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ISRAELI AMERICANS AND THEIR CHILDREN: KEEPING TIES TO THE HOMELAND

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By Marianne Sanua

Good morning. My topic today is Israeli Americans and their children, and in some cases grandchildren, living in the United States. First of all there are a lot of them and the number is growing larger, even though many thousands do return to Israel each year. They have become a very important sub-ethnic American Jewish immigrant group. No one can say exactly how many; the exact number is extremely controversial, especially when you ask the question who or what is an Israeli. At the low extreme are sources that claim there are no more than 140,000 Israelis actually living permanently in the United States and only 25,000 living in the Los Angeles area where we are today. At the other end there are sources which claim there are up to a million Israelis living in the United States. That is most likely an exaggeration. My sources who work closely with the Israeli government estimate that there are at least half a million, perhaps as many as 550,000. And I believe that number is actually realistic if you count everybody – Israelis who were born in Israel, Israelis who were born elsewhere which is 40 percent of the Israeli population, their spouses, who are sometimes native born American Jews, their children, all the students, all the young people visiting for at least a year after their army service, everybody who comes here on temporary or non-immigrant visas for what they believe will be a limited time -- and they end up staying for years. A number of them are actually undocumented and are working under the table, so to speak.

They are concentrated in three major areas – the first is the New York area, the second is the Los Angeles area (here the similarity to the Mediterranean climate is a draw) and the third is Miami and South Florida. However there are significant Israeli-American communities in several major American cities, including Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Philadelphia and Baltimore. There, immigrants have set up “mini-Israels.” There are restaurants, video stores, local Hebrew newspapers, and an entire line of Hebrew speaking businesses which cater to their needs. Since the early 2000s Israeli television, including programs aimed at children, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In all these places there are day care centers, pre-schools, and school programs from elementary through high school that seek to educate Israeli-American children. An especially important goal of these educational institutions is to get the children to speak, read and write the Hebrew language. Unless families are proactive about it, this ability gets very quickly lost. This education takes place either in Jewish day schools, to which Israeli Americans disproportionately send their children (that is compared to native-born American Jews) or in afternoon or scouting programs which are geared to those who attend public school. We are also seeing a rush, which started only in the last five years, to set up Hebrew language charter schools, which are actually tuition-free public schools that teach modern Israeli Hebrew. I’ll have more to say about those in a moment.

These educational programs come from four sources – the first is Chabad, which was the first organization to reach out and establish special Chabad houses and congregations specifically for Israeli Americans and their children. The Rebbe himself – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson – became concerned about Israelis in America and their children being lost to Judaism. As early as the 1980s he began to send out shlichim, or emissaries, whose specific job was to set up and run Hebrew language congregations and religious-oriented programming for Israeli-American families. The second source is the Israeli government which began encouraging Israeli Americans or their children to come back to Israel; they have also come to terms with the idea that many are going to stay in the US and to keep them connected both to Israel and to Judaism, they have very recently begun subsidizing educational and cultural programming geared toward them and their children in their places of residence. The third source is the Israeli communities themselves, which have recently realized that they need to be concerned about the second and third generation. Finally there are the Federations and American Jewish philanthropists who have recently realized that Israeli Americans, who happen to have very strong Jewish identities, and many have become quite affluent, can be an asset to the otherwise shrinking and aging American Jewish community. There are many good reasons, therefore, to reach out and cultivate them, which they started to do.

The attitude toward Israeli-Americans and their children by both the government of Israel and the organized American Jewish community has changed radically in the last 40 years. These attitudes have had a direct impact on both the quantity and the quality of programming directed at them.

As most of us probably know, for many years the Israeli government viewed Israeli Jews who left the country to live elsewhere with revulsion -- as traitors and deserters. They were called pejoratively “yordim,” those who go down, as opposed to “olim,” those who go up, and the Israeli authorities specifically told the American Jewish establishment not to have anything to do with them and not help them in any way. If they did, it was feared, this would have the effect of endorsing and aiding rather than discouraging this movement of people. This was in direct contrast to the aid that American Jews had given and were giving to every other Jewish immigrant group that ever came to America, especially Russian-speaking Jews. What Israelis called “yerida” was seen as a mortal threat to Israel – ideologically, morally, socially, demographically, militarily. And Israeli Americans were viewed as pariahs on both sides of the ocean. In 1976, in a nationally televised interview on the state of the nation, then Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin called Israelis who had left the homeland “nefolet shel nemushot” – the fallen among the weaklings. Various other Israeli officials and Consuls in America had less-than-complimentary names to call them, which are remembered to this day. And this was basically the attitude among both the Israeli government and the American Jewish community until about 1985.

