

<i>Demonization of the Poles</i>	232
<i>The Marginalization of Diaspora Jews</i>	233
<i>The Role of the Witness</i>	234
Ceremony Structure and Embodiment	236
Individual Needs and Group Dynamics	238
<i>Channels for Individual Expression</i>	239
<i>Resistance and Accommodation</i>	240
Conclusion: The Messages of the Voyage	241
Notes	244
References	246
<b>Conclusion: The Backpackers and Israeli Society</b>	<b>251</b>
<i>Erik Cohen and Chaim Noy</i>	
The View from Afar	251
Israeli Youth Journeys: Hegemonic and Nonhegemonic	252
Distanciation and Communality among Israeli Backpackers	253
Backpackers' Rites of Passage and Identity	
Formation: Between Collectivism and Individuality	255
Varieties of Israeli Backpacking	257
Conclusion	259
Notes	260
References	260
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>265</b>

## *Introduction: Backpacking as a Rite of Passage in Israel*

Chaim Noy and Erik Cohen

### PREAMBLE

These names articulate a sentence that his steps compose without his knowing it ... What is it then that they spell out?

—Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

Cuzco. Manali. *Habit shel Fistuk* [Fistuk's home]. Koh Phangan, Annapurna Circuit Trek, the Khao San Road, and the Salar Desert. All are names of sites and attractions along the beaten track of Israeli backpackers, and all are names in a myth both pursued in and embodied by a collective, a myth this volume tries to "spell out."

Spelling out this cultural phenomenon lingers for a while—as the backpackers do—at the sites and attractions mentioned above, but soon returns to consider the social and cultural conditions in the home society, that is, the Jewish Israeli society, in a perspective we termed "outside-in." Though this volume primarily explores the backpacking experience of Israeli youth, and delineates the process of its development and gradual routinization, we also need to examine it as a reflection of current processes of change the Israeli society is undergoing.

Thus, this collection relates to the studies of Israel society and culture through investigating a unique touristic practice: the backpacking trip that is a common custom, nearly normative, among Israeli youth in the period soon after the military service.

### BACKGROUND: BACKPACKING IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Backpackers—also variously referred to as "drifters," "wanderers," "travelers," "budget travelers," "modern nomads," "tramping youth," and so on (Adler

1985; Cohen 1973; Elsrud 2001; Murphy 2001; Riley 1988; Vogt 1976) are a ubiquitous and growing phenomenon on the contemporary tourist scene that has recently attracted increased attention in sociological, anthropological, and psychological research (Desforges 1998; Elsrud 2001; Firth and Hing 1999; Hampton 1998; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Ross 1997; Scheyvens 2002).

Though there exist some significant differences between various kinds of backpackers—partly reflected in the different terms by which they are called—authors tend to agree on some general characteristics of this kind of tourist: “backpackers” are seen as a subcategory of “youth tourists” (Aramberri 1991), on an independently organized, relatively long trip, with a flexible itinerary; they are budget conscious, preferring cheap accommodations and services (Hampton 1998; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Sørensen 2003); they seek to penetrate beyond the boundaries of the established tourist system—but owing to the “massing” of similarly minded individual backpackers, a separate, lower-cost tourist-system tends to appear on the more popular backpacker itineraries and destinations, catering to their specific needs and preferences (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Riley 1988). Due to the backpackers’ suspicion of formal tourist material, a marked feature of this system is a heightened pattern of the informal communication and narration among the travelers (Elsrud 2001; Murphy 2001).

“Drifters” (Cohen 1972, 1973; Uriely et al. 2002) are backpackers who have the most flexible timetables and itineraries, and who avoid even the backpacking tourist-system, preferring to travel by themselves in uncharted territory; but most contemporary backpackers appear to prefer the company of other backpackers and seek little personal contact with the local population at their destinations (Hampton 1998; Murphy 2001; Riley 1988).

The relationship between the contemporary modern (or postmodern) world and the motivation and mode of backpacking travel has been little explored, though the relation between modernity and tourism constitutes the principal theoretical axis in the sociological study of tourism (from MacCannell 1973, 1976, to Wang 2000). Cohen (1973) suggested that “drifting” is closely related to alienation from “ordinary” society and associated with the counterculture, but there is little information in the later empirical research that supports—or disproves—that suggestion (with one notable exception, see Uriely et al. 2002). However, the relationship between the place of the youth in their society of origin and their choice of backpacking as a mode of travel, remains largely unexplored. It is this topic that lies at the heart of this collection of articles, with special reference to the relationship between the tensions and problems experienced by Jewish youth in contemporary Israel and the patterns of their backpacking travel.

In that respect this collection differs from other backpacker studies: it is not merely dealing with the conventional topics of the motivations, itineraries, experiences, destinations, and modes of interaction of backpackers and their economic and other consequences for the host society; rather, it is also, and perhaps primarily, a contribution to the study of Israeli society, by way of an analysis of the modes of conduct and motivations of those youths who temporarily move away from it.

This collection thus stresses an aspect of backpacking tourism research that was largely overlooked in most other studies: the context of the society of origin from which the backpackers depart. It is suggested that backpacking from different societies, though it may take superficially roughly similar forms, may be motivated by very different problems and tensions experienced by the young people in those societies; and these problems and tensions, as we shall see in this volume, may endow backpacking from a given society with a particular dynamics and a peculiar subculture of its own.

Backpacking appears to be primarily, but not exclusively, related to “early youth,” the period between adolescence and adulthood—falling in most modern societies in the early twenties of the individual’s life. For most modern youth this is a transitional period of life, marked in various societies by studies, occupational training, temporary occupations and, in Israel, also by a period of prolonged military service. After this period many youth depart on one or several extended backpacking trips; however, only few are able to repeat—or even start—such an undertaking at a later, more sedate period in their life, when occupational, domestic, and other obligations constrain their freedom of travel (but see Maoz 1999, and this volume). Backpacking can thus usefully be approached in terms of the wider anthropological model of the “rite of passage” (van Gennep 1908/1960; Turner 1967, 1973), which is indeed widely used in the studies presented in this volume. It is here formulated in terms of the particular Israeli situation, as a ritual bridging the transition from obligatory military service and the reentrance into civic society, whether by way of studies or of employment. The ritual may be differently located in the biography of backpackers in other societies, and therefore lead to different varieties of backpacking. Since the ritual marks different kinds of transitions, it may also have different short- and long-term consequences for the biography of individual backpackers (Desforges 1998; Heichal 2000; Noy 2004), which are well worth further detailed exploration.

Finally, it should be noticed that backpacking may for some individuals become, not merely a pattern of travel characteristic of a transitional period of their lives, but a way of life in itself; such backpackers tend to become lifelong wanderers traveling in an “experimental mode” (Cohen 1979), in quest for an “elective center” that they might embrace as an

alternative to their society of origin. Such individuals are hard to locate and have been rarely studied. The fact that they are absent from the studies here presented does not mean that there are no Israelis around in remote localities of Asia, South America or even Africa, who have forsaken their country of origin in quest of a more fulfilling existence elsewhere.

### The Israeli Context: *Tarmila'ut*

Backpacking (*tarmila'ut* in Hebrew) became an increasingly popular tourist activity among Jewish Israeli youth in the last two and a half decades, which has caught the attention of both the popular press,<sup>1</sup> as well as a growing number of researchers, some of whom are represented in this volume. Such a large-scale phenomenon necessarily raises the question of the basic motivation that induces so many youth to depart on such a long journey abroad, and more broadly, of the relationship between that journey and their place within contemporary Israeli society and attitude toward it. Considering earlier theorizing on this question, the main research problem is whether these extended journeys signify a high degree of alienation of the youths from Israeli society and a quest for an alternative "elective" center abroad (Cohen 1979), or, rather a "time-out," a moratorium during which the youths need to re-create themselves after the toils and restrictions of military service, as well as reflect on their society and their own place in it? This problem tacitly underlies most articles in this collection.

In order to find an answer to this question close attention should be paid to the prevailing behavior patterns of Israeli backpackers, as revealed in the various studies. This reveals a paradox found in many of them: a gap between the purported purpose of the trip and the actual conduct of the Israeli backpackers. Many wish initially to get far away from Israel and Israelis to remote and nontouristic areas. In fact, however, they follow similar itineraries, find themselves, or seek, the company of other Israelis, and spend a good deal of their time in Israeli "enclaves" in popular destinations of youth tourists, engaging much of the time in conversations on issues of common interest in their home society. This paradox may not be unique, and commonly found among contemporary backpackers, but it appears to be more salient among the Israelis, who, while projecting an image of daring adventurers, insulate themselves more exclusively in their own "enclave" than do backpackers from other nations. While this can be partly explained by a lack of linguistic and social skills, it also indicates a greater concern with the complexities of contemporary existence in Israel and their future in it.

In this regard, Uriely et al. (2002) have recently pointed out that at least as far as their travel experiences and motivations are concerned (which

they term the "type" dimensions), backpackers are quite a heterogeneous population. The research, which was based on Israeli backpackers, suggested that while some of the backpackers' experiences may be still be easily classified into previously theorized categories and typologies, most move between categories, and within the same trip experience different "modes" (Cohen 1979) of experience. The heterogeneity is manifested thus both between different backpackers, as well as within the experiences individual backpackers attest to along the extended trip. For example, what Uriely et al. (2002: 530) term "humanistic backpackers," are travelers who, while searching for meaningful experiences in the centers of other cultures, are not alienated from the centers of their own culture. Thus the supposedly dissimilar categories of backpacking phenomenology in fact coincide, and produce a rich and complex experience, on both the individual and the collective levels (see also Wickens 2002).

### A CULTURAL RITE OF PASSAGE

Contextualizing Israeli backpacking requires that we briefly consider the development and maturation processes that are characteristic of this period in the individual's "life cycle" and that take place within a given social and cultural background.

The backpacking journey represents a distinct developmental subphase in the participants' youth and early adulthood,<sup>2</sup> and has been viewed by researchers as a rite of passage, that is, a meaningful moratorial and liminal developmental phase in the lives of the participants (Avrahami 2001; Jacobson 1987; Mevorach 1997; Noy 2002). In general, the trip is undertaken soon after military service and lasts from several months to several years. It is a phase during which young Israeli adults take "time off" from the structured course of their obligations, after having fulfilled their duty to the state, and before pursuing higher education or entering the labor market.

