student cheats on an exam the code of behaviour for friends dictates not reporting. When a fellow student asks for your help during exam it’s considered your moral duty to comply). This connected orientation was described as entailing a world-view in which the good of the society takes precedence to individual self-fulfilment; the individual’s vision of self fulfilment and “the good life” was to be achieved by the ‘actualization’ and realization of the communal goals.

“For me Ben-Gurion [the first Prime Minister of Israel] was a model, a living myth, like Gandhi. His image moulded my way, my world-view. And at school, the brain washing, you know. My dream was to make it, to settle in the Negev [the Israeli desert] because it was his legacy, the legacy to realize yourself by realizing the potential of the country...and it is also the legacy of Ben-Gurion that made me feel, when I emigrated, like a traitor, like I’ve done the immoral thing, and it was very painful and hurtful to me personally because for years I had a hard time staying in contact with my old friends, I felt judged, and I
judged myself” (Rina).

The cultural imperative for goodness, the expectations of family and community, and thus the expatriates’ themselves were antithetical to not returning home. The language used by the participants illuminates this notion and highlights their questioning of concepts such as obligation, rights, duties, justice, care, loyalty and self-sacrifice.

“For a long time I felt that while I was here and enjoyed my daily life, I should be there. It was my duty to return. Now I don’t have a reason to feel guilty. I can’t even contribute. Last time I tried to volunteer during the war in 1982 they told me: what we taught you 20 years ago is of no use now, you see, I’m useless for them...funny I can’t even die for my country any more. You see it’s all over when ha’aretz doesn’t want you sacrificing your life for it”. (Miron)

“My relationship with ha’aretz are like with my mother; a love/hate relationship. The homeland in many respects is like a mother, you accept her like she is, because you can’t really change her, you don’t choose her; and this bring rise to many questions, conflicts and guilt feelings...These guilt feelings, which by the way do not exist any more, that I don’t feel any more. I used to feel guilty because this was the way I was raised and educated, that it was wrong to desert the country, that it was like leaving a battle field. I don’t feel like this any more, I have feelings of regret, pain, sadness but no more guilt.” (Rina)

The accounts reveal that a sense of obligation and loyalty was critical to the participants’ sense of moral self. Their conflict however was not depicted only by invoking objective, impartial, principles, but more often as a matter of emotions (e.g., caring, resentment, compassion) which arose in their struggle to maintain connection in separation. Yet these emotions were revealed as not merely personal and concerned with subjective self-worth. Neither were they only about the community, but seem to involve the community in the very identity of the participants. One word all the participants used to describe this relationship is ikhpat - a common Hebrew word which connotes a variety of nuances of care. It encompasses caring about, caring for, compassion, concern, having an interest, being engaged and taking something personally. It implies connectedness, loyalty and conscience. This emotion is exemplified by the following comment in which the word ikhpat was translated to ‘care’ for lack of an English equivalent.

“My loyalty and ‘care’ is a very real part of me. Look, how much do I ‘care’ about what happens in Yugoslavia? You read about it, you watch it on T.V. and you say - this is wrong, those people are wrong, it shouldn’t be like that, it’s terrible, it’s such a horrible waste of human life. But you don’t feel it, I mean you don’t personally care emphatically. In the case of Israel it’s a personal ‘care’, it’s a personal involvement. It’s a personal hurt. Their hurts, trouble, values and fate is yours”. (Yigal)

Even in their anger and attempts at detachment the participants used the language of connection. Indeed their anger was embedded in the connection and in the particular ‘care’ orientation.
“Why should I ‘care’? what for? ha’aretz (the country) has disappointed me. When I go to visit I see that things are not the way they used to be, everyone leaves, they don’t stay on the Kibbutz, they don’t ‘care’, they don’t feel obligated… but I do ‘care’ a lot, yet I’m not willing to sacrifice my life for the needs of the country only because I was born there. But I still carry a bag of worry and ‘care’ for the country on my back, it’s sometime a burden, it doesn’t go away by you going away” (Tamar)

By not returning the participants found themselves caught in an ambiguity, caught between two images of the self - at once connected and separated. They found themselves criticized for the very thing they suffered from - a betrayal of connectedness. Paradoxically perhaps they refused to reject the society within themselves, yet the society was unsure about accepting them as the loyal expatriates they conceived themselves to be. Thus the non-return became an experience which spells a transition from a values status to a devalued status. From the status of Israelis to the status of yordim.

(b) Moral pain

The term yordim - a Biblical word meaning ‘those who descend’ is often used as a common noun to designate emigrants from Israel (although there exists a proper word for emigrants in the language). Yet the derogatory connotation of this label is highlighted by the opposite of the term Olim - meaning those who ascend, which is used to designate immigrants to Israel. The derogatory connotation of the term yordim was not denied by the participants all of whom felt that the term, and its concomitant stereotypes of a traitor, deserter, and a self promoting egoist who does not care for the society, were demeaning, unwarranted and hurtful.

“Yored is a dirty word” (Dorit)

“Only in Israel there is a label like that. In no other civilized nation this term exist. There are emigrants not yordim. What is yored? Every emigrant, I suppose feels a sense of loyalty to his country, but no one else is being tagged a traitor.” (Rina)

“For a long time now I don’t feel like a yored. It is a ridiculous word. Who do they [Israelis in Israel] think they are. It’s degrading and a put down. I know I am an honest moral human being. (Ruth)

“The word yordim encompasses a feeling of being accused. Even now when there is a sort of growing-up in Israel and many recognize anyone’s right to live anywhere he or she chooses. Now instead of derision there are strong encouragement to return. The notion that emigration is wrong is still very potent.” (Yonatan)

As described before it is through their identification with their national group that the participants experienced inner security and a sense of belonging and loyalty. The closer they came to having to
construe themselves in a new, alien and stereotypical demeaning manner the more their sense of self was threatened.

“Yored is someone who left with a decision not to return, actually it is also someone who left and decided not to return, or maybe also one who left meaning to return and will not return...I guess I am actually a yored... even if it’s hard for me to accept it, I guess it’s true. The word bothers me, not that I think about it much but now that we are talking there is...I guess, it connotes a guilt feeling” (Emanuel)

“Look, I suppose all sorts of people would say that I’m a yored. According to all the criteria we are yordim no question about that. We don’t live in Israel, we’re not saying that we are returning immediately. I’m not on any official Israeli mission, so according to all these formal definitions we would be yordim, I have no doubt about that...but you can’t avoid feeling very emotional about this word. We grew up in an atmosphere where the word yored was derogatory. It still has negative connotation...both the words yored and even the proper one for emigrant, they both have negative connotations. When I’m asked if I have emigrated I always say -now I live in Canada - and that is the truth.” (Yigal)

“Anyone who dislikes something in Israel is considered in negative terms and is called yored. I’m not a yored, I never defined myself as such. I’m an immigrant here... well, if you asked me if I’m Canadian, if I had to fight for some other country, well, there is a problem for me in this”. (Avi)

When feeling relegated to an inferior devalued status, feeling rejected and humiliated, some began to doubt themselves, to comply with the stigmatized label or accept its value judgment. At times the choice and tone of the words mirror the moral voice of the indoctrinated ‘principled’ moral code of behaviour.

“It’s a matter of personal integrity. I owe the country a lot. Someone invested in me, to get up and leave is wrong, even if in my case it’s accepted. Even if a general amnesty was declared, we have no clemency” (Nira).

“I don’t have any rights concerning Israel. I don’t have the right to voice an opinion. If you want to voice an opinion, you go live there, you send your son to the army and you don’t sleep nights because your son didn’t come home or didn’t call or something. You go live there and pay the price and then I will have the rights to have an opinion. Here all I can do is that I have the right, the privilege that they accept my money and it is my duty to give; and it doesn’t give me any rights to opinions, either negative or positive, I have no right to sit on the flesh-pot and criticize” (Mika).

others reacted with anger and indignation.

“I don’t feel guilty because I don’t think it morally correct for a country to treat people like that; to take and take, and not to allow people the basic right to leave” (Tamar)

Since the non-return was often depicted as a turning upside-down of a traditional collective norm or principle of ‘right’, the principle itself often became the subject of evaluation. Many of the participants were questioning the ethics of the group to which they felt such a strong connection.