And then the attitude began to change, slowly. In 1991 for example Yitzchak Rabin, who at the time was giving an interview to a Hebrew language newspaper in Los Angeles, recanted his views, saying “What I said then doesn’t apply today. The Israelis living abroad are an integral part of the Jewish community and there is no point talking about ostracism.” His view and that of the government was that Israeli Americans should be encouraged to be part of the Jewish community and helped to perpetuate Israeli language and culture. His reasoning was that this would offer them and their children some chance of maintaining their Jewish identity. Also the government began to see that it could not afford to alienate so many hundreds of thousands of its potential citizens because they were a large pool for re-aliyah – that is, immigrating back to Israel. And in fact, many thousands of Israeli Americans do return to Israel each year and several hundred Israeli American children go back to Israel to serve in the IDF. It would appear that a majority of those children end up staying in Israel permanently. In 1992 the Israeli government set up a special department in the Ministry of Absorption for them and started the “Toshav Chozer” program – that is, for returning citizens – offering Israelis and their children living abroad the same package of benefits it promised any new olim, including cash assistance, low-cost airfare, suspension or reduction of taxes, financial aid for school tuition, assistance in finding jobs and housing, and reduction in military duty. In 1995 they even published a booklet, entitled “For Those Returning Home.” This was happening at a time when the Israeli economy seemed much more secure, and almost one million Russian speaking Jews were coming, which was an incredible demographic “shot in the arm” for the entire country.

In addition, many Israelis living abroad maintain professional connections with Israel and make investments there and in many ways are boosting hi-tech industry. And quite a few have become what are called “transnationals,” meaning they actually live in both countries and commute back and forth in ways that are financially beneficial to both the United States and to Israel. So today the terms “yordim” and “Yerida” are not much used anymore and if they are, the words no longer have the sting they once had. Israelis living abroad very recently have finally become an accepted fact of life.

Also, along with the change of heart in the Israeli government, there has been a change of heart in the leaders of the American Jewish community. Jewish federations in American cities are now reaching out to Israeli Americans and their children and providing them with services and education, either trying to integrate them into organizations that already exist or encouraging them to form organizations of their own. And there are good reasons for that too. First of all they are Jews, and taking care of Jews is their responsibility. Also, they have realized that Israeli-Americans can be an asset to the American Jewish community. For a long time there was a stereotype that Israelis were disconnected from the American Jewish community, that they had no desire to identify with it.

Recent surveys have shown this view to be completely untrue. In fact, one demographer in Los Angeles, Pini Herman, has said that the opposite is the case; Israeli-Americans are in fact “The Jews among the Jews.” In surveys that have been done, most notably the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000 and a 2009 study of Israeli Jews in greater New York by Steven M. Cohen, Israeli Americans actually far outscore native American Jews in almost every single indicator you can think of that relates to Jewish identification and continuity. They are much younger as a group than American non-Israeli Jews, and they have larger families. As an immigrant group they have been very successful and have a high median income and relatively high levels of education. They live and locate their businesses in established Jewish neighborhoods, sell products and services to Jewish consumers, enter business fields where Jews already play important roles, and engage in a wide range of joint ventures with native Jews.

Their closest friends are more likely to be Jewish or Israeli. They speak Hebrew, they belong to synagogues and Jewish community centers, they are more likely to be married to other Jews – nationally 75 percent are in-married as opposed to 38 percent of American Jews. In New York 96 percent of Israelis are in-married as compared with 78 percent of non-Israeli Jews. They are more connected to Israel, visit it much more often – either several times a year or several weeks during the summer -- and believe that American Jews living in the US should donate financially to Israeli causes. They keep funds in Israeli banks and send their kids to Israeli oriented religious, language, recreational, cultural and national activities. They visit Jewish museums, attend Jewish cultural events, and visit sites of Jewish interest more often. They are ritually more active in things like lighting Shabbat candles, keeping a kosher home, attending a Passover Seder. On any measure they are more observant than American Jews, even those that do not identify themselves as Orthodox. They believe in community and Jewish peoplehood and the idea that Jews are responsible one for the other. They are much more likely to give their children a Jewish education than non-Israeli American Jews and a higher percentage of them send their children to all-day Jewish schools. Israeli women and some men play a vital role as teachers in all areas of American Jewish education. For example, it has been estimated that one third of the teachers in Los Angeles Jewish day schools and between 20 and 40 percent of the students are Israelis or children of Israelis. In other words they come out as highly engaged and committed Jews which are just the sort of people the established American Jewish community wants and needs. They are also a revitalizing force, moving into Jewish neighborhoods where most of the original residents have died or gone to Florida. So in many ways, it is being discovered today, when so many American Jews are being lost to assimilation and intermarriage, or are simply indifferent to anything Jewish, Israeli Americans are seen as having a vital role to play in maintaining American Jewish communal life.