Exact figures on the number of backpackers are not available since it is difficult to extract the number of backpackers from general tourism statistics (see Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). According to Maoz (1999), about 20,000 visas for India are requested by Israelis every year, with an estimated annual growth of about 10 percent. Since Asia, and in particular India, is a "must" destination in a backpacker's itinerary, this figure can be used as an estimate of the numbers of Israeli backpackers visiting Asia. Since South and Central America are also common destinations, visited by approximately half the number of backpackers who visit Asia (Mevorach 1997), we estimate the total number of Israeli backpackers at approximately 30,000 a year (some estimations are considerably higher, see Moaz in this volume).<sup>3</sup>

These figures indicate that backpacking in Israel is a significant social phenomenon, that embraces a significant percentage of the twenty-to-thirty age cohort of Israeli Jewish youths. We suggest that these youths pass through a moratorial phase, typically after completing their military service, entering a liminal period in which they undergo personal change, form or consolidate their identity, and eventually reorient themselves to Israeli society.

Moratorium is a stage of socialization experienced by the adolescent or the young adult, in which a meaningful connection is established between the individual and the society he or she will soon join (Erikson 1955, 1959, 1968). This occurs in a state in which social constraints and obligations are temporarily suspended, a state that encourages skepticism and a search for a personal identity (Rapoport 1986:9–10; also Kahane 1997:28). Thus, extended backpacking trips, which take place in distant locations remote from the social and cultural centers of Israel obliquely facilitate in fact *socialization* into Israeli culture and society. Yet this process occurs under the distinct social conditions of moratorium (“informal conditions,” Kahane 1997; Lamdan 1991) and liminality.

In the rite of passage model that Victor Turner adopted from Van Gennep (1908/1960), liminality is the middle stage, situated between the separation of the adepts undergoing the rite from their community and their reaggregation in it. It is a stage at which the assembled adepts lack structure and tend to create spontaneously a closely knit *communitas*. Their “antistructural” state is symbolized by spatial separation from their usual place of abode. In the exalted state of liminality, the adepts undergo deep personal experiences and learn the secrets of their culture, which entitle them to a new, adult status on reentering into their community (Turner 1969, 1973).

Indeed, on their return from the trip, backpackers repeatedly claim that they have undergone a deep personal change and maturation related to their autonomous assumption of heavier responsibilities. This claim indicated the fulfillment of their wish for independence and personal growth repeatedly voiced by backpackers prior to their trip. While such accounts have been observed among backpackers in general (Hampton 1988; Riley 1988; Vogt 1976), they are accentuated and carry a particular cultural shade unique to Israelis (Heichal 2000, chap. 3; Jacobson 1987, chap. 4; Mevorach 1997, chap. 4; Noy 2004).

Such a shade stems from the fact that the trip is preceded by a lengthy period of military service in Israel, which has a significant influence on the youths’ transition from childhood to early adulthood. Psychologist Amia Lieblich (1989:186) states that “military service in Israel, often including the experience of war, provides the specific cultural context for the Israeli

transition to adulthood.” She concludes: “The general conclusion I have drawn regarding the influences of military service on personality development is that the pattern of transition to adulthood during military service in Israel is different from that described in Western literature” (193).<sup>4</sup>

Military service in Israel constitutes a developmental phase in the individual’s life, due to the convergence of three primary factors: (1) compulsory military service is nominally obligatory for all citizens and pertains to the *entire cohort* of young (Jewish, nonultraorthodox) Israelis (Horowitz and Kimmerling 1974); (2) an extended period of service—a minimum of two years for women and three for men. Such a long period of service, with the diverse and often harrowing experiences involved, engenders profound psychological and psychosocial processes (e.g., see Ben-Ari 1998, 2001; Sasson-Levy 2000); (3) the military service is embedded in the wider culture of which the military, and to some degree militarism, are crucial components (Almog 1997:124–215; Almog 2000; Ben-Ari and Levy-Schreiber 2000; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999b; Maman, Ben-Ari and Rosenhek 2001).

Finally, backpacking as well as some of the activities typical to this kind of travel (especially hiking and trekking) are contemporary reflections of some of the constitutive ideas of the Zionist ethos of the “Sabra” and are therefore charged with additional cultural significance (Almog 1997:324–350; Katriel 1995). Strenuous trekking in the “wilderness,” mostly in high-altitude mountain terrain (Noy 2003) echoes “hiking in the Land of Israel” prior to the establishment of the state, which was considered an important means for creating a bond between the young Jewish Pioneers and the Land of Israel (Ben-David 1997; Katriel 1995). Backpacking itself, with its simplicity (of clothing and appearance) and parsimony, its emphatically gregarious character, and its relationship to the “authentic,” also reflects a nostalgia for the romantic and “authentic” past of the Israeli pioneers (Almog 1997: 324–350; Katriel 1999; Katz 1985). These activities can be seen as a universalization of the pioneering Zionist *tiyul* (hike), which emphasized some highly valued qualities of the Israeli Pioneer.

Related to cultural perceptions of toughness and endurance are risk-taking undertakings, typical of this form of travel (Elsrud 2001; Mevorach 1997). The Israeli backpackers may engage in “sensation-seeking” and “risk-seeking” behaviors, which are culturally patterned (Mevorach 1997; Noy 2003).

## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAELI BACKPACKING

The evolution of Israeli backpacking (*tarmila'ut*) spans a period of approximately thirty years. During this time, backpacking has developed into a

widely popular venture and became a meaningful rite of passage for most participants.

In this section we will consider some of the sociohistoric circumstances that have shaped the current role of *tarmilá'ut* in Israeli culture. We will consider the cultural and sociohistoric origins of Israeli backpacking to two major destinations: Asia and South America and will examine the relationship between military service and *tarmilá'ut*.

### The Drifters of the Seventies

Although there is very little documentation or research on the origins of *tarmilá'ut*, it is our contention that Israeli backpacking, particularly to Asia (India, Nepal, and Thailand) and South America, probably began sometime during the mid-seventies.<sup>5</sup>

During that period, these factors came to play a role in popularizing backpacking as a socially acceptable activity. The first factor was internal: from the mid-sixties until the mid-seventies Israel was involved in two major wars that had a crucial impact on Israeli society and culture: the Six-Day War, 1967, and the Yom Kippur War, 1973 (Horowitz and Lissak 1989; Lissak 1984). Israel was undergoing profound social changes, and—after the 1973 war—an acute internal crisis, which seems to have provoked new spiritual longings and thereby encouraged young Israelis to travel abroad.

The second factor is global and concerns the protest movements of the sixties, whose ideas had begun to reach Israel by that time. The beliefs held by the youth of the sixties included an exoticized and spiritualized image of the "East" (particularly India). We believe that such images have influenced young Israelis and motivated them to join the international backpacker movement.

The third factor was economic: the seventies were a period of robust economic growth, which created the material circumstances enabling parents to support the travel of their offsprings.

It is the convergence of these factors in Israel during the mid-seventies, that led backpacking, originally in the form of drifting, to become an increasingly socially acceptable form of travel of young men and women following military service.

Resembling the changes that occurred in Western backpacking between the decades of the sixties and the seventies, and the decades of the eighties and nineties (Riley 1988), the early Israeli backpackers differed considerably from contemporary ones. While Israeli backpackers during the seventies traveled mostly on their own and resembled the "drifters" of the period (Cohen 1972, 1973), contemporary routinized (or "massified") backpacking

is considered a normative act that does not reflect an adherence to counter-culture or even alienation from Israeli society. In fact, Heichal (2000) suggests that during the trip feelings of commitment and of identity with Israel are, eventually, strengthened. Backpackers who left Israel for a long trip in the seventies, when collective beliefs were still the dominant norm, represented a nonconformist, individualist, and alienated reaction to Israel. Many appear to have been moving "away" from the local cultural center toward "elective centers" abroad (Cohen 1979).

It is possible that this act of distancing oneself—backpacking—had its origins in the kibbutz and in the tensions and changes the kibbutz has undergone. The kibbutz has initially been an intensely closed and cohesive social system, but after the establishment of the state it was increasingly marked by tensions and internal crisis. It was the kibbutz that initially allowed the younger generation to take a "year off" (*shnat hofesh*), after having completed their military service and prior to becoming kibbutz members (Jacobson 1987; Lamdan 1991). The institutionalization of the "year off" from the kibbutz, which entailed working within Israel or traveling abroad, especially in Asia and South America, appears to have set the pattern for other Israeli youth.

Backpacking became more widespread when veterans of the traumatic Yom Kippur War of 1973, reacting to the posttrauma experienced by Israeli society came to engage in it. The reaction of alienation and disenchantment with Israel and with the collective founding beliefs encouraged the development of backpacking as a form of drifting, a travel abroad and a distancing from Israel, both concretely and metaphorically. Drifting allowed young Israelis to distance themselves from their native society, but at the same time, since this practice entails a limited stay afar from one's home society and culture, it allowed the youths to reevaluate their attitude toward and their place in Israel, and thus helped in the formation of their identity.

The drifters of the seventies hailed from the socioeconomic "centers" of Israeli Jewish society and were reacting against the hegemonic social control of the time by the traditional establishment. Members of disadvantaged groups in Israeli society, such as Jewish youth of Asian or African origin, or Israeli Palestinian citizens, chose other ways to express their resentment, such as social and political protest (e.g., the Black Panthers; see Bernstein 1977; Cohen 1972) or emigration from Israel, especially to the United States (Kimmerling 1989; Shokeid 1988; Sobel 1986).

In choosing their destinations in the Third World rather than in the First World, the drifter tourists leaving Israel temporarily contrasted sharply with the emigrants, leaving indefinitely to the West. The drifters usually traveled as individuals in quest of experiences and adventures, while emigrants sought economic relief and usually took their families with them. The drifters

were seekers, and thus their concerns were intellectual and experiential, while immigrants were motivated by practical concerns of work and income.

These individuals were alienated from the hegemonic political "center" of the time and reacted to it by traveling to cultural "elective centers" abroad. As pioneers of Israeli backpacking, they established the popular itineraries and destinations followed by the growing number of other Israeli backpackers in the eighties and in the nineties.

Israeli backpacking gradually shed its individuality and alienated character, which have marked the early drifters. Though the participants still favored individuality ideologically, Israeli backpacking became increasingly a collective phenomenon. The "elective centers" lost much of their salience, and the trip served increasingly as a means of the youngsters to distance themselves physically from Israel, while preoccupying themselves continually with its problems.