“I don’t have a problem with who I am. I am an Israeli and all these words like yordim, O.K. so I am. Look, in Israel there are many words and labels created to define those who go against the set norms,
whether the norms are right or wrong. I object to the rule that states in 1992 that all Israelis must live in Israel. Maybe it was a legitimate value for the first years of the country’s existence like the law of material conservation, but I object to having to live there if I can’t and I object to feeling guilty about it. I don’t have this problem with guilt like other *yordim* have. The label is used to make us feel guilty and to give strength to those who stay so they wouldn’t leave. It works in both directions in order to separate.”

(Ofra)

“I refuse to accept the word *yored*, and it’s not because I’m ashamed of emigrating. I wanted to go back and my non-return was to a large extent a result of circumstances in Israel which didn’t make it a viable alternative. I reject the label because it has no justification. This form of thought and speech exists in order to isolate ‘disobedient’ members of society, to give them a feeling that they have betrayed or something. This is a way for a country to break a sense of group cohesion, to create a sense of ‘us’ and ‘they’. In the long run this has more negative than positive consequence to all.” (Michael)"
Dealing with the derogatory label and stigmatized identity the participants were negotiating the emotional entanglement they found themselves in. By not returning they found themselves on uncertain grounds where their assumptions were often radically upset. The non-return did not allow them to sustain a prior nonconflicted emotional and social definition and forced them into a new moral and existential definition. The resolution of the entanglement between the poles of connectedness and separation, between their needs as individuals and the needs of their communal affiliation, involved a difficult task of recognizing the elements of their communal national identity not as external imposed constraints but rather as elements within themselves, and thus to view the ‘I’ as primary yet not separated from others. To be able to construct this view and maintain the ties with their comminity they had to find a balance between the claim that by virtue of their citizenship, their historical and familial affiliation, they had a responsibility and an obligation to live in and for the country, and the claim of individuals needs and rights to live for themselves. The accounts suggest that the attempt at balance involved a need to account for the circumstances of the non-return. Though they did not set themselves in opposition to the social conventions purposely, they found themselves facing a multiple moral audience.

(e) Facing the audience

As each participant struggled with their own dilemmas and paradoxes they continuously had to deal with the larger issue of their commitment.

"I had a promise to keep, to myself, to my family, to my friends..." (Moshe)

"It starts from Israel, it has to do with current and historical circumstances and constraints, but it is also within us, we feel that way, we carry the guilt, or the ramification of not returning inside us." (Michael)

"In Israel, you find that you need to explain yourself all the time. Everything in Israel has to do with honour, personal, familial and national honour." (Avi)

The participants were aware that their non-return did not figure in a social and historical vacuum. In the Israeli paradigm the non-return is considered morally wrong and thus the burden was on them to prove or explain their moral correctness. As an interviewer I represented one such audience, yet they were continuously surrounded by a multiple audience to which they, consciously or unconsciously, felt they had to or wished to explain the situation.

"In the war in '73 my best friend was killed. His brother was also killed...I feel this is also my family and I feel relegated outside of their world. I feel that I'm separating, getting detached and its a painful separation."
They have closed into themselves, but it’s difficult for me too. I often feel that I owe them an explanation, though they don’t and never had asked for it.” (Emanuel)

Many experienced pain, hurt or disappointment as they felt the community they had once belonged to in a primal solidarity turned its back on them and suspected them of rejecting its fundamental values, interpreting their non-return as self-indulgence. As illustrated before, many explained how and why their non-return did not present contempt or rejection of the shared values of the community or was selfishly motivated. Some became very sensitive to comments from others; comments which were interpreted as judgment.

“When I didn’t return it was very difficult to maintain connection with my old friends because I knew I was being judged. Didn’t you feel that people pointed an accusatory finger at you? and they didn’t hide it, it was very vocal and explicit judgment. And it also was an inner judgment, because I was raised like that to believe it was wrong to leave, so there were feelings of guilt and shame from within...and my mother kept saying ‘how can you do this? I’ve left everything behind to come here [Israel] to give you a security and a sense of belonging, how can you?’ she used to say specifically- how can you betray all that’” (Rina)

“In the war some of my friends were killed and there are a few who accuse ‘my son was killed and you’re alive and well in Canada’. There is a feeling some people give you that you’re not o.k.” (Avi)

“When I didn’t return I disappointed my family and friends. I didn’t have to have a feeling in this respect, many were very explicit about their disappointment, that they hoped we would return. People used to ask every time we visited - so, are you ready to return already? These inquiries repeated year after year one way or another, in more or less explicit manners.” (Yigal).

At times the sense of being judged did not entail an explicit judgment as much as a perception thereof, yet this did not detract from its immediacy or pain.

“I used to feel very uncomfortable around local Jews who defined themselves as Zionists. I used to think what do they think of me as an Israeli who left. I don’t know if they actually felt or thought this way but I felt ill at ease. Now I no longer have this problem but initially it was very difficult. Partly it was my own guilt feeling for being here and partly it was a certain contempt I had for what I viewed as their hypocritical kind of Zionism. Now I have more tolerance for it. I think they do ‘care’, but in those days I thought it was absurd that people would talk about Zionism and sit here. Now I no longer feel guilty and they also don’t seem so ridiculous. I’m older and more tolerant of human weaknesses, I don’t really expect people to always act on their words.” (Ruth)

The participants’ moral pain was at times enhanced by feeling unjustly criticized and by the failure of others to respond to their call for connection. Separation which is often valued for one’s sense of independence and autonomy became for the participants a mark of moral ambiguity since it connoted loss of ‘care’ and connectedness.

“I was feeling more and more isolated, I did not want to visit my friends even though I missed them because I knew they’d judge me” (Miron)

“I began to feel more and more separated and isolated, but actually I isolated myself. I felt very lonely. That
nobody understands me or ‘cares’. There was this annoying feeling that Israelis always assume that we are so well-off and happy here, that we don’t ‘care’. Then another expatriate, an old childhood friend said “I’m definitely never returning”, it made me very anxious. Am I like him? do I feel that way? is my stay here justified?, no, it hurt me, that he stated this with such conviction... tell me, do you feel your life in an eretz nechar [a biblical term for a foreign land] is justified?” (Gabi)

The participants often found themselves in a gap between opposite poles. One pole represented connectedness with its implied ‘care’, love, hurt, obligation and mattering, and the other pole represented isolation, alienation and marginality. Some reacted by attempting detachment.

“I didn’t want my children to suffer from this duality, so I did everything I could not to raise them as Israelis. For years I didn’t allow talking about Israel...well it kind of back-fired” (Nira).

“Israel needs people, but many cannot return and those who can’t or decide not to because this is what is good for them, then it’s legitimate. You only live once... you don’t live your life for the country, you live for yourself. And I don’t think the country had invested and gave you so much and now you have left, no, I don’t see it this way, really. I’m free from all this stuff, it doesn’t bother me at night. No, I’m not worried that everyone would leave, most wouldn’t leave for all the millions in the world. No need to worry, there will not be a mass defection. People are happy there despite their complaints. I’m not worried, on the contrary maybe if some leave we could return. We are already quite detached because it takes an effort not to, But you can’t really run away from Israel.” (Ofra)

“I don’t have a political opinion. I don’t associate with Israelis much, I live here, that is it. You don’t cry over spilled milk. You don’t have the right to criticize from here, maybe just to have an opinion, but they don’t really care what we say here. It’s o.k. to express an opinion among Israelis, but only among Israelis, with others it’s not justified. look, my parents still live there, you don’t cut off the branch you’re sitting on.” (Avi).

“We no longer have very many friends in Israel, many have died or have left. You become separated with the years. There is no point. Beside I have my life over here. But I try my best, I’m a very good fund raiser so when I’m asked I do my best and I contribute as much as I can, it’s all I can do” (Mika)

Opting for detachment some attempted to stay away from voicing an opinion regarding Israel (which is antithetical to the political nature typical of Israelis), or from becoming overtly involved with Israelis, or Israeli activities. Yet the accounts show that emotional distance was not a preferred or an enduring mode of resolution. Overall the participants still comprehend themselves as people of a certain place, of certain living roots. Even as each reconstructed his or her own first person world-view, it was not unfamiliar, and reflected a personal versions of their community’s values, a community to which they had in some respect said ‘no’, yet which nonetheless remained the object of their concern.

As they were facing the ‘courts’ of the society, history and of particular people, each participant’s most difficult audience was a personal and a private one; the person’s own reflective
conscience. Indeed the experience of non-return was marked by self examinations. The participants asked themselves hard questions and often worried about the moral risks entailed in the non-return. These self examinations were closely linked to a sense of connection to the family and collective history.

"To be at such a distance from the family is difficult, you know that you’re hurting them, although this was not the intention. My parents came to ha'aretz, they weren’t brought there. They created this country for me, built a place for me to belong to, and I left. Their life-dream is constantly being broken in many respects, and the fact that I left has a significant part in this" (Michael)

“When I didn’t return I disappointed my pioneer ancestors and an entire collective agenda. Because I’m married to a Canadian, my being here is granted a legitimacy by both Israelis and the Jewish community. But this legitimacy hasn’t solved my problem.” (Nira).

“Not returning is more than a personal problem yet it’s very personal. Returning is a symbol of the two thousand years of Jewish history in the Diaspora and the short, vulnerable 44 years of the state. It’s a kind of justification for all the history and our responsibilities regarding it”. (Rina)

The participants placed themselves very close to their audience, and their explanations, or justifications, were bound by the community shared outlook, aspirations and ideals. They explain themselves or criticize the society knowing that the moral / emotional references are shared. The accounts do not show undifferentiated antagonism or disregard for the others. Even when they put themselves in opposition to the other they were not in absolute separation. Their exile seemed a physical, not a moral, condition. The non-return placed them outside geographically but not outside emotionally. They continued to identify with their homeland, to defend its interest (though not necessarily its governments’ policies) and to uphold its values.

The participants of this study did not wish to give up their connection to their society and conceived of emotional separation as more a negative outcome than a sign of health and growth. Yet constructing new modes of relatedness and connection had to proceed out of self-doubt since the new modes were not found in either their original or their host cultures. Oscillating between connection and separation was integral to the movement towards resolution. In the final ‘phase’ of their nonevent transition many created their own vision of this new relationship. For a large number of the participants the resolution entailed remaining spiritual participants despite being separated geographically, and working from a difficult distance to balance connectedness and separation. In their defiance of disconnection and their faithfulness to a spiritual bond they seem to outlast despair and to find a personal sense of moral and spiritual peace.
Chapter 5 - Discussion

This study has sought to explore the nonevent experience among Israeli expatriates. To that end a phenomenological case study mode of inquiry was utilized. I personally interviewed a group of Israeli expatriates to gain understanding of their experience of the broken expectation to return to Israel. The obtained data was synthesized with additional sources of information including informal group conversations, letters received, questionnaire data from a pilot study and literary sources provided by the participants, as described in Chapter 3. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. Although the participants' experience varied in many aspects, a common pattern can be discerned through which the essential meaning of the experience is revealed. That is the focus of this chapter. Other areas of focus include the therapeutic, theoretical and research implications, as well as the limitations of the study.

The pattern of nonevent transition

According to Laing (1969, p.93) "one's self-identity is the story one tells one's self of who one is". Each story told by the participants reflects a life story characterized by a finely strung chain of 'the way things were' and 'the way things turned out' which is divided by a painful word 'then'. This word represents a nonevent, the thwarting of an expectation pivotal to the person's sense of identity, which leads a whole set of self/world meaning of self to crumble.

The common pattern of the nonevent experience involves a spiral movement from a before (the expectation or yearning to return home) through a transition (living with the absence of the expected event) and culminating in an elaborated resolution. The resolution phase is open-ended and consists of a movement toward a delicate balance of opposites (replacing the either/or dichotomy more typical of the before and transition phases of the resolution spiral). The movement from before to resolution often seems like 'one step forward two steps backwards', since it proceeds in spirals; passing again and again by the same points, cycling the conflict at different level of complexity (cf. Sartre, 1968). The person negotiates and makes accommodations only to be faced with an external or internal reminder of the existential conflict which entails reimmersion in another version of the entanglement.
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The accounts of the participants reflect a life of people diverted from the taken-for-granted path of existence by the nonoccurrence of an expected pivotal life event. While their emigration was an elected act, the expected outcome of this act was to return home. Not returning home was experienced as a thwarted expectation, a possibility not actualized, or a dream not realized (cf. Schlossberg, 1984). It was identified by the participants as the central and most difficult aspect of their emigration experience, since it changed the expected sequence of their life and was often perceived as a threat to their values, commitments and assumptions about self and world. Since these were held by the participants to be essential to existence and to their sense of identity, the unfulfilled expectation often led to feelings of anxiety; to a subjective state of becoming aware that one can lose oneself in the world, that one can be ‘nothing’ (cf. May, 1982; Merleau Ponty, 1962; Sartre, 1956).

The existential entanglement of nonevent emerges in the realm of relatedness. The nonevent experience is implicated with the notion of personal independence and autonomy; to what extent a person is free of the community in which she or he were raised; to what extent the person is connected to some or all of the traditional-cultural ways by which one defines oneself in the world (e.g. a set of values, virtues, primary loyalty, family, education, good name, national, political integrity). The nonevent separates the person from his or her sense of self as a member of a community and thus from a personal moral commitment and responsibility for and to the community which is part of the self. A mode of ‘Being only for myself’ seems to lead the person to a condition of alienation, yet, being connected is hampered by the interpretation of the non-return as a rejection of the basic value orientation of the community. The spiritual movement of nonevent involves consciousness and conscience, both of which derive from the same root meaning - ‘knowledge with’ (Welwood, 1979). Being the root of nonevent (and existence), they are not separable.

The nonevent transition is about entanglements: Entanglements between desire and frustration, between mastery and loss, between reason and emotions, between possibilities and limitations, between what is and what ought to have been. The movement toward resolution often entails immersion in the entanglement, it necessitates dialectics and wrestling with the opposites. It may take many years of enduring, living with uncertainty and ambiguity; yet paradoxically perhaps
accepting uncertainty produces the cutting of the entanglement (cf. Cochran, 1991). Efforts to
hurry solutions, to avoid the entanglements or to choose either/or solutions often create more
entanglements. The pole not chosen is repressed, denied or ignored, there is no inner dialectics,
movement is hindered. This in turn leads to a feeling of entrapment or despair. Movement in the
spiral does not always guarantee growth or positive outcome. The resolution may be for better or
for worse (cf. Parkes, 1971; Schlossberg, 1984), since what is perceived as a positive resolution
by one person may be perceived as a one-way ticket to limbo by another.

The nonevent experience of Israeli expatriates begins with the expectation to return
home. The yearning and hope to repatriate is rooted in an emotional connectedness and in cultural,
ideological and moral commitments. It is implicated with self perception, self presentation, a sense
of historical connection, a history of persecution, a moral obligation, loyalty to a birth country,
loyalty to parents and a group of friends. It is implicated with layers of myth and ideology. Since
all the participants expected, indeed counted on the event of returning home, they held on to a self
presentation as temporarily uprooted, and prepared for the return home in various instrumental and
emotional ways. Many lived for years as if in a “waiting room” with “suitcases ready to move”,
feeling that life is elsewhere. The expectation to return was experienced at various degrees of
preoccupation. Some lived a ‘life on hold’ - unable to bring about the return, yet unable to give up
on it either, while for others it felt like a ‘sleeper transition’ - at some point realizing that the
temporary situation has become permanent subtly over time (cf. Schlossberg, 1989). The accounts
reveal that the nonevent can go unrecognized and denied for a long time since there is no
acceptable, tangible event to mark its finality, and no tangible loss or endpoint. However, the
illusory nature of the temporary sojourn is eventually challenged by time. At some point the
participants started to realize the threat of time as a possible obstacle to fulfilment of their yearning.
While some identified this marker in actual number of years, for others it related to completion of
their original academic or professional goals, or the realization was associated with the birth of
children or with children entering school, the death of a parent in Israel, or the realization that
parents there were getting old. There were attempts to reverse the nonevent: Some made an attempt
to return home, some continued to plan and prepare for their return, clinging to the expectation
even when the finality of its nonoccurrence was becoming clear. However, whether the attempt to
return was a physical or an emotional one, in all cases there was no way back. Some attempted to minimize or deny the nonevent as a way to cope with the needed change. For some, life in the shadow of the nonevent felt like living in the real presence of a painful central absence in their lives. For many a powerful facet of despair was sensed as being on a never-stopping emotional roller-coaster. Eventually, however, the reality that this event not only had not happened but also was unlikely to happen slowly settled.