Thus the drifters of the early seventies became the role models of those of the nineties. Even the parsimonious shoestring budget of the early drifters was imitated, though contemporary backpackers, who come mostly from the middle and upper-middle-classes (Mevorach 1997), do not necessarily suffer from a lack of funds.

Since the 1970s backpacking was further encouraged by changing social circumstances in Israel. There was a continuing erosion in the hegemonic collective beliefs that have been dominant since the establishment of the state, and a strengthening of diverse new subcultures and diverse individual worldviews. The growing and political heterogeneity increased the public tolerance to the pursuit of individual life-prospects, thus granting backpacking trips and the emergent backpacking subcultures growing legitimating.

Later on, political events, such as the peace treaty with Egypt in 1977 and the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, and the Lebanon War (1982), also contributed to the rapid growth of Israeli backpacking during the eighties (Cohen 1987). In this regard, the evacuation of Sinai, which took place in 1980–1982, had both a dramatic effect on the size of the territory under Israeli control (the Sinai peninsula is some three times the size of Israel) and a symbolic effect on Israeli morale. The evacuation affected the image of Israel as a country of great size and power, and created the feeling that other occupied territories would eventually be abandoned. Moreover, Sinai had played a prominent role for young Israeli tourists. Its primordial landscapes, imbued with mythical significance in the national memory, had been a popular destination for trekkers and backpackers. Its spectacular beaches served as places of escape for many youths during the years of the occupation (1967–1982).<sup>6</sup> Young Israelis have since begun increasingly to look abroad for new destinations, especially in Asia and South America (see below).

Backpacking still encompasses primarily secular Jewish youths of European parentage (Heichal 2000; Mevorach 1997), although a growing number of youths of Asian or African background, as well as youths affiliated with the Zionist religious movement *kipot serugot* (knitted skullcaps, see Heichal 2000) presently backpack. Yet, very few recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union or from Ethiopia participate in backpacking. Nor do Israeli Palestinian youths show much interest in this type of travel. However, Jewish Afro-Asian youths, some religious Jewish youths, and Arab youths seem to engage increasingly in travel abroad, which sometimes carries the symbolic meaning of a rite of passage, though their destinations and travel styles differ quite significantly (this has been scarcely researched, see Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 1999).

### Backpacking and Military Service

The changes that occurred in the meaning of military service over the last two and a half decades are essential to our understanding of Israeli backpacking. Military service is seen in Israel as one of the principal civic obligations, the performance of which is a condition for full inclusion in the society (Horowitz and Kimmerling 1974; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999a; Maman, Ben-Ari, and Rosenhek 2001). This duty, however, is fraught with ambiguities: the service is both aspired to and avoided; it is a source of pride but also a burden; it is a contribution to society and also a constraint on individual freedom. The service thus engenders a desire for compensation. Indeed, departure on a backpacking trip normally occurs shortly after demobilization, and is often referred to as the "long trip after military service" (Mevorach 1997).

The proximity between the two time frames (Elsrud 1998) supports the common notion that the massive participation in backpacking expresses the demobilized soldiers' need to "relax" and "unwind" following the intense years spent in the army. But while this compensatory role of the trip may justify it in the eyes of parents and others, the trip has also a deeper significance that we hope to unveil in this book.

The "long trip after military service" has also been mentioned in the recent professional literature that dealt with the experience and the meaning of military service in Israel (Lieblich 1989:189; Lomsky-Feder 1996:57). While some of the authors view the trip as a *reaction* to military service, along the lines of the above discussion, others view it as expressing *continuity*. In his discussion of soldiering in the Israeli army, Ben-Ari (1998) writes:

Yet there is an interesting point to these [backpacking] journeys, which can be seen as a sort of rite of separation from the compulsory

part of military service. These travels very frequently include treks that are carried out in a "military" mode including precise planning, walking in small cohesive groups, and repeated tests of people's abilities to withstand hardship and take risks. (p. 116)

Ben-Ari's observation reflects a basic tension in the relationship between military service and the backpacking trip. Participation in the trip is viewed as a "rite of separation" from military service, but at the same time, the trip is conducted in a "military mode," thus reflecting continuity in the behavioral and social patterns that were acquired in the army. (Note that in the general backpacking research literature, Israelis as a collective are depicted as "fresh out of the military service" [Sørensen 2003:848]).

We suggest that this tension, which is constitutive and pertinent to the Israeli backpacking experience, is expressed in a *ludic manner* by the backpackers (Cohen 1985). Such exclamations as "We conquered Cuzco!" or "Thailand is in our hands!" represent a ludic (and perhaps parodic) mode of perception of the trip. It extends the "military mode" and reacts against it at the same time. This volume seeks to cast light on these dialectics, which are unique to Israeli backpackers.

While in the past military service was held in high esteem within Israeli society, which allowed it to function as a rite of passage, a gradual but continuous decline in this status has apparently reduced its transitional significance. The change in the meaning of military service over the last two decades has often been regarded as an indicator of wider processes of social and cultural change in Israel.<sup>7</sup> This change had a significant impact on the scope and meaning of backpacking, which has thus acquired the status of an independent moratorial phase in the youths' development.

While elaborating in detail on the changes in the status of military service is beyond the scope of this chapter, some of its aspects have direct implications for the backpacking trip: The decline in the status of the military, which has brought about a gradual but eventually far-reaching change in the relationship between the army and other civic institutions, particularly the family and the legal system. These institutions have become increasingly involved in military affairs, as soldiers' families launched an unprecedented number of complaints in the legal system (predominantly through the High Court of Justice) concerning such issues as soldier's rights, sexual harassment, and so forth. This has forced the military to review its system of rules and norms on a variety of issues, reflecting some of the processes by which the aura the military had enjoyed in Israeli society is dimming as other issues are gaining precedence.

The strong emotional ties between soldiers and their families has received considerable attention in the literature on Israeli army (Azarya

and Kimmerling 1985–1986). Lieblich, a developmental psychologist, attests to the close connection between adolescents and their families during military service (Lieblich 1989):

This transition into adulthood is not accompanied by the breaking, or even the weakening, of family ties ... military service in Israel often removes men from their parents' home, but emotionally they remain highly attached to their parents. (p. 190)

The unprecedented involvement of the soldiers' families in military affairs has been facilitated by the increasing use of cellular phones, which made communication between soldiers and their families frequent and unmediated. While a decade ago soldiers' families regularly met their children at or near their army base, in what was designated by the sociologist Tamar Katriel (Katriel 1991:71–91) as "weekend picnics in military zones," the current extensive usage of cellular phones, which allows both parties to call each other from *anywhere* in Israel in *real time*, problematizes and undermines the notions of a military "zone." Now, the soldier and his family are constantly "accessible" to one another (the word *zamin*—*accessible* in Hebrew—is used by the cellular phone service, meaning "in service").

The role the military service played in the past in creating a distance between the soldier and his or her home and family, thus in furthering the process of separation and individuation, has diminished in recent years. In contrast, the backpacker until recently often traveled to areas beyond the cellular phone's range and beyond the family's direct reach. It has been a journey to the "*lo zamin*" ("out of service") zone, distant and inaccessible. It thus provided the conditions for separation and individuation processes (as evident from backpackers' frequent reports of homesickness; see Mevorach 1997; Simchai 1998:99–114). However, recent developments in cellular technology, that is, the availability of cell phones that have worldwide accessibility, suggests that the possibility to locate themselves beyond the family's direct reach is questioned once again.

It should also be mentioned that during their military service, many young Israelis had frequent contact with the Arab population, in the occupied territories.<sup>8</sup> The continuous encounter between the army and a civilian population in a situation of conflict and hostility has reinforced the sense of separateness of "us" from "them" and enhanced the saliency of the Israeli collective identity. This dichotomization is carried over to the trip and is reflected in the backpackers' jargon. For example, the word *mekomiyim* (locals), is used in both military jargon, in reference to the local non-Jewish occupied population and in backpackers' slang in reference to the native peoples of "Third World" countries. Since both institutions—the (Israeli)

army and (backpacking) tourism—are expansionist, it might not be surprising to find analogies and a carryover of images, terminology, and frames of reference from the first to the latter (Noy 2003, 2004).

### FROM SITES TO ENCLAVES

The steady growth of Israeli backpacking and its expansion into farther areas in Asia and South America has gradually led to the emergence of popular itineraries along which most, if not all, backpackers travel. Eventually, at the most popular sites along these itineraries, where Israeli backpackers tend to stay for relatively extended periods of time, from a few days to a few months, Israeli “enclaves” appeared, in which young Israelis meet and socialize. Such enclaves are distinct “environmental bubbles” (Cohen 1972), offering the visitors cheap and familiar amenities and services. They are usually based on a guest house or a restaurant, frequented primarily by Israelis. The restaurants often feature menus in the Hebrew language, which list what are considered to be “typical” Israeli dishes, such as “hummus,” “shakshuka,” and Israeli-style salad. Some travel companies cater specifically to Israelis, often advertising the quality of their services in the show windows in Hebrew. Waiters and other service personnel in some enclaves speak the Hebrew language. The information about these enclaves spreads by word-of-mouth (Elsrud 2001; Murphy 2001; Noy 2002), via backpackers’ logbooks (*siphrei metaylim* in Hebrew) kept at the Israeli embassies and in guest houses in the enclaves, and, of late, by electronic mail.

These enclaves play an important role in the backpackers’ experience and accounts of their trip. They are aware of the high visibility of fellow Israeli travelers on the routes, which are often a butt for ironic comments and jokes.

In the following we shall discuss the process of transformation of the sites that Israeli backpackers regularly visit, into Israeli social and cultural enclaves and its implications for the backpacking experience of Israelis.

#### The Enclave Out There

The emergence of Israeli enclaves in remote sites is a distinct feature of Israeli backpacking. The fact that Israeli backpackers travel *away* from their socio-cultural center (Israel), but at the same time gravitate *toward* such ethnic enclaves, has a formative affect on the experience of the trip, and endows it with a distinct character.