The anxiety-laden transition begins with the sometime vague realization that the ‘temporary uprootedness’ has become permanent. The dream of returning home has not and will not be fulfilled. There is a gap between where one is and where one has expected to be, and between what is and what aught to have been. These gaps are implicated as sources of anxiety. Yet accepting the finality of the nonevent is also anxiety producing since it conflicts with one’s vision of who one is. Thus the existential question of the person is often not ‘to be or not to be’ but rather how to be while not quite being.

The broken expectation to return home entailed a threat to the values and world-view the participants held as fundamental to the security of identity. It threatened their expected course of life, a range of personal commitments and the way they conceived of themselves, all of which are a part of the meaning of and the vision for living. The failure of the expectation and commitment to return home was often experienced as a failure to live up to the expectation of the community through which the participants have gained their sense of identity, and in which they were emotionally embedded.

The initial confrontation with the broken expectation to return home evokes pain, anxiety, a sense of loss, and a feeling of personal fragmentation. It often involves feeling vulnerable, insecure or incomplete as the person negotiates the path between the yearning to reverse the nonevent and the knowledge that it is not changeable. Many participants described this experience as a concrete presence, using metaphors such as a pain, an internal wound, a severed limb, a scar. Unable to make the return a reality, or to give up on this dream, some continued to feel poised in a ‘life on hold’. Caught in an existential conflict, in limbo between two worlds and the incongruent sense of self they imply. There is a strong sense of suspended identity, a feeling that the self was homeless. In elaborating these feelings the participants always associated the metaphor of self loss
with what can be termed an enlarged sense of self, a self that includes and identifies with the society. The attachment the participants felt toward their homeland was not merely functional, but rather it was implicated in the foundation of the participants’ identity. While the country judged her expatriates negatively it did not consider the participants permanently lost to it and never ceased to remind them of their possible ‘redemption’ via their return to the communal bosom. In not returning an existential change took place; previously taken for granted self-images and meaning of the person’s self/other identity became severed from their familiar mooring. The sense of belonging to a place, family, friends, nation and a set of values became ambiguous. This mutually agreed upon meaning of connectedness and belonging wass fractured, and the expatriate’s emotional/moral position within this relationship was called into question.

Regarding the nation as part of themselves, the loss of that part of self was felt as most difficult. For most the break with the mother country was rarely a complete break. Despite being geographically separated, their lives and politics were shaped out of their primary loyalties which they were incapable of severing. They seem to embody Orwell’s notion of patriotism: “Above all it is your civilization, it is you. However much you hate it or laugh at it, you will never be happy away from it for any length of time” (Orwell, 1968, p.57). Indeed the dominant theme in the transition constitutes a struggle to maintain the ties to the community.

At some point there is a powerful need to alter the expectations and fantasies surrounding this event that has not occurred. Yet, accepting the finality of the situation may be avoided because it may mean confronting one’s own mortality. Indeed, while not always confronted consciously, the theme of mortality laces the accounts. It was not unusual for the participants to be in transition for many years as they continually reevaluated, reconsidered, attempted and hoped for the fabled return to occur. A number of participants described a chronic state of grief or depression, living in apathy or in a ‘frozen state’. Other became obsessed with their work or career, others with accumulating material goods, as if they were trying to fill some great emptiness. Some reacted by a deliberate thought stopping, a strategy which was often only partially or temporarily effective. Some felt that since there was no ‘solution’, a sort of rational resolution was called for. Yet it seems that relying only on rationality often ended in rationalization which then leads to self-deception and deepens the pain.
Most reported a strong need for normalcy and a need to confront the "fine line between dream and illusion". This is indeed a very fine line. In exploring the accounts it was often difficult to interpret with utmost certainty whether what is expressed is a form of denial or a form of acceptance of conflicts and paradoxes as a part of life's existential nature. Some acknowledged that they had essentially decided not to make a final decision and seemed to have a strong tolerance for ambiguity, and to be determined to accept and live with questions which have no ready-made answers. Yet, to decide not to decide, holding on to the self presentation of temporarily or indefinitely uprooted, may also be seen as avoidance or denial of the finality inherent in the situation.

The notion of 'hope' which permeates the accounts sheds a different light on the fine line between dream and illusion. For a large majority of the participants a certain hope of returning remained even when the reality of non-return had been acknowledged. It seems that hope may not necessarily reflect another facet of denial of the nonevent but rather another type of reaction to the threat aiming to negotiate or mediate it. The accounts reveal that when one has lost hope depression ensues. Holding on to, or developing, a hope may be facilitative to working through conflict and despair, and to ward off depression. It should be noted that hope includes exposure to the threat and pain through the struggle to deal with them. Contrary to crude optimism which is not based on realistic assessment of hurdles and tends to minimize them, the sense of hope often seems to be embedded in reality, yet it does not require immediate, concrete satisfaction or tangible fulfilment. It seemed more like a way of being than a way of acting (cf. Breznitz, 1982, 1986; Menninger, 1959).

By not returning the participants found themselves caught in an ambiguity, caught between two images of the self - at once connected and separated. They found themselves criticized for the very thing they suffered from - a betrayal of connectedness. Paradoxically perhaps they refused to reject the society within themselves, yet the society was unsure about accepting them as the loyal expatriates they conceived themselves to be. Thus the non-return became an experience which spelled a transition from a valued status to a devalued status, from the status of Israelis to the status of yordim. The derogatory connotation of this label was not denied by the participants, all of whom felt that the term, and its concomitant stereotypes of a traitor, deserter, and a self promoting
egoist who does not care for the society, were demeaning, unwarranted and hurtful. The closer
they came to having to construe themselves in a new, alien and stereotypical demeaning manner,
the more their sense of self was threatened (cf. Shokeid, 1988). Some began to doubt themselves,
to comply with the stigmatized label or to accept the value judgment. At times the choice and tone
of the words mirrored the moral voice of the indoctrinated ‘principled’ moral code of behaviour.
Others reacted with anger and indignation.

Grappling with the stigmatized designation and attempting to resolve the feeling of hurt,
most of the participants did not respond by taking an impartial standpoint toward official rules and
norms. More often they did not detach themselves from the connection to specific people and the
community and attempted to see the perspectives of all those whose interests and values were at
stake.

Emotional pain, sadness, guilt feeling, ambiguity, conflict and acceptance are experienced
on several levels, and at times simultaneously, during the attempt to come to terms with the reality
of the “never”. The non return often gave rise to ambiguity regarding collective values, and the
sense of moral obligation and connectedness. This was reflected in a shared need on the part of the
participants to account for or justify their non-return. The justification involved disappointment,
anger, blame, bitterness, feeling cheated, feeling humiliated or rejected. Sometimes it was directed
at the spouse who was considered at fault, at other times at Israel, Israeli institutions, quality of life
(or lack thereof) in Israel, the economy, lack of basic civility, or the aggregate Israeli. In a few
cases this need for self-justification led to stereotyping of others who were thus relegated the ‘just’
stigma yordim (cf. Shokeid, 1988). At times these feelings turned inward and created an
intrapersonal crisis.

The past, when one belonged, becomes a painful reminder of its absence in the present.
Since the non-return was perceived as an end which was bound to the future, the participants
found themselves with a sense of an amputated past and an uncertain future. Some resigned
themselves to self deception, some attempted to manage by dissociating themselves from the
dilemma, and still others immersed themselves in the entanglement. All, however, had to face
constant reminders of the reality of not returning. One such reminder was the excessive, and in the
eyes of the participants often uninformed and overtly negative, media attention given to Israeli. No
matter what their political affiliation was, most found facing the often antagonistic and at times hostile criticism of Israel and the tendency of local Jews to express either uncritical approval and adulation or uninformed criticism, difficult to deal with. Their own sense of ambiguity regarding their right to voice an opinion or to criticize exacerbated the conflict. Frequent visits to Israel were another painful reminder. The children growing up with different values, aging parents and the continuous difficult circumstances in the homeland were also a common reminder of unfulfilled hopes and wishes. Some became 'superconnected', developing an idealized picture of the homeland. The seemingly opposite tendency, that is, to colour everything in Israel in negative tone, was evident in other accounts. Idealization and anger towards the country seemed to serve the same function: the participants' need to both maintain the connection and to separate. Both idealization and anger put the country in a place separated from the person (by either making it illusory and inaccessible or destroying it) and at the same time by occupying the person, the connection is preserved.

The psychological make-up of the participants reflected their membership in a dominant group. They felt liberated from the minority mentality which typified their parents' generation as well as most Diaspora Jews. Thus being an Israeli as a part of a minority presented another ambiguous state of being. Many described the relationship between Israelis and Jews as a that of mutual exclusion between two groups who perceive each other as different in regard to values, mentality and culture (cf. Fish, 1984; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Meyer, 1990; Shokeid, 1988). Unable to adopt into the local 'natural' ethnic group identity and unable or unwilling to organize themselves into a viable group added to a painful sense of exile and not belonging.

For the participants, the non-return which resulted in a self-imposed exile did not necessarily entail an ability to forge a new identity, to become detached from their connectedness, or to choose some other, more suitable, homeland. They were unable to refuse the society within themselves. They continued to define themselves in terms of their attachments, affections and social identities. The participants' spiritual connection was revealed by their courage to look within and to trust a deep sense of belonging while facing the consequences of their non-return and its implications to their sense of self.

The participants' spiritual connectedness was essential to the struggle to maintain the
broken ties with the homeland since it seemed to nurture the present without dragging it back. It gave them strength and allowed for self-healing. It encompassed awareness of relatedness with the past, with ancestors, family, the country and the culture. Yet it also brought into awareness the multi-layered paradox of their connected and separated self.

Even though their world-view, goals, expectations and choice of words to describe their experience were individualized, they tended to be also distinctly social, since they were derived from the themes, myths and world-view of their particular society and historical context. Coming from a society which had been committed from its inception to a collective self-determination, the connected metaphors took a central stage in the accounts. The accounts reflect a perception of a connected sense of self rather than the sense of the autonomous, bounded individualistic self more typical to their host society. Yet this sense of connectedness was never without conflict. Indeed a powerful theme in the participants' shared experience was that of the tension between the need for connectedness and the need to separate which often appeared as a conflict between collectivity and individuality. While the participants' central struggle seemed to be related not so much to separation but rather to the desire to maintain or renew the ties with their community, inner dialectics often brought to awareness that the forms of connectedness they were nostalgic for had not always seemed so desirable. Connectedness at best was associated with harmony, yet it also had connotations of a sense of over-involvement, sometime denial of individual differences and various forms of enforced conformism, i.e., oppressive connectedness. While yearning for the togetherness typical of their homeland, many revealed a fear of being smothered by it.

Leaving the country may be seen as a flight from the strain of connectedness. Yet the accounts reveal that most participants were unable and unwilling to make the final break, to give up their connectedness to their identity group. Physically separated, many found themselves oscillating emotionally between the poles of connectedness and separatedness.

The language used by the participants highlights their questioning of concepts such as obligation, rights, duties, justice, care, loyalty and self-sacrifice. The accounts reveal that a sense of obligation and loyalty was critical to the participants' sense of moral self. Their conflict however was not depicted only by invoking objective, impartial, principles of rights, but more often as a matter of emotions (e.g., caring, resentment, compassion) which arose in their struggle to maintain
connection in separation. Yet these emotions were revealed as not merely personal and concerned with subjective self-worth. Neither were they only about the community, but seem to involve the community in the very identity of the participants (cf. Solomon, 1991).

The essential underlying theme of the transition is the struggle to maintain or reconstruct a self-respecting, connected, morally sensitive identity. The wavering and self-contradictions within the accounts reflect the participants’ moral negotiation in facing the real life obstacles of right/wrong cultural principles which were embedded in the participants’ definition of self.

The resolution of the entanglement between the poles of what is and what ought to have been involves a difficult task of balancing the opposite poles. To be able to reach such a view the participants had to find a balance between the claim that by virtue of their citizenship, their historical and familial affiliation they had a responsibility and an obligation to live in and for the country and the claim of individuals’ needs and rights to live for themselves (cf. Walzer, 1970, 1988). The accounts suggest that the attempt at balance involves a need to account for the circumstances of the non-return. Though they did not set themselves in opposition to the social conventions purposely, they found themselves facing a multiple moral audience.

The participants were aware that their non-return did not figure in a social and historical vacuum. In the Israeli paradigm the non-return is considered morally wrong and thus the burden was on them to prove or explain their moral correctness. As they were facing the ‘courts’ of the society, history and of particular people each participant’s most difficult audience was a personal and a private one; the person’s own reflective conscience. Indeed the experience of non-return was marked by self examinations.

The participants of this study did not wish to give up their connection to their society and conceived of emotional separation as more a negative outcome than a sign of health and growth. Yet constructing new modes of relatedness and connection had to proceed out of self-doubt since the new modes were not found in either their original or their host cultures. In the final ‘phase’ of their nonevent transition they must create their own vision of this new relationship. While individual modes of resolution were evident, the overwhelming feeling of the participants was that not returning home, even though it was something that did not happen, had changed their emotional/social world and called into question their image of themselves. While some remained in
a state of chronic grief, most of the participants had, in time, found a way to “live with” the thwarted expectation.

Movement toward balance of both/and seems to be the essence of resolution. Oscillating between spiritual connectedness and physical separation seems like an existential state of being. What was shared among the participants was the sense that their experience of nonevent meant a “never ending story”. For some there is a heeling of the wound, although many acknowledge that like an old wound it reopens every once in a while. They have learned to live with the losses, although they do not seem to bury the past or to completely let go of hope to repatriate. For many there is a realignment of priorities, they enjoy a sense of fulfilment and accomplishments in their lives. For many there is a lingering hope to repatriate some day, though now it combines with a settled resignation that this most likely will not happen and that if it does it would entail a novel experience. Neither the loss nor the hope have totally disappeared, they are more often like a ‘sleeper’ presence. They come and go, sometime forgotten, and sometime hurling the person back into transition.

Implications to theory and research

The transition from one culture to another is often conceptualized as an end to one way of being and a beginning of another. The present study shows that Israeli emigrants perceive the event of arrival in a host country as neither an end nor a beginning, but as an interval, since the intended goal is to return home. Thus, for a long time, life in the host country is marked by a permanent impermanence. The findings of this study confirm the observations of other researchers (Fish, 1984; Peleg, 1990; Shokeid, 1988) that despite being voluntarily uprooted, Israeli expatriates tend to hold on to an expectation or a commitment to return home and to invest considerable energy, hopes and dreams into this event that for most does not happen. The present study conceptualizes the broken commitment to return as a nonevent: the failure of an expected event or change to occur (Beeson & Lowenthal, 1975). Since there is at present no theoretical model to describe the experience of nonevent, the observations from this study are theoretically relevant to a future theory of nonevent transition. The description of nonevent by the participants who have lived through the experience provides a means by which to assess various proposals and suggestions
which have appeared in the literature regarding nonevent. The observations from this study are highly relevant to the literature on Israeli expatriates. The results are also relevant to an assessment of the validity of models of migration transitions which purport to describe the experience of all migrants.