Most backpackers appear to desire at the outset of their trip to travel to sites and destinations not visited by other Israelis. However, a number

of related circumstances lead them eventually to sojourn, at least for a while, in Israeli enclaves or to travel with other Israelis, whom they have met on their trip. Most Israelis use the same sources of information on their trip—backpacker guidebooks, information found in equipment stores in Israel (Jacobson 1987; Salmon 1998), or travelers’ logs found at Israeli embassies abroad (particularly in South America, Noy 2002). They are thus enrouted along similar paths. Many, especially newcomers, suffer from limitations and difficulties encountered when traveling alone or with a single partner in an unfamiliar environment—especially since many lack a sufficient competence in spoken English. They therefore seek assistance from other Israelis met on the trip, who gradually socialize them into the Israeli backpackers’ enclaves. Many eventually end up by spending a good deal of their time—perhaps even the majority—in the familiarity and security of these enclaves. The enclaves reflect in important respects the cultural and social “center” of the backpackers’ homeland, Israel (Cohen 1992a, 1992b; Turner 1973; Turner and Turner 1978).

The unique fact about the “enclave-out-there”—to paraphrase Victor Turner’s “the center out there” (Turner 1973)—is that although Israelis do not necessarily reside there on a permanent basis, Israeliness does thrive there permanently. Nonetheless, there are a few sites that have become enclaves as a result of the presence of permanent Israeli residents, which further demonstrates the semi-institutionalization processes Israeli backpacking is currently undergoing. For example, there is a growing number of guest houses and various agencies (such as jeep rental and insurance agencies), which are run by Israelis who live in both Asia and South America.

Another example of such Israeli permanence can be found in the “traveling Hebrew library,” located in enclaves, a library that backpackers often mention in their stories. This term refers to books that circulate among backpackers. The books are mostly in Hebrew and play an integral role in the recreational and leisure activities during the backpacking trip. They are brought by backpackers from Israel and are passed from one backpacker to another. In addition to such books, guest houses and restaurants often hold a large library of Israeli videos.

Not only Hebrew books and videos are passed around the backpackers in the enclaves, but also audiocassettes and foods. Israeli music is very popular among backpackers, and some contemporary singers, such as Shlomo Artsi, are mentioned quite frequently in their accounts (Noy 2002). Foods, and especially snacks (such as *Bamba*), are brought from Israel as well, mainly by backpackers who keep *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary rules. Such music cassettes and foods, brought on the trip, metonymically represent Israeliness.<sup>9</sup>



### Ambivalence toward the Enclave

The existence of Israeli enclaves in remote localities endows the backpackers' trip with some ambiguity: as we have pointed out above, they may travel far away only to find themselves in a bubble of their homeland. Their trip thus constitutes not just a movement "out" or "away" from the center to otherness, but also a move *between* ethnically, socially, and linguistically *familiar* enclaves or, more precisely, between the center and its partial reflections abroad. It is time spent "away" (from the center) *but also* time spent "within" (the enclave).

This ambiguity affords the backpackers the possibility to reflect on their own society in a far-away enclave, which at the same time partially reconstitutes it. The backpackers are often ambivalent toward the enclave (which they themselves are a part of)—an ambivalence reflecting their broader ambivalence toward their homeland.

The "push" and "pull" factors affecting tourism in general and backpacking in particular, acquire an additional complexity here. This duality frames the Israeli backpacker in a unique and paradoxical context. It affords the backpackers the possibility to relate to their own culture through its (translocated) reflection that they themselves create and sustain. In fact, observations made by backpackers frequently reflect their *ambivalence* toward the center and the society of which they themselves are a part.

The enclaves enjoy great popularity among Israeli backpackers, many of whom spend a good deal of their trip in them and in their vicinity. They are also fairly visible, manifesting the Israeli presence in often remote localities. The backpackers themselves are sometimes aware of the contradiction between their alleged desire to get away from other Israelis while they cluster in the enclaves, and tend to refer jokingly to their contradiction.<sup>10</sup>

Though they stay in the enclaves, backpackers repeatedly complain that "there are too many Israelis there," and that Israelis are typically "loud" and "noisy." At the same time they are also depicted as "trustworthy," and as a "reliable" source of information. Backpackers are thus situated in a loop in which they themselves are the "them" to whom they refer. A common question asked in stores selling backpacking equipment, during backpackers' gatherings before the trip is, "Where can we travel to in order to *avoid* Israelis?" The paradox of Israelis asking other Israelis where there are places with *no* Israelis, indicates the perception that one can hardly avoid Israelis or the Israeli enclave on the trip.<sup>11</sup> Even backpackers who claim to have been innovative in choosing their itineraries and routes on their trip, compare them and locate them *in relation* to the standard and normative itineraries and sites followed by Israeli backpackers, rather than by other tourists.

The question that preoccupies many backpackers throughout their trip concerns the desirable "distance" from the Israeli enclave, that is, from

fellow Israeli backpackers and sites of Israeli culture and ambience. Finding one's optimum distance and relationship with the enclave is a significant factor influencing one's sense of satisfaction from the trip. In fact, although the trip predominantly serves as a rite of passage, its salient initiatory role involves the search, conducted under moratorial circumstances, for one's optimal interpersonal distance in relation to the Israeli collective, and the search for one's identity in relation to one's *own* cultural center.

### *The enclave as frontier*

We would like to suggest an additional and complementary conceptualization that addresses issues involving the notion of territory and the somewhat militaristic and colonialist character of some parts of the backpackers' discourse.

Following sociologist Baruch Kimmerling's observation regarding the transformation of the Israeli "borders" into "frontiers,"<sup>12</sup> we would like to suggest a view of backpacking in a colonialist light, as a reflection or a projection of territorial issues that feature prominently in popular political discourse in Israel. Kimmerling (1989a), Gurevitch and Aran (1991), and Ben-Ari and Bilu (1997) point to the expansionist character dominant in Israeli Zionist social and cultural discourse.

Our contention is that the Israeli backpacking community, and the Israeli enclaves, are sometimes metaphorically perceived as a third "frontier," in addition to the two already existing ones, namely, the Israeli Diaspora and the Israelis living in occupied Palestinian territories that are geographically contiguous to Israel (Kimmerling 1989a:274–278). Hence, a third frontier seems to be collectively perceived by the backpackers, reflecting symbolic components of the other two; it is neither a Diaspora nor is it geographically contiguous to the homeland.

The possibility of imagining such a frontier derives from the notion of the "negotiable" borders or boundaries of the State of Israel. As mentioned earlier, hardly a decade has gone by during over fifty years of statehood in which the boundaries of Israel have not changed. The indeterminate character of Israel's boundaries is perceptible both on the national-territorial plane and on the collective narrative level, as it is reflected in ongoing public discourse.

These territorial aspects in the collective identity of Israelis are in backpacking "played out" ludically rather than addressed seriously. (The terms "colonialism," "frontier," and "pioneers" are not understood in their literal meaning but rather, they are used playfully or metaphorically). The commonly used terms, such as "settlers" (*mitnahalim* in Hebrew), denoting Israelis who are living in the occupied territories, or "conquerors" (*kovshim* in Hebrew), as well as the assertions "We conquered Cuzco," or "Bangkok is

in our hands,"<sup>13</sup> when used in regard to Israeli backpackers, are not meant to be taken literally, but rather in a ludic or even ironic sense. What is being pursued is a demonstrative *acting out* of these collective approaches to territory, space, and place, which originate within Israeli society.

### CONTEMPORARY BACKPACKING SITES AND ROUTES

In line with the title of Simchai's thesis "This Path Begins Here" (Simchai 1998, 2000), our review of the site map of Israeli backpacking begins with sites located *inside* Israel and then extends to sites and enclaves abroad. This "site map" is the result of nearly three decades of backpacking to old-established sites, which reflect a routinized itinerary, and to a centrifugally growing area of new sites and itineraries which backpackers explore.

#### Sites in the Homeland

The itinerary of the backpacker begins in Israel at stores that offer trekking and traveling gear.<sup>14</sup> Such stores are designed with large open spaces to allow social interaction between prospective and veteran backpackers. These spaces are vibrant with backpacking lore as backpackers tell and retell their experiences and adventures. In addition to the regular guidebooks commonly used by backpackers (such as *Let's Go*, *Lonely Planet*, which are also available in Hebrew), these stores maintain a kind of "*backpacking library*," which includes personal accounts of backpackers' trips. These handwritten accounts, cataloged according to country, contain information and lore that the veteran backpackers share with newcomers (these are called *sifrei metaylim*, literally "travelers' books," see Jacobson 1987; and Noy 2002). In the stores there are also located large bulletin boards for messages, which serve mainly to assist backpackers in finding partners for a trip (and are gradually transformed into virtual ones, i.e., an elaborate system of backpackers' chat rooms, Internet sites, and the like). The boards are also used for other purposes, such as the sale and purchase of secondhand gear. Furthermore, the stores organize various activities such as "lectures" that are devoted to specific countries and geographical areas, such as Thailand, India, Peru, or other South American countries and the Pacific. More recently, lectures have been added for "religiously observant travelers" to India.<sup>15</sup> The lectures are usually given by veteran backpackers and include an extended question-and-answer period, in which the audience is invited to ask questions regarding sites, attractions, itineraries, and amenities.

Though visiting such stores and hearing such stories is an integral part of the preparation for a trip (and not only among Israeli backpackers but also elsewhere; see Elsrud 2001; Murphy 2001; Riley 1988; Vogt 1976), backpackers tend to dismiss the significance of the visits to such stores. Nevertheless, it is in these sites that prospective backpackers meet and mingle and it is here that the backpacking experience begins. It is conceptually possible to view these stores as "gate-sites," passed in Israel before the departure. The visits carry a symbolic value, testifying, in fact, to one's identity as a backpacker.

Other locations where backpackers meet before departure include the clinics at which vaccinations are given. Such clinics are located at the Ministry of Health offices and in various private and public hospitals. The vaccinations carry some symbolic significance that derives from the framing of the "Other," or the "Third World" in terms of sickness and disease (Elsrud 2001; Martin 1994; Weiss 1997).

Other locations could be described as *trampoline* sites, that is, places in Israel to which veteran backpackers, or "serial backpackers" (Uriely et al. 2002) return to meet each other before they depart for a second or third trip.<sup>16</sup> Such sites have not yet been systematically researched but it appears that they include specific cafés and discotheques. These sites often maintain an atmosphere reminiscent of the countries visited by the backpackers, like a discotheque playing Brazilian music or a café in which Indian incense is burnt.

#### Routes and Sites Abroad

The routes that are popularly traveled and the sites that are routinely visited by Israeli backpackers abroad differ in terms of the proportion of Israelis among the general backpacking and tourist population. Some sites are frequently visited by Israelis, as well as by other backpackers and tourists. Examples are the Taj-Mahal in Agra, India, the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador, and the Machu-Picchu trail in Peru, all of which are well-known tourist destinations. Other routes and sites are frequented only by backpackers, such as the various treks in Nepal, Thailand, and Peru (compare with Riley 1988). Due to limited travel budgets, backpackers tend to lodge where a lengthy stay is affordable (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995), which points to locations with guest houses and cheap hotels, such as the Khao San lane in Bangkok or the Main Bazaar in New Delhi. These areas sometime include certain guest houses and restaurants that are visited predominantly by Israeli backpackers (such as the "Hari-Rama" guest house on Main Bazaar lane in New Delhi, or the "El Lobo" restaurant in La-Paz). Such facilities are

specifically oriented to Israeli backpackers. They are sometimes run by Israelis and expressly seek to attract Israeli backpackers, through their Hebrew names, such as the guest house "*habait shel Yiftah*" (lit. "Yiftah's Home") in Bogotá, Columbia, the restaurant "*habait shel Fistuk*" (lit., "Fistuk's Home") in Cuzco, Peru and "Little Tel-Aviv" in New Delhi, India, and many more.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that, though the enclaves are a highly salient feature of Israeli backpacking, they are not exceptional. Pamela Riley already observed that "adventure [among backpackers] is defined as traveling away from the beaten path of mass tourism, but down the beaten path of other budget travelers" (Riley 1988:326), and that backpackers congregate in "ghettoes." However, the Israeli backpackers appear to be more clannish, and their national distinctiveness more expressly marked than that of other nationalities (Haviv 2002; Noy 2002).

We now turn to the principal world regions popular among Israeli backpackers.

#### *Sites in Asia and the Pacific*

Israeli backpacking turned to Asian destinations during the late sixties and early seventies, following the *zeitgeist*, which associated the symbols of peace, spirituality, and tranquillity—common in the youth movements of the sixties—with the Far East and particularly India.

The three major destination countries in Asia that form the axis of the Israeli backpacker's itinerary are India, Nepal, and Thailand. These three form a backpacking "package" with each country making a unique contribution to the trip:

1. In India the areas that are frequented specifically by Israeli backpackers are located mainly in the North. Israeli backpackers tend to visit the mountains of Kashmir and Ladak, the valleys of Simla and Manali, the Tibetan population in Dharamsala in the Northern state of Himachal Pradesh, and the beaches and full-moon parties at Goa. In Goa, a specific strip of beach is referred to as the "Israeli beach."
2. In Nepal, the two main cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara, which are commonly visited by tourists, are also frequented by Israeli backpackers who often lodge there before or after a trek. It appears that Pokhara plays a more central role than the capital Kathmandu. The backpackers tend to participate in the longer and more strenuous treks, such as in the Annapurna Sanctuary area (notably the Annapurna Circuit), the Everest Base Camp trek, and treks around the Langtang-Gosaikunda region near Kathmandu.

3. In Thailand the common destinations for Israeli backpackers are the area of the hill tribes in the North, and the Southern Thai islands (Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, and Koh Phi Phi). On the islands, relaxation and the liberal usage of drugs constitute an "unwinding" experience following visits to Nepal and India.

We should note that the variety of destinations in the region has gradually expanded, as additional countries were added to the Israeli backpacker's itinerary. Japan, Australia, and New Zealand are countries in which Israeli backpackers both travel and work, spending periods of up to several months in order to earn the money needed to continue their trip in Asia (Bloch-Tzemach 1998, 2002; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Murphy 2001). Recently, China, Burma, and Vietnam have also become increasingly popular destinations of Israeli backpackers.

#### *Sites in South and Central America*

Our understanding of the beginnings of Israeli backpacking in South America is even less clear than our understanding of its beginnings in Asia, mainly because the South American destinations never achieved the aura enjoyed by the "East" among Western backpackers (general research of backpackers to the Americas is scarce, see Sørensen 2003). The initial circumstances in which South American destinations became attractive to Israeli backpackers are extremely vague.

The interest in backpacking to South American countries was possibly the result of accounts brought back by individuals who were engaged in commercial, agricultural, and military cooperation projects between Israel and various South and Central American countries. These connections, which were created in the sixties and seventies, might have played a role in disseminating information, fostering acquaintance, and perhaps facilitating access to South American destinations for Israeli youth.

Another factor may have been the Latin American origin of some of the early Israeli backpackers (or of their families). There is a large community of South American Jews in Israel, who have immigrated mainly from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. In fact, several studies have found that such backpackers regard their trip as "a search for family roots" (Noy 2002; Salmon 1988).<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the initial circumstances that encouraged Israeli backpackers to travel *en masse* to South America, additional factors, such as the favorable currency exchange rates and cheap prices, have attracted Israeli backpackers to the region and enabled them to extend the duration of their travel.

The itinerary of Israeli backpackers in South America generally begins in the North and proceeds southward, or vice versa. The backpackers refer

to this itinerary as the "wave." If the trip begins in the North ("the northern wave"), the first countries to be visited are in the Andes, namely Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Among backpackers these countries are known for their treks, such as the famous Machu Picchu Inka Trail, as well as the Azangate and Huaraz trails, in Peru. In Cuzco there exists a major Israeli enclave that is probably the largest and the most active in South America. In Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands are a "must" for Israeli backpackers. This itinerary proceeds southward to Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.

Brazil is visited mainly for the Carnival and to some extent, for trekking in the Amazonas region. Chile is popular for trekking (particularly the Torres del Paine trail), while Argentina, which is considered the most Westernized of the South American countries, is particularly suitable for shopping. The Salar salt desert in Argentina is yet another item on the standard collective itinerary.

The southern wave shares the same sites as the northern wave, but begins at the Carnival in Brazil and proceeds northward toward the Andes. The many points of intersection between the "South-bound wave" and the "North-bound wave" allow the backpackers an opportunity to share their experiences and to collect information as to their anticipated route.

## CATEGORIES AND SUBCULTURES OF ISRAELI BACKPACKERS

### Categories

Though backpackers are a distinct type of contemporary tourists, they are not a homogeneous category. Rather, internal differences of two kinds can be observed. On the one hand, there exist external or "etic" distinctions between backpackers, relating to their mode of travel and to various sociodemographic characteristics. On the other hand, there exist "emic" distinctions between backpackers' subcultures, made by the Israeli backpackers themselves. We shall outline here the principal distinctions and subcultures observed among Israeli backpackers.

#### *Collective versus individual backpacking*

Israeli backpackers tend to stick together, though they are not usually traveling in permanent groups. Rather they create ephemeral associations that appear to endow Israeli backpacking with a "collective" character—iconically expressed in the comradeship of the Israeli enclaves (Avrahami 2002; Haviv 2002; Noy 2002).<sup>19</sup> Most Israeli backpackers appear to travel in this fashion. Research has almost exclusively focused on them. But there is a minority of Israeli backpackers who shun the company of their copatriots and

take long and often arduous trips to remote destinations, often using the skills acquired in military training. These individual backpackers are difficult to locate and consequently have not been seriously studied.

#### *Ethnic and socioeconomic background*

According to Mevorach's sample (1997), and observations made by other researchers, backpackers are distinguished from other youths of the same age who do not engage in backpacking by parameters such as religious observance, ethnic origins, and socioeconomic background. Israeli backpackers come from predominantly middle-class, secular families of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) background rather than Mizrahi (North African or Middle Eastern) background. They reside primarily in large and medium-size cities and kibbutzim and moshavim rather than small towns. Their parents tend to be well educated and relatively well-off (Mevorach 1997).<sup>20</sup>

These findings reflect a continuity from earlier patterns of youth travel in pre-State Palestine under the hegemonic labor Zionist ideology as well as a reaction to the constraints imposed by its hegemonic dominance. As sociologist Tamar Katriel has noted, participants in hikes (*tiyul*) in pre-State Palestine and in the early years of the State usually came from among the veteran youth of Ashkenazi origin. Such hikes were ideologically construed and not seen as mere recreation by the Zionist leadership. Katriel points out that the absence of Oriental Jews from such hikes was seen as an indication of a weak "connection to the land" (Katriel 1995; also Ben-David 1997).

Today's backpacking trip reflects some elements of these earlier hikes, but—as it is conducted in places far remote from Israel—it manifests their ideological content and significance in an altered form. As we have pointed, the majority of participants are veteran Israelis of Ashkenazi background, who possess the economic means to embark on a lengthy trip that Oriental youths, most of whom are descended from immigrants, do not always attain. Whether youths of Oriental (Mizrahi) background travel abroad, and if so what are their destinations, itineraries, and modes of travel, are questions requiring further research, so is the issue of youth travel patterns among new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia (regarding the former see Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 1999).

#### *Variations of military service prior to the trip*

Most Israeli backpackers appear to have served in combat units. According to a study by Salmon, half of the male backpackers she interviewed said they had served in frontline or fighting units and similarly half the women said they had served in frontline units or as instructors in fighting units (Salmon 1998; see also Mevorach 1997; Sasson-Levi 2001). The others either served in noncombat units or have not served in the army at all. We assume

that the trip has a different significance for those backpackers who served in combat units and those who did not. For the former, the trip constitutes a relaxing inversion, which enables them at the same time to practice some of the skills that they acquired in the army. For the latter, the trip appears to provide a compensative opportunity to "rough it" and to prove themselves, an opportunity which they did not have in their military service.

#### *Religious background*

Mevorach's (1997) sample reveals that some 4 percent of backpackers reported that one or both of their parents was religious (while some 70 percent reported both parent to be "secular" and some 19 percent reported their parents to be "traditional"). Heichal's later study (2000), which focused on Israeli backpackers affiliated with the Zionist religious movement *kipot serugot* (knitted skullcaps), suggests that the religious backpackers of the late eighties and early nineties were "pioneers" among the religious youths and constituted the beginning of a growing trend. There appears to be a steady growth in the percentage of religious participants, both in terms of the general backpacking population as well as of their age-cohort in the religious sector of Israeli society.