The notion of nonevent has appeared only recently in the literature. Schlossberg (1984, 1989) has proposed a general formulation of nonevent transition. Her formulation incorporates suggestions by various researchers who have recognized the phenomenon and noted its neglect as a research phenomenon (Beeson & Lowenthal, 1975; George & Siegler, 1981; Neugarten, 1976), and is in line with her formulation of transitions in general. She defines a nonevent as a transition which a person had counted on but which did not occur. The nonoccurrence of the expected is said to alter the person's assumptions, self definition and relationships. The current study provides support for aspects of Schlossberg's formulation of nonevent. It expands on this theoretical formulation by concrete descriptions which both concur with and challenge the general formulation. Schlossberg views nonevent (like other transitions) as a three-phase process of 'assimilation' involving the person's response to the thwarting of an expectation. The current study supports this view of the nonevent as a process rather than a marker for a transition. Indeed it shows that a variety of markers, or triggers, both external and internal, are affiliated with the experience. The findings provide support for Parkes' (1971) suggestion (which is incorporated in Schlossberg's framework) that the transition is implicated first of all with the person's assumptive world. He suggests that a transition is initiated when a person loses something (a role, a status, a relationship) that was salient to the person's life space and pivotal to the sustaining of his or her assumptive world. Support is also provided for the nonevent implication to the definition of self.

This study supports Schlossberg's observation that a nonevent is different from an expected normative event, from an unanticipated event, as well as from a chronic hassle. Being an absence of an event, a nonevent is often not acknowledged, not celebrated and not ritualized. As such, nonevents are potentially more difficult to endure, or may be perceived as more stressful than the occurrence of normative, expected, and recognized events. The accounts reveal, however, that unlike suggestions in the model the nonevent was not hidden from the view of those whom the participants are most concerned with. This study illustrates that expectations are more than
individualized yearning: they are also social in that they derive from the themes, myths and symbols made salient by one’s particular culture and historical context, and are grounded in conscious or unconscious images of self in relation to others. The unfulfilled expectation causes or results in anxiety, because it presents a threat to the values one holds to be essential to existence and security of identity. These values which are fundamental to a coherent sense of self are culturally, socially, interpersonally and historically embedded. All these contexts and the particular people they involve affect and are affected to various degrees by the nonevent. The findings suggest that we must acknowledge these ‘audiences’ when we study a nonevent.

According to Schlossberg the process begins with the person feeling pervaded and preoccupied with the change following the nonoccurrence of the expected event. For the participants in this study the experience seems to begin with the preoccupation with the expected event, with preparation for its fulfilment, rather than after the nonoccurrence. The context of the expectation and its essential meaning as pivotal to the sense of self was most obvious at this time. The preoccupation with the change was most prominent during the middle phase. Schlossberg’s outline of the middle phase as a time of feeling between and betwixt was corroborated by the description of the participants. This description was also similar to descriptions of a liminality phase of transitions where the person is in the threshold, between two worlds (Bridges, 1980; Van Gennep, 1908/1960). However, the description of liminality as a crisis period of short duration was not borne by the participants’ accounts where liminality seems to be the longest period of the nonevent experience. While the world of each participant was changing it was not necessarily in chaos or crisis, it was more often felt as a long entanglement where a mix of positive and negative feelings was experienced.

According to Schlossberg, the main task of the third and final phase of any transition is to integrate the changes into one’s life. Here she is in agreement with a number of transitional models (Bridges, 1980; Hopson & Adams, 1976; Parkes, 1971). It is through the struggle between the person’s past identity and assumptions and the present conflicts brought forth by the loss, that a new meaning of life can be formulated. These studies posit that assimilation (what the present study refers to as resolution) depends on how successfully the person is able to accept the break with the past, prepare for the future, and let go of the hope for the recovery of the loss. Yet, this is
precisely what is so difficult for the participants, who oscillate between the temptation to abandon the burden of connectedness to the homeland on the one hand, and their need for the emotional strength provided by the sense of belonging on the other hand. That sense of belonging is essential to their enlarged sense of self, the self that includes and identifies with others.

The current study is in agreement with Hopson & Adams (1976), Parkes (1971) and Schlossberg (1984, 1989) that the outcome of the experience may be for better or for worse, and that resolution does not necessarily spell growth. The accounts do not reveal, though, a stable life structure as an outcome. The participants did not forge a new identity, neither did they have a sense of ending. They did not wish to give up their connection to their society, and they conceived of emotional separation as more a negative outcome than a sign of health and growth. With no models available, constructing new modes of connection had to proceed out of self doubt. The movement toward a resolution is a movement toward a balance, toward both/and rather than toward either/or. A shared sentiment among the participants was that the journey through the experience of nonevent was a 'never ending story'. While they had learned to live with the losses, they never buried the past or completely let go of a hope to repatriate.

Generally speaking, hope often seems to be understood as reflecting another facet of denial. Throughout history hope was often seen in negative terms. Euripides described hope as an evil illusion, 'the food of exiles'. This deterministic approach continued by later days fatalists such as Nietzsche, who depicted hope as the mother of all evils, since it prolongs the person's suffering. Judaism, however, emphasizes hope and regards it in high esteem. The participants' sense of hope is embedded in realistic appraisal of possibilities and limitations. It does not however require immediate or concrete fulfilment. It is more a way of being than a way of acting.

While Schlossberg emphasizes that type, context and impact of transition will influence the person's response to it, her model, in line with most models of coping mechanism and stress adaptation, remains a-historical and the attention to context is mostly situational. It generally conceives of transition as a period to be coped with and then transcended. The focus is on the individual as an isolated unit of analysis and thus the description of transition often seems to pay minimal attention to background context. The findings suggest that life fundamentally means life with others. The life of the individual is meaningful by virtue of participation in a larger whole.
The person is always in relation with others, in context of a group, family, society. When the expected does not happen the person inevitably thinks not only about oneself but also about others and about what others think about him or her (cf. Laing, 1972). Generally speaking, in a-historical approaches a high value is placed on separation, individualism and autonomy, and on letting go of losses and detachment from ‘dysfunctional’ attachments. The findings suggest that a relational theory may be more fruitful to the understanding of the nonevent experience. Contrary to classical psychological theories which are embedded in the notion that the person is intrinsically and fundamentally separate, relational theory assumes that “there is no ‘self’ in a psychological meaningful sense, in isolation, outside the matrix of relations with others” (Mitchel, 1988, p.33). While the participants may present a unique group for whom the communal self is particularly strong, it is likely that most people find little meaning in isolated life where one is the only referent of meaning and values.

The participants in this study present their major entanglement as a moral dilemma. Even after decades of living in a ‘foster homeland’ they do not stop caring for their birth country, to which they feel a strong loyalty, moral commitment and spiritual connectedness. The participants’ spiritual connectedness was essential to their struggle to maintain the ties with the homeland and to maintain or reconstruct a self-respecting, morally sensitive, connected identity in exile.

The findings suggest that nonevent is complicated by the fact that significant life shaping expectations and thus their nonoccurrence are embedded in a moral domain. The nonevent conflicts with values and assumptions which are held to be essential to identity, the coherent sense of self. Since identity depends upon a set of values and the feeling that our values and actions are harmoniously related, moral identity (i.e. the sense of wholeness, of knowing what is right and what is wrong, of one’s place in the world, particularly in the social world) is implicated with the nonevent. The moral identity of the participants consists of feelings: care, compassion, indignation, gratitude, obligation, guilt, resentment, loyalty, honour and shame. These feelings have at times been left out of transitional models, yet the accounts of the participants in this study suggest that they are integral to the experience of nonevent since they are wholly integrated with the person’s vision of the good life (cf. Solomon, 1991). The failure of the expectation to occur is not only a personal issue, it is also a failure to live up to the expectation of the community through
which the participants have gained their sense of identity. All these elements of identity are shaken by the nonevent, by the fraying of a taken-for-granted life’s framework. The social/moral identity is separated from its mooring. The sense of fundamental connectedness becomes ambiguous.

This study suggests that it is not possible to understand the experience of nonevent apart from the person’s moral, social and cultural context, since no matter how personal the person’s goals and expectations are, the aim is to satisfy a self that is a part of a community. It is in the community context that we find the values which are essential to our identity. This study illustrates that research of nonevent must deal with values and the personal sense of moral identity. Yet, many transition models tend to sidestep these issues, leaving them to philosophers and, sometimes, to moralists.