The unique sociohistorical background that sheds light on the development of youth tourism and backpacking within the *kipot serugot* religious movement requires additional elaboration that is beyond the scope of this introduction. It seems that the growing involvement of the *kipot serugot* youth in the military, and especially in fighting units where religious soldiers are exposed to secular-militaristic culture and serve shoulder-to-shoulder with secular youth, has encouraged their adoption of backpacking. In addition, the development of a generation of religious youth within *gush emunim* (the Block of the Faithful), which, in some respects, rejects the social beliefs of the older generation and to a lesser degree of the religious establishment, might also have contributed to the increased participation of religious youths in backpacking (Aran 1987; Heichal 2000). In this case, the trip is experienced either as a rebellious reaction to the observant way of life or a quest by the observant backpacker for his or her own style of observance.

#### *Age cohorts*

Most Israeli backpackers belong to the twenty-two to twenty-five age group (compare Murphy 2001; Riley 1988; Vogt 1976). However, as the backpacking population gradually grew, it came to include an older population of "young adults" in their late twenties and early thirties (Maoz 1999, in this volume). The latter can be divided into two types: "serial backpackers" (Uriely et al. 2002) who departed on a trip soon after their military service,

and since then have been taking additional trips, and young adults who have taken up backpacking for the first time in their lives at a later age (Maoz 1999). The latter are at a point in their lives when they have already reached some professional and educational achievements. They may have invested a great deal in their jobs and are perhaps carrying the double burden of intensive higher education and the pursuit of a career. Since backpacking at that age and at that stage in professional development is not common, and in view of the different motivations the older backpackers have, the nature of their trip tends to be less communal and more individualistic (Maoz 1999:20–25).<sup>21</sup>

Participation in backpacking has expanded not only to older cohorts but, in a limited degree, to younger ones as well. Some of the participants are soldiers still in active military service who are on an extended leave. In this case, the backpacking experience is simultaneous with service in the military. In other cases, individuals who are not enlisted may depart on a backpacking trip during the period ordinarily devoted to military service.

It might be conjectured that in the future backpackers will be even more heterogeneous in terms of age, and will range from adolescents who make the trip before or instead of military service, to middle-aged or even older adults ("Peter Pan backpackers," see Schonhammer, 1992; cited in Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995).

#### *Gender*

Backpacking in Israel is generally pursued by men and women alike (Mevorach 1997). Patterns of participation in the trip suggest that men travel slightly more to destinations in South America than women, but that the genders are more or less equally represented among travelers to Asia. While both genders are similarly represented in trips lasting up to six months, males are more numerous on longer ones (Salmon 1998).

Qualitative research into the motivations and expectations preceding the trip suggests that women and men differ in some respects: Women seek more autonomy and independence on their trip, and are less interested in frequent and multiple social relationships. As might be expected, men perceive the trip more than women as an occasion to "unwind" from the intensive experience of the service in the military in Israel.

Finally, since the trips reflect hiking practices common in the Israeli culture and since they are engaged in soon after the service in the military, some of the practices undertaken on the trip carry prominently masculine, if not pseudo-militaristic, features (see, Ben-Ari 1998:116). In such cases, especially in trekking, gendered differences are sharpened and more salient (Noy 2003, forthcoming). Female backpackers often resist pressure to conform to masculine, militaristic, and colonial traveling practices (Elsrud 1998).

### *Backpacking in Asia versus South and Central America*

About twice as many Israeli backpackers travel to Asia than South and Central America (Mevorach 1997). In addition, some backpacking takes place in the Pacific, mainly to Japan, New Zealand, and Australia; a few travel to Africa, mainly Kenya, but also to Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.<sup>22</sup> Thus, a question arises as to the differences—if they indeed exist—between backpacking in these regions.

The traditional imagery of Asia has been that of spirituality, ever since the early days of the mid-seventies when Israeli drifters began traveling there. Research indicates that this ethos still attracts backpackers to Asia, mainly to India (as can be assumed from their frequent participation in a variety of “spiritual” activities there). In contrast, South and Central American destinations have never shared such an image. Sojourns in ashrams, consumption of psychedelic drugs (Dayan 1999; Mevorach 1997), famous “full-moon” parties at the Goa beaches in India, Koh Phangan in Thailand, and *trance* and *thecno* music, all are popular, and even principal activities, among various subgroups of travelers in the Asia, which have no correlate in South America. As Ghinsberg indicates in his adventure book (1985), which is based on his own experiences as a backpacker, South and Central American destinations share an image of adventurous and strenuous jungle traveling and risky mountain trekking. In general, it seems that travelers to South America are more interested in trekking and other intensive “nature activities,” than they are in “sitting in one place and not doing a thing,” as they stereotypically refer to their peers traveling in Asia.

A second distinction concerns communication with the local population. The younger generation of Israeli Jews, having been brought up speaking Hebrew, generally experiences difficulties communicating in other languages. However, their linguistic situation in Asia is different than that in Latin America. It is generally assumed that English is the *lingua franca* in the Asian countries most commonly visited by Israeli backpackers. Though few of them know English from home, most have some basic English from school, with which they try to get by in Asia, though their language skills are often fairly limited. Only a few even try to pick up or learn any Asian language, such as Hindi, Nepalese, or Thai, though some may show some interest in them.

The situation in Latin America is somewhat different. Spanish is not taught in Israeli schools, but some backpackers have knowledge of it from home, whether their parents immigrated from Central or South American countries or whether they are of Sepharadi background and learned from them some Judeo-Español (Ladino). Most, however, appear not to have any Spanish on arrival in South America—but in contrast to Asia, they tend to pick up Spanish on their trip (sometimes by attending “crash courses”)

and after a while are able to get by using it for practical daily purposes. It is doubtful whether any even think to learn local Indian languages such as Quechua or Aymara.

Finally, in both major regions are found localities in which backpackers can work, earning additional funding in order to extend the duration of their trip. While backpackers who travel in Asia occasionally work in the region (particularly in Japan and Australia), backpackers who travel in South and Central America might make a stop in North America prior to or during the trip in order to work and save up money for their trip. In such cases short-term, high-earning jobs are common, such as furniture “moving” companies, selling pictures on the street, and the like.<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that these sites, in which Israeli backpackers routinely work, are interesting sites for future research.

### Subcultures

In this section we will explore a variety of terms by which groups of backpackers *collectively* refer to themselves. The diversity of such terms reflects the backpackers’ own distinct terminology, designating the subcultures that have emerged over the years. The following passages touch only briefly on the surface of a rich variety of sociolinguistic practices of backpackers’ subcultures, which have eluded previous research.

Concluding her research on backpackers in Australia, Murphy (2001:63) claims: “There does not appear to exist a unique or distinct set of words or phrases used in backpacker social situations, as often is the case with other subcultures, such as surfers.” We will see that such distinct linguistic usages do appear within sub-cultures of Israeli backpackers.

### *Kovshim (conquerors) versus Mitnahalim (settlers)*

*Mitnahalim* (“settlers”) is the term by which some of the backpackers refer both to themselves, and are referred to by other backpackers (Maoz 1999). Most *mitnahalim* belong to an older group of backpackers, at their late twenties and early thirties. This label refers to some typical travel habits, one of which is dwelling at the same location for lengthy periods of time, in comparison to the younger Israeli backpackers (Maoz 1999). This definition is opposed to another subculture referred to as the *kovshim* (“conquerors”). The *kovshim* are the younger group of travelers, which are, in fact, the majority of Israeli backpackers. Their typical travel habits involve brief sojourns at various destinations and rapid moves from one destination to another. Sometimes, this rapid and hasty itinerary apparently involves some competition, as the backpackers try to visit a maximum number of destinations



in minimal time (to mark a "check" sign as they refer to it. Cf. Avrahami 2001; Elsrud 2001; Haviv 2002; Riley 1988; Sørensen 2003).

These two distinct subcultures of backpackers suggest a *conceptual and experiential continuum* on which one can locate his or her own pace and manners of travel and thus, one's own identity while traveling. While the older travelers linger on in certain sites, are "closer," as they put it, with local cultures and experience a "deeper," more "authentic" and "spiritual" sense of place, the younger backpackers, the *kovshim*, are more hectic and restless in their journey.<sup>24</sup> The younger backpackers are perceived as less "patient" and busy with "exploring or covering the territory" (Maoz 1999), that is, sightseeing quickly as much as possible. These distinctions, which partly reflect subcultures and hierarchies as referred to by the backpackers themselves, confirms Riley's (1988), Elsrud's (2001), and Sørensen's (2003) observations regarding "hierarchies" and the "norms" prevailing among backpackers.

It is important to note, from an ethnolinguistic perspective, that the terms for both "conquerors" and "settlers" are in common use in colloquial Hebrew in Israel, in a political semantic field. Specifically, *mitnahalim* is the common term designating (Jewish) Israelis who choose to live in the "occupied territories," that is, beyond the sovereign borders of the state of Israel. Since this national and political issue is highly charged, the term "*mitnahalim*" is therefore pregnant with a broader meaning. So is the term *kovshim* (conquerors), which is borrowed from the Zionist colonializing discourse, and refers to the conquest of the land, by various means, for the Zionist enterprise. During the journey these terms obtain a modified meaning, which ludically or ironically echoes and interplays with their original political and colonial meaning at home. This points to social and cultural aspects of the backpackers' discourse, that are manifested, or better, acted-out afar from home.

#### Karhanim or Manali versus Issta'im

The term *Karhanim* or *Manali*, refers to backpackers whose trip focuses on the use of drugs, mainly hashish (but also some heavier drugs), and who are part of a wider drug-related subculture (Leon 2000a, 2000b; Maoz 1999). Both terms, *Karhanim* and *Manali*, originate in local Hindi names: the Manali are named after the village of Manali, located in northern India (in the state of Himachal Pradesh), for a long time the popular site of backpackers in general (Riley 1988), and Israelis in particular; known for its abundance of drugs. Whereas *Karhanim* means sitting in a circle, a term probably originating from drug-related jargon (Leon 2000a).<sup>25</sup> The term *Issta'im* derives from the acronym of the Israeli Student Travel Agency (ISSTA), and refers to backpackers who do not consume psychoactive substances

and, in fact, might be critical to such practices undertaken by their peers. These terms point to an important subcultural distinction between Israeli backpackers: based on the use of drugs, the distinction involves a variety of other practices entailing different itineraries, sites, and social affiliations.

#### "The Wave"—itineraries and sites among South American Mochileros

As we have noted above, the term *gal* (wave) is commonly used among Israeli backpackers traveling in South and Central America, or *muchileros* as they are referred in the Spanish term by the locals. The contrasting directions of the two waves allow the Israeli backpackers to exchange information and lore, which occurs when the backpackers heading South meet with those heading North. Despite the difference in the direction of the "waves," the length of the journeys, and the destinations and sites visited by backpackers remain more or less the same.