In contrast to many of the transitional models, this study suggests that resolution of nonevent does not entail a ‘letting go’, burial of the past or achievement of separation. Rather, it observes that resolution entails an acknowledgment of the moral ambiguity, of being caught between two images of self, at once connected and separated, implicated and innocent, responsible and a victim of circumstances. The movement toward resolution is toward both separation and connection, toward an acceptance of the tension between these poles as an existential given and the need to find a personal meaningful balance.

The present study has implications to research on cross-cultural transitions. Nonevent transitions have received virtually no attention in the immigration literature. The findings reveal that the phenomenon of nonevent is central to the uprooting experience of Israeli expatriates and proposes that it may be found significant to the experience of other groups of migrants, since migration and uprooting are fundamentally implicated with expectations, hopes and dreams and their inherent possibility of nonoccurrence.

The studies by Adler (1975) and by Brink and Saunders (cited by Cox, 1977) are representative of many studies which have attempted to define and characterize the transitional experience of migrants. These works advance a linear stage model of adjustment and have stimulated a great deal of interest, modification and elaborations, in an attempt to describe the universal, rather than individual variations (Fukuyama, 1990; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Sluzki.
1986). “In fact”, claims S luzki, “if we focus our attention on patterns rather than content...we may
develop a model of the migratory process that has a reasonable degree of cross-cultural validity, a
model that is, so to speak, culture free” (p. 278). These perspectives and models with their
emphasis on orderly and clearly demarcated stages have had a great popular appeal. Like
developmental stage theories and various transition models they cater to our human wish for
predictability, simplicity and definitions of ‘normality’. and like stage theories they are “a little like
horoscopes. They are vague enough that everyone can see something of themselves in them”
(Brim, 1987).

But research on cross-cultural transition cannot be ‘culture free’. The current study
cautions that individuals holding different assumptions about the world may draw different
meaning from the same experiential events. It concurs with Breznitz (1983) that the same transition
which may be seen by one person or group as positive may be viewed by others as a one way
ticket to limbo. It joins with other researchers in the claim that the focus on universal patterns tends
to maintain a surface level of understanding and to ignore the complexity and diversity of
individuals and groups and the values which give meaning to their experience (cf. Berry, 1990;

This study provides qualified support to various studies on Israeli emigrants. It supports
shokeid’s (1988) observation of the anxiety-provoking paradoxes involved in the negotiation of the
experience. However, it illustrates that it is not just a cultural identity but also, and primarily, moral
identity that is being negotiated. The study supports Peleg’s (1990) observation that the losses
experienced by most immigrants are compounded in the Israeli case by a commitment to return
home. However, it does not support his ideological, religious definition of the commitment. All
the participants described their commitment to return home as embedded in personal loyalties, not
in religious dogma. While the ideological, historical dimensions were an integral part of the
expectation to return, the participants’ need to identify with the homeland was expressed as a need
for rootedness, connectedness and belonging. They emphasized the role of communal identity,
moral obligation and care for the community and specific people as the essential part of their
commitment to repatriate.
The findings do not completely match the stereotypes of Israeli expatriates. None of the participants fit either the stereotype of the detached, uncaring nonmembers, nor the pathetic portrait of the pathologically ‘stuck’, depressed person (such stereotypes have dominated the literature and popular conception). The findings do not concur with the picture of the stereotypic Israeli emigrant who leaves the country without feeling or suffering remorse or moral distress, dilemma or doubt and separate themselves from all emotional or moral ties to the community (Sobel, 1983). The findings also do not support the portrait of the expatriate as a miserable, dangling marginal, who is ever unable to choose in an either/or situation, unable to give up their comfort and return home, or unable to choose the way toward separation (Peleg, 1990).

The findings suggest that we should not completely ignore these stereotypes. However, the experience of the participants is much more complex than either stereotype. The study suggests that their experience is more in agreement with Walzer’s (1988) description of exiles. Few of the participants ever got very far from their core connectedness. While they travelled far, their spiritual and emotional distance had remained small, and every bit of it was agonized over. They never stood totally free of their connection, commitments and loyalty. They oscillated between disconnection and connectedness. As they reach resolution, for many only the physical tie between themselves and the old community is broken. The outcome is not separation or disconnection because the spiritual, emotional and moral ties are not broken.

Peleg’s research follows the classical literature on separation and individuation which is embedded in the supposition that the person’s “ego appears to us as something autonomous, unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else” (Freud, 1930, p.13). Peleg follows this tradition, assuming that Israelis manifest a failure to separate from a problematic love relationship. This supports Sobel’s (1986) contention that Israelis suffer from a pathology of over-identification. The findings of the present research suggest that the problem of the participants seems to be less an inability to separate as much as a wish to maintain the ties, an inability to maintain a sense of connected, morally coherent self. According to Bowlby (1980), despair arises when a person feels helpless in his or her ability to maintain or make affectional connections. The difference may seem semantic, yet it becomes clearer if we look at the experience from the perspective of relational theory. If the self is seen as a part of a social experience, attachments are
not merely functional, but rather they provide the foundation of the self. Attainment of human attachment, the emotions of care, compassion, loyalty and connectedness are the basis for a healthy sense of self and morality. There is no reason to accept the notion that the connectedness needs to be broken, or that separation is a healthy outcome of the transition. The findings seem to support Bowlby’s (1979) conception of attachment as necessary for healthy functioning throughout life. Attachments and reliance on others are not manifestations of dependence, but a healthy, normal human need and a source of a valuable strength. The problem of seeing the separated self as the goal of healthy growth has been attended to in a number of new voices in regard to the psychology of women (cf. Gilligan, 1982), yet the findings of this study concur with Solomon (1991) that connectedness and the care orientation are not necessarily the sole domain of women’s moral identity. Both male and female participants defined their attachments to the community in connected terms. Both conceived of the nature of their broken expectation to return as their moral obligation to the community in connected rather than in separate terms, by emphasizing personal loyalties, emotions and a sense of belonging, rather than a commitment to ideological or religious principles.

Much research needs to be done to further explore the experience of nonevent among these and other expatriates. Also needed is research which will explore other nonevents such as the marriage that never occurred, the child that was never born, the cancer that did not metastasize (cf. Schlossberg, 1984). This study provides preliminary observations regarding the embeddedness of nonevent in moral domain and its implication to moral identity. Further work is needed to corroborate and expand on these observations.

**Therapeutic implications**

The study has several practical implications. It can serve as a guide for those who are going through the experience of nonevent, and for those who may counsel them. The study’s narrative examples of individual experience can serve as a source of information and validation. Several participants have said that knowing that someone else had similar feelings, and has gone through a similar experience had a ‘therapeutic’ effect. For some just talking freely to an empathic, non-judgmental audience was helpful.
From a therapeutic perspective, the accounts and common pattern can serve as a guide for practice by identifying the unique reality faced in the process of nonevent experience. It is important for counsellors to understand that people are not only aware of the presence of events in the world, but that we are also frustratingly aware of their absence. The need for therapy may be portrayed as situational, one must go beyond the local story. The counsellor must understand the nonevent through its appearance as an absence. She or he has to recognize that an absence is not merely nothing, but another form of presence.

It is important to understand that the process of nonevent does not present a linear progression which depends on symmetrical entering and exiting of normative stages. The nature of the experience is spiral and its negotiation occurs in cycles. Thus one should expect old themes and issues to resurface occasionally. There is an inherent ambiguity in the spiral, yet as such it echoes life.

Most importantly, the counsellor needs to recognize that nonevent experience is an experience of entanglement; entanglement between what is and what ought to have been, between desire and frustration, between mastery and loss, between reason and emotions, between possibilities and limitations. In the therapeutic encounter, we need to go on an expedition with the client to make sense of these gaps. We are concerned with the person's search for meaning and with his or her vision of a life worth living. We are concerned with the person one is to be and the life one is to lead.