In the course of time subdivisions have developed within backpackers in South America, resulting in subtaxonomies. For example, the wave called "August Trekkers" refers to backpackers who have began their journey during the "backpacking tourist season," from Northern countries such as Colombia or Ecuador, and are so called because these countries are abundant with trekking routes popular among backpackers.

### CONTRASTING MODES OF THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY AMONG ISRAELI YOUTH TOURISTS

Backpacking as a rite of passage, a moratorial and liminal period of separation, which facilitates the process of identity formation among Israeli youth and the formation of their attitude to their society of origin has been extensively discussed in the articles in this volume. Despite a significant degree of variation in the specifics of various kinds of backpacker trips and differences between various kinds of participants, such trips possess some basic common characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of Israeli youth tourism. Unfortunately, though many Israeli youth take the more standardized trips to Western Europe and North America, rather than the backpacker journeys to Third World countries, we have very little information on the nature of that form of youth tourism. Hence, we are unable to gauge the extent to which the youths traveling to the West engage in a similar quest of their identity—but we suppose it is safe to assume that their quest will be less intensive than that of the backpackers traveling to the more remote parts of the world.

However, there exists quite another, highly distinctive and fairly widespread form of youth tourism in Israel—organized visits to the death camps

in Poland. Superficially seen, there could hardly be two more contrasting forms of youth tourism than the backpackers' trip to remote locations in Asia or South America and the pilgrimages to the sites on which the Nazis killed their Jewish victims. However, despite the vastly different intent, spirit, and organization of the two forms of travel, there are some surprising parallels between them with regard to the processes of formation of the youths' identity and of their attitudes toward Israel, which are worth exploring. This is the reason that we decided to include Jackie Feldman's study of the of Israeli youths' trips to Poland in this collection.

In both cases there is an encounter with the "Other," which engenders these parallel processes, although this "Other" is vastly different in the two situations. The early backpackers were traveler-tourists (Cohen 1992b), who expose themselves to the Other of their own choice, whether on the Andean heights or the teeming cities of India. They were drawn together by their common exposure to the strangeness of the local environment, and gradually established Israeli "enclaves" to which were attracted those who follow in their steps. Located in limbo, these enclaves provide the backpackers possibility of unconstrained deliberation and reflection on themselves and their society, while the contrast between themselves and the surrounding Other assists them to shape their own identity and attitude toward Israel. The identity and attitudes thus emerge spontaneously from the unconstrained opportunity for contemplation in a strange and unimposing environment.

The backpackers typically depart for their journey after military service, but the young pilgrim-tourists traveling to the death camps of Poland are predominantly secondary-school students, facing recruitment to the army at the completion of their studies. While participation on such pilgrimages is voluntary, the journey itself is organized in groups with a strict, obligatory timetable. The pilgrimage is also a trip to the Other—but, in contrast to the backpackers' journey to the remote periphery of their world—it is a trip to an Other deeply embedded in the Jewish collective memory—the death world of the Nazi annihilation camps. While the backpackers are spontaneously induced to form their identity and attitudes to their society, the pilgrimage to the death camps is intentionally orchestrated by the authorities to induce in the receptive youths in the course of their journey the sense of continuity between the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel—between the death world of the past and the life-center of the present in Feldman's terms—and thus create or reinforce the identification with the State of Israel and the readiness to serve and defend it. This enhanced identification is achieved within the context of immediate and intensive contact with death and virtually complete isolation from the surrounding, everyday Polish environment. Unlike in the case of the backpackers, this isolation is not a consequence of a voluntary and spontaneous withdrawal but

is imposed on the participants by the authorities responsible for the trip. The youths are induced to perceive the surrounding environment as alien, hostile, and fraught with danger, and tend to identify the contemporary Poles with the Nazi criminals. In this respect they differ significantly from the backpackers, who may be overbearing, exploitative, or callous toward the locals, but are generally not hostile to them.

These two contrasting forms of youth tourism thus lead in different ways to surprisingly similar consequences: they are mechanisms by which personal identities and attitudes toward one's society are formed, during different phases in the youths' biography.

The relationship between these two forms of youth tourism raises some interesting questions, especially whether those youths who at an earlier stage joined the pilgrimages to Poland tend at a later stage to travel to remote sites unrelated to the Jewish past and tradition, or whether the two forms of travel attract different kinds of youth—those more identified with Jewishness and the Jewish past making pilgrimages to Poland and those less identified, at least at the outset, traveling to the Third World. Unfortunately, we do not possess the data to deal with this question.

### THE BACKPACKERS AND THEIR RESEARCHERS

"Thailand be'yadeinu" ("Thailand is in our hands"), the caption of an article in the Israeli press on the "conquest" of Thailand by Israeli tourists (see note no. 1), ironically paraphrases the militaristic jargon, in terms that Israeli youth tourists often express their experiences on their trip abroad (Noy 2002; in this volume). But it also discloses the tendency, often unintended, to conflate the "tourist space" or the "enclave" in which Israelis abroad predominate with the destination as a whole. The correspondent ironically claims that he discovered, that "Thailand, like New York or Los Angeles, is altogether only a suburb of Ashdod" (a city in Israel, p. 34). He reports with a tongue-in-cheek that he thought that he saw all that the Israelis have to offer in Thailand. He saw the Israeli films, like *Casablanca*, broadcast on videos, he found *shakshuka* (a popular Arab dish in Israel) on the menu of a tribal restaurant in northern Thailand, and was greeted with "*Ahalan, ya-ahi*," a common hybrid Arabic-Hebrew greeting on a remote southern Thai beach. Thailand emerges from the reportage, as a "little Israel" abroad.

This tendency to conflate the destination with the Israeli "enclave" emerges from most of the articles in this collection. Most Israeli backpackers appear to live and move principally with other Israelis, inhabit an Israeli "enclave," and to be concerned primarily with reflections on their home society. Surprisingly, the sites, people, and culture of the destination, which



would normally be expected to play a principal role in their experiences of the trip to a remote destination, appear relegated to the background; a decor, as Avrahami (2001) suggests. The host population, who is supposed to constitute one of the principal attractions for drifters and other non-conventional travelers, emerges colorless and insubstantial from the reports, mere shadows on the stage dominated by the Israeli in-group.

While we believe that the emphasis given in the articles to the Israeli enclave, of Israeli co-travelers and the preoccupation with Israel, captures the peculiarities of Israeli backpacking, it may possibly be somewhat exaggerated by the authors, owing to their own background and their methods of investigation. There is a close and pervasive affinity between most of the authors of the articles and their subjects: all are Israelis and almost all belong to the same age group as their subjects. Virtually all are themselves in some way associated with backpacking: most have been themselves backpackers before they have engaged in the study of the Israeli backpacking phenomenon; one is the father of several backpackers, whose travels drew him to the topic. Most articles are based on interviews conducted with backpackers on their return to Israel—in some cases several years later. Even where fieldwork was conducted abroad, the researchers moved within the circle of Israeli backpackers. Hence the "Thailand is in our hands" syndrome returns in their writings in a subtle form: the context of their research is the Israeli enclave, and not the destination as a whole. None of them conducted a wider community study of a major backpacking destination, which would include other subjects than the Israelis.

The common background and the relatively narrow focus of the investigation necessarily drew the attention of both the researchers and their subjects to those topics that were specifically "Israeli" on the trip. These are the topics on which researchers and subjects shared a common perspective, on which the researchers—as Israeli anthropologists—were most interested, and on which they were able, owing to their own experience, to collect the richest and most detailed information. Indeed, approaching the backpacker trip within the framework of a "rite of passage," common to virtually all the articles—while by no means wrong—implicitly situates the research in the conceptual space bridging Israel and the travelers' apparently far-off destinations, and thus focuses on the Israeliness of the backpackers to the possible exclusion of other topics, to which a researcher more remote from the Israeli situation, or more inclined to approach the topic from a different conceptual perspective, would lend much more attention, and thus possibly rectify the Israeli-centered emphasis of the articles in this collection.

This book should therefore be read as a study in the anthropology of Israel, focusing on young Israelis on extended journeys to relatively remote destinations abroad. The more specifically "touristic" aspects of their journey,

their exposure to the environment and culture of the destinations, their interaction with the local populations, and the impact of their trip on their view of the world, remain still largely to be explored.

Finally, there is the problem of accessibility of subjects, which may well have contributed to some exaggeration of the closeness and self-preoccupation of the Israeli backpacker emerging from this collection: researchers working abroad find it easier to meet those Israelis who stick to their "enclave" and to other Israelis, than those who travel individually and avoid their compatriots; and those who studied the backpackers on their return, necessarily missed those—perhaps few, but important—Israeli youth, who have departed on a journey with the intention to return, but never did—staying semipermanently in some remote corner of the world, often marrying or cohabiting with a local spouse or living in a Buddhist monastery. Whether their concerns, points of view, and attitudes toward their country of origin parallel or contrast those of the returnees is therefore a topic still open to investigation.

#### REVIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE VOLUME

The contributors whose work is represented in this volume are typically young researchers, trained in sociology, anthropology, and psychology. All of the contributions are original, they are all based on fieldwork the researchers have conducted, and they are either parts or extensions of theses and dissertations they have written on the subject.

The first three essays are solely concerned with the group of young Israeli backpackers to whom we have referred thus far. In her work, Ayana S. Haviv inquires into the formation of a new and alternative type of national identity that takes place during the extended trip. While the backpackers are still strongly allied with being Israeli, and although their collectivized travel patterns enforce this identity, they nevertheless establish a new conception of what it means to be "Israeli." Haviv's discussion fruitfully applies transnationalist trends of thought, and the examination of the role tourist consumption patterns play in the formation of the Israeli backpackers collective identity in the Far-East, and the youths' alignment with Western culture vis-à-vis its opposition with the Orient.

Lisa Anteby-Yemini, Keren Bazini, Irit Gerstein, and Gali Kling are primarily interested in deterritorialized populations and translocal cultures. They suggest an ethnographic inquiry into people "on the move," which sheds light the relationship between identity, place, and culture. Subsequently, their research clarifies what "locality," "home," and "community" mean with regard to Israeli backpackers. They illuminate the cultural

"techniques" by which the backpackers create and sustain a "home away from home," and examine the different experiences of travel and practices of displacement among the youths.

Chaim Noy's research probes into the intensive network of interpersonal communication among the backpackers, and to the far-reaching implications it carries in shaping and constructing the actual itinerary and choice of activities on the one hand, and at the same time the collective Israeli experience abroad on the other hand. Noy's work brings together theories from communication, narrative, and social construction, and suggests, among the rest, that adventure and travel narratives play a crucial role in the construction of a collective national identity within a certain interpersonal sociality. Furthermore, the research suggests that the heightened pattern of communication is, in and of itself, a constitutive element among the Israeli backpackers, and reflects close interpersonal communication characteristics typical in the Israeli society.

The following essays by Darya Maoz and Dalit Bloch-Tzemach, while revolving around young Israeli backpackers, focus on two adjacent groups that are conceptually related to the Israeli backpackers: the older group of backpackers, with somewhat different patterns of travel and subsequently different travel experience, and the "dwelling-tourists" (or "*vaigar*"), who are typically backpackers who chose to reside temporarily in one of the trip's destinations (Japan, in this case), respectively. Hence, both works conceptually probe into, problematize and expand the concept of the Israeli backpacker.

Darya Maoz's contribution focuses on Israelis of an older age cohort who backpack to destinations in Asia. Since these travelers are older—by approximately a decade—and they do not leave for the trip after the military service, but rather after spending time while acquiring higher education and working, both their travel patterns and their experiences are considerably different. Their research thus sheds light on their own unique backpacking experience, which, interestingly, is partially constructed vis-à-vis the way by which they conceive of the younger, more hectic, Israeli backpackers.

Dalit Bloch-Tzemach's contribution is concerned with young Israelis who have traveled to Japan and have strayed there for periods of a few months or years, while studying, working or traveling. Bloch-Tzemach contends that though they have initially backpacked in Japan, the extended stay and the manner by which they engage in work and study conceptually designates these young travelers as belonging to a different group than the backpacker, that is, "dwelling-travelers." While Bloch-Tzemach case study concerns Israelis in Japan, it is illuminating in regard to other countries, where to many Israeli backpackers travel and dwell temporarily, and to the ways by which some of them "leave behind" backpacking travel patterns and experience to assume a different transnational identity.

While the contributions by Maoz and Bloch-Tzemach allow for a subtle comparative perspective, as they inquire into adjacent groups of Israeli travelers, the contribution by Jackie Feldman suggests a comparative perspective in a more traditional sense. As we have mentioned in the section above, relating to the youth's travels to Eastern Europe, there are more connections and reflections between the two forms of youth tourism and travel than initially meet the eye. Of particular interest are the facts that in both cases Israeli youth is at stake, the construction and negotiation of collective national identity is a salient and explicit feature, and the context is that of tourism (to the "Second World" or the "Third World"). Of course, these facts are interrelated in various ways which, we believe, insightfully shed light on contemporary Israeli society, and which are the rationale for including Feldman's work on the youths' journeys to Poland in this volume.

## NOTES

1. Articles about Israeli backpackers appear almost daily in Israeli newspapers, usually in the form of news concerning tragic or near tragic occurrence (such as, for example, in *Ma'ariv*, weekend supplement, 27.7.2001, and "Help Us locate Avshalom," by A. Chaim, 13.8.2002). In other cases articles published in newspapers' supplements deal with backpackers' stories and experiences, exotica, and the like (such as "Thailand Is in Our Hands," in *Hair*, 14.6.91, and "rebellious, like everyone," *Hareetz*, 9.2.2001).

2. The definition of the developmental phase(s) between childhood and adulthood is continuously debated (following Levinson, 1978; Levinson et al., 1978; cf. Cohen, D 1995). The terms adopted here are "youth," and "early adulthood" (Bar-Yoseph 1996; Lieblich 1989: 149–179, 1995).

3. Mevorach's (1997) estimates, which are based on statistical sampling, also point to a total of 30,000–35,000 backpackers annually. See also Haviv 2002.

4. Several interesting studies have been conducted regarding these developmental aspects in Israeli Youth (Adler and Kahane 1984; Dar 1993; Lieblich 1989, 1995; Lieblich and Perlow 1988; Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder 1988; Sasson-Levy 2000; Sion 1997).

5. Heichal's work with backpackers traveling in the late eighties (2000), as well as Ghinsberg's book (*Back from Tuichi*, 1985), which describe his adventures in South America, point to the fact that in the early eighties processes of institutionalization of Israeli backpacking were already under way. But cf. Uriely et al. (2002) and Haviv (2002), who suggests that the beginning of backpacking may be located in the eighties.

6. Regarding implications of the Israeli evacuation of the Sinai peninsula, see Cohen 1987 and Kimmerling, 1987. A common cliché among backpackers in this regard is that "the plane from New-Delhi lands in Sinai," thus charting the similarities between these two areas that lay beyond Eretz-Israel.

7. Such research on the army has been undertaken from historical, sociological, and anthropological perspectives. It has primarily been concerned with military symbols, beliefs, and myths and their historical role in Israeli society. It has also dealt with the

military and war as constitutive elements in Israeli national identity (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1997; Kimmerling 1993; Lissak 1984; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999; Lomsky-Feder 2000; Maman, Ben-Ari, and Rosenhek 2001).

8. These circumstances are the result of the Six-Day War (1967), the Lebanon War (1982) and, later, the Palestinian Intifadas (1987, 2000), which have increased the contact between young Israelis in uniform and native Arab populations (Eisenstadt 1985, 1986; Gal 1990; Hammami and Hilal 2001; Horowitz 1984; Ron 2001).

9. Researching the pilgrimage voyages taken by young Israelis to Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe, Feldman (2000, and in this volume) has also observed that both foods and music from the homeland are consumed within the "Israeli spaces," such as the hotel rooms and busses.

10. These clichés are a part of the intensive word-of-mouth communication among backpackers in general (Elsrud 2001; Murphy 2001; Sørensen 2003). This genre of clichés usually takes the rhetorical form of a joke. For example, a local citizen is alleged to have asked a backpacker, "How many Israelis are there (in Israel)?" The response is "Some six million," to which the local asks surprisingly: "Are all of them currently here?" Notice that abroad this variant is unique since it not only testifies to the large number of Israeli backpackers but also to the existence of an Israeli center abroad. Or rather, it illustrates the process of sites turning into centers. It does so by relating to the homeland—Israel—and by alluding to the intricate and problematic issues of demography, territoriality, and nationality in Israeli society (see Kimmerling's 1983).

11. Obviously, such quotations echo the search for authenticity, particularly typical of backpackers (Elsrud 2001; Noy 2004). However, the specific question quoted above does suggest an Israel-centric view, according to which the authenticity, as the exotic "other," lays beyond the Israeli collective.

12. Kimmerling (1989a) employs the "frontier theory" following F. J. Turner. The theory suggests the possibility of conceiving of the fringes as frontiers, that is, not as definite limits or boundaries but rather as terrain waiting to be explored.

13. For example, "brother (*achi*), Thailand is in our hands." A newspaper article by Eyal Halfon. In *Ha'ir*, June 6, 1991.

14. One such store, "the traveler" (*hametayel* in Hebrew), has been extensively researched by Jacobson (1987) and later by Salmon (1998). While during the eighties the *hametayel* was the only such store operating, in the nineties an impressive growth has taken place, both in the number of stores and branches that are operating, and in the array of services and facilities offered to the backpackers. For example, in a shopping mall in the city of Haifa, the gear and equipment store is joined by an array of services that include travel and insurance agencies, a medical clinic, and the like (*Ha'aretz*, business supplement, 1.7.2001).

15. The advertisements for this lecture designate not only the specific destination but also the target audience. This points to the emergence of subcultures of backpackers, such as that of observant Jews (Heichal 2000).

16. Bloch-Tzemach (1998), Maoz (1999), and Simchai (1998) have independently identified a subgroup of backpackers who continually travel back and forth between Israel backpackers' destinations for a period of a decade or longer. Heichal (2000) suggests that some of the backpackers in this subgroup eventually become active social agents for backpacking, that is, travel guides or "lecturers" at the aforementioned stores.

17. *Fistuk* (literally Pistachio) is a popular character in a children's TV program, which was on the air in Israel during the late seventies and early eighties. Hence, such names—which noncoincidentally include the word "home"—stimulate nostalgia and perfectly complement the "regressive" atmosphere and the "Ol' Talk" of tourists and backpackers (Dann 1996:218–228). Thus Dann's observation, that "it is into this nostalgic environment that tourism inserts itself" (219) is convincingly validated among backpackers as well.

18. As such they add to their trip an entirely new context, and become part of the currently popular trend of travel pilgrimages (secular as well as religious) in search for one's roots (Feldman 1995; Levy 1997).

19. See Bloch-Tzemach 1998:88–90; Heichal 2000:49–54; and compare Simchai 1998:74–98.

20. This information refers only to Jewish youth who have served in the army. There is no data on backpackers who have not served in the military.

21. Leon (2000) indicated yet another older age-cohort who's members visit the backpackers' sites in India. These are veteran backpackers who travel for short periods of time during holidays and vacations to the destinations and sites they once visited, usually with their families (Leon 2000).

22. Although the backpackers' itineraries and sites are quite diverse, research has focused nearly exclusively on the backpackers who travel to Asia.

23. These young Israelis in North America have received some media attention lately, in the wake of the September events in the United States, when nearly a hundred were detained because of illegal employment in the United States (John Mintz, "60 Israelis on Tourist Visas Detained Since Sep. 11," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2001).

24. Some older backpackers are inclined to a more leisurely and less rough style of travel than the younger ones, which corresponds with higher travel expenses (see Sørensen, 2003; and "India for the Spoiled" (*hodu lamephunakim*), by T. Zelig, in *Laisha*, 8.4.2002, pp. 50–54).

25. For research regarding patterns of drug usage among backpackers and variables predicting it, see Dayan 1999 and Mevorach 1997. The empirical findings show a large difference in drug consumption between backpackers and a comparison group of nonbackpackers in the homeland. As to the backpackers, some 62 percent reported using "light" drugs, and 34 percent reported using heavy drugs as well; while in the same cohort in the homeland, only 6 percent report using light drugs and 1 percent report the use of heavier ones (Dayan 1999:32–33). These findings, which present a substantial difference, are confirmed by Mevorach's findings.

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