As counsellors, we are not trying to cure a person of some pathology, but to help a troubled person through understanding. There is a need to find the mode of therapy suited to the existential nature of the nonevent experience. Rational techniques, for example, are not appropriate. Means-ends rationality that provides yes-no answers to either-or questions is not useful, for it abolishes contradiction and proposes that we can master all anxiety. Existential issues require a different kind of reasoning, one that views alternatives and opposites as fruitful collision of ideas which allows for a personally meaningful balance or synthesis. Helping a person in a nonevent experience cannot separate the experience from the meaning and significance of the thwarted expectation to the person's life, and thus it requires understanding of the person in his or her life context. This is particularly important in cross-cultural situations: only by knowing how the migrants view
themselves, their lives and the nature of their uprootedness, can we hope to facilitate meaningful therapeutic experience.

Heraclitus believed that man’s life was intimately bound with the total context of his world, and that understanding the elements of that arrangement and their interrelationships constituted wisdom (Kirk & Raven, 1960). The life story is most likely the most suited method for understanding the person’s expectation and dilemma. The unique feature of a life story interview is that it is an individualized flexible procedure. It puts something together and its flexibility provides a wealth of possible understanding. It allows us to ask deeper and wider questions, to explore possible answers, and to uncover the personal meaning of the entanglement.

The experience of nonevent is a turning point in life. The issues involved are self- and life-defining. They are about the thwarting of life-shaping expectations, they are about the possibilities and limitations of life. The person experiences the tension between two poles - what is and what ought to have been. The discouraged person is stuck between the opposing poles and his or her movement is hindered. The object of counselling is to help the person shape or reconstruct his or her intelligible, enduring and coherent story in an effort to make life more meaningful, productive and fulfilling (Cochran, 1991). The person may be stuck either in not finding a way out, or in fear of plunging into the unknown. The essence of the entanglement is an inner division, the manifestation of which are halfheartedness, irresolution and uncertain oscillation between two alternatives.

An entanglement we do not face cannot cease to be (Cochran, 1991). The role of the counsellor is not to help reverse the nonevent, or to sidestep the entanglement, but rather to guide the person through the entanglement. Paradoxically, perhaps, harmony can only be achieved through immersion and confrontation with the inner disharmony. The accounts suggest that the way out of the entanglement is not through choosing either/or, but rather through a balance of both /and. The counsellor needs to guard against the natural inclination to give up or to fall into the always lurking temptation to hurry solution, to choose either/or. The counsellor’s role is to encourage the person to cooperate with the natural ambiguity of the entanglement and to accept uncertainty. Fostering a well-being through the experience of nonevent can be facilitated by wavering and developing a dialogue between the opposite poles, by encouraging the person to
endure in the effort to reconcile the poles, and to find a personally meaningful balance.

The accounts reveal that in their resolution many of the participants used a practical wisdom. In the pursuit of fruitful and worthy therapeutic practice we should follow their path. This finding supports Cochran's call for counsellors to return to the practice of wisdom, a practice abandoned by counsellors for things more behavioural and instrumental. In early Greek writing wisdom was seen as a kind of transcendental knowledge which was nonetheless needed to be practised in one's daily life. It was deemed both necessary and beneficial to pursue wisdom (though the complete state of understanding was seen as a perfection reserved for the gods), as it helped in developing a better understanding and a better way of life. For Socrates wisdom was to be approached by striving for a comprehensive self-knowledge. For Aristotle practical wisdom was concerned with a movement toward a well-lived life. In practising wisdom one would be able to delineate a desirable, possible and realizable vision or project. Following the Judaic tradition, modern writing of wisdom suggests that wisdom is social and interpersonal in nature. The consensus of historical and modern wisdom writing stresses that the wise are well-informed, focus on practical human understanding and are self-reflective in ways which allow them to determine good ends and to approximate an ideal vision of living a satisfying and fruitful life (Holliday, 1986).

The accounts and the above descriptions provide an inspiration for pursuing wisdom in counselling. Practical wisdom involves both doing and not doing, i.e., practical wisdom would determine when to intervene and when to stand back. The wise counsellor would know whether to provide the client with a solution or help the client find his or her own solution. The counsellor would need to learn and teach the healing art of combining analytical insight, practical reasoning, reflective judgment, sensitivity and intuition in the resolution of the nonevent. By fostering practical wisdom, gaps can be filled, explanations supplied, paradoxes clarified, balance approximated, resolution of nonevent transition achieved.

**Limitations of the study**

In this study a phenomenological, case study approach was taken. The guiding assumption in this type of research is that people are reliable witnesses of their own psychological experience.
Yet, since the study is based on the participants’ self report, it is limited to what these people were willing to share with the researcher, and what they were able to recall. It is possible that an element of self-presentation has influenced selectivity in the accounts, which thus may or may not be objectively accurate. However, since the aim of this study was to discern the meaning of nonevent experience to the experiencing person, questions regarding ‘objective reality’ were suspended. The underlying assumption is that while we continually revise our stories, the way the story is told and its particular content becomes the psychological reality of the teller.

The difficulty of self-report data was somewhat mitigated, and the issue of validity was addressed by utilizing converging lines of evidence, or triangulation; the experience of nonevent was approached by different participants and by data from a variety of sources. Patterns were compared, matched and corroborated.

The present study was a collaborative venture between the researcher and her compatriots, the research participants. Being like Jonah ‘inside the whale’ have necessarily affected my formulation of questions and my interpretation of the findings. My aim was not to to eliminate my personal ‘historicity and sociality’ (Giorgi, 1976) but to be aware of it and acknowledge my assumptions, biases, values and definition of the situation, to maintain a ‘conscious subjectivity’ and to continually ask whether my perception fit that of the participants.

The findings of this study are suggestive and cannot be generalized to all Israeli expatriates or to all nonevent experiences. Yet they provide a beginning for further research. Concepts from this study need to be taken to other social, ethnic groups and to other types of nonevent experiences to enhance our understanding of the diversity of nonevent experience. This study is meant to serve as an analogue, providing a test for other accounts which may expand, replicate or challenge the findings, leading toward a deeper understanding and hopefully a more adequate theoretical conceptualization of nonevent experience.
Conclusion

The sea preserves in salt.
Jerusalem preserves in dryness.
And where shall we go?
Now, in the exacting twilight,
To choose.
Not what we shall do
Or how we shall live
But to choose the life
Whose dreams
will hurt least
In all the nights to come. (Yehuda Amichai)

The accounts tell a story of living with the consequences of a thwarted expectation to return home. It is a story of life many years after the non-occurrence of an expected event. It describes a world of people who live the presence of an essential absence in their lives. This absence is a living presence inside the self, it is implicated in the existential spinal cord of the participants, in their identity and in their breaking and healing lines.

From another angle the accounts talk about the self and the other; the absent other who is a living presence inside the self. The external ‘successful emigration’ of the participants is also an internal, more often than not secret and painful, entanglement. They find themselves separated and facing an environment in which separation is deemed healthy, mature and an authentic way of being in the world. Yet, the separated self is an alienating existence for the participants. Living in a self-sentenced exile the seemingly comfortable, unconflicted and well adjusted participants are struggling to maintain or recreate their connectedness to the other, who is an integral part of their selves; to reconcile the paradox of being both separated and connected; to be a part while being apart.
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Note: All the lines from Israeli poems quoted in this work were translated by the author with the exception of the poem on p.123 which was translated by Assia Gutmann and was taken from *Yehuda Amichai: Selected poems* (1971). Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
Appendix: Consent form

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand more fully the lived experience of emigration transition among Israelis. This research will strive to explore the effect this transition has on identity and sense of self.

Your participation will involve meeting with me to discuss your feelings, thoughts and perceptions regarding this experience. I do not anticipate needing any more than four hours of your time. If you should need more time to comfortably tell your story, I will make more time to meet with you. All efforts will be made to find a setting that you will find comfortable, convenient and private. Your participation, I believe, will be an interesting opportunity for you to review and reflect on aspects of this important personal life experience.

The interview will be audio-taped. The taped data will be transcribed deleting or disguising your name and any identifying information. All tape recordings of interviews will be erased upon completion of this research project. Your participation is purely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign two (2) copies of this consent form. You will keep one copy and I will keep the other copy. If you have further questions or concerns about the research or procedures, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Thank you for your time.

Nurit Barkan-Ascher
Researcher.
731-9981

I have read this form and consent to participate in this research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.

Date: ______________________  Name:_____________________
Phone: _____________________  Singnature:_________________
Researcher's signature: ________________