In addition, the Israeli government is no longer looking at Israeli-Americans merely as a pool for potential re-aliyah. They have realized that at a time when Israel is being demonized and delegitimized all over the world, a group of hundreds of thousands friendly American citizens who can vote and wield political power should be cultivated and encouraged to maintain their Israeli connections and identity -- into the first, second and third generations if possible.

For all these reasons there has developed in centers of Israeli American population a significant communal infrastructure of programs and institutions dedicated to keeping Israelis involved and educating their children. I will now give a review of some of these programs.

The first and oldest American Jewish organization to reach out to Israelis and their children was, as I mentioned, Chabad, long before any of the others. The first Chabad house for Israelis, called Ha’vaada le’dovrei ivrit, was established in Philadelphia in 1985 by Rabbi Zalman Lipsker. Today they send out a weekly newsletter in Hebrew to over 1,000 families. There are 25 such Chabad Israeli centers in the United States and Canada. They offer Shabbat services, Shabbat dinners, and holiday events in modern Israeli Hebrew, in contrast to the European style Ashkenazic Hebrew that is common at most Chabads. They offer religious instruction for public school students, a children’s club, a teen club, in some places and early childhood- preschool center, circumcision, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, and if that happy occasion should present itself, weddings.

Probably **the best example of Israeli-American organization and programming for children and youth can be found in the Los Angeles area,** which some of you probably know better than I do. And according to reports in the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles concern for the next generation was the main impetus for forming the ILC – the Israeli Leadership Council very recently in 2007, in Hebrew “Ha-Moadon Ha-Manhigut ha-yisraelit.” The ILC, [now renamed the “Israeli American Council” of IAC] which is made up of dozens of wealthy Israeli businessmen, **has become a sort of unofficial “Federation” for Israelis.** They have founded a number of new cultural, educational and Israel advocacy programs in the Los Angeles area and have generously funded and revitalized others that already existed. When they held their first annual gala event at the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel in May 2009 which was attended by over 700 people, guests were greeted with a letter from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who wrote: “On behalf of the citizens of Israel, I wanted to say thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with Israel, for working to ensure that the deep feeling of solidarity you have toward Israel will be passed onto the next generation and for strengthening unity among our people, which is more important than ever.”

The writer of the article that reported on this event observed “Times sure have changed for Israeli expatriates” and recalled the nasty names that Yitzchak Rabin had called them back in 1976. The author wrote: “The recent explosion of activity – which includes political activism, social gatherings and cultural programming – has been fueled by a widespread and growing desire in the community to support Israel from afar, as well as to connect with one another in social settings and, most fervently, to perpetuate their Israeli Jewish identity via their children, whom many Israelis living here fear are being lost to assimilation…Ultimately what pulled the Israelis into this current state of cohesion is something every Jew can relate to: children. Every Israeli interviewed for this article cited the next generation as their inspiration to become involved, to seek out other Israelis and to foster a bond with the greater Jewish community.” An Israeli mother of three is quoted as saying, “We mistakenly assume that our children will naturally inherit our culture and language and love of Israel. But they won’t. We have to be more proactive about passing down our heritage. Israelis are having a hard time coming to that realization.”

Different educational and cultural programming geared toward children and young people that are supported by the IAC include the Tzofim, the Israeli scouts, who were down to 50 members but grew recently to 200; (I’ll say more about the Tzofim in a moment) the Bnai Akiva youth movement, which has four chapters in the area now; 90 percent of the members are children of Israelis; extra-curricular activities such as Israeli folk dancing, a mountain biking club, and krav maga – the Israeli form of hand-to-hand combat, which is very popular with boys. The MATI center and the Ami School (AMI meaning “My people”) which offers an after-school Israel centered curriculum twice a week in Hebrew for kindergartners through seventh-grade students, which offers classes on Torah, holidays, prayer, and reading and writing Hebrew; there is also the Los Angeles Hebrew High school which goes up to 12th grade and the Hebrew Discovery Center; there are community sing-a-longs, the IAC has been bringing in top-name Israeli entertainers to Los Angeles; there is special support for Israeli-oriented programs at the Kadima Hebrew Academy, which seems to be the favorite school for Israeli-Americans to send their children; a group called “Dor Chadash” (in Hebrew the “new generation”) which is geared to young professionals; they also have an organization called BINA, which is the counterpart to the young leadership groups that most American Jewish organizations have—that is oriented to people aged 25-45; in 2010 it had 300 members; and a program called “Shagririm: The Ambassadors” which trains young people to be pro-Israel advocates on California campuses, where many Israeli American children are attending school and are confronted with pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli activism. The Shagririm have representatives at the University of California in Irvine, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, San Diego and the University of Southern California.

Another interesting program which has been supported by the IAC and private American Jewish philanthropists is something called “Sifriat Pajama be’America.” This is a program which provides free classic Hebrew language children’s books to Israeli American parents and their children. “Sifriat Pajama” means bedtime stories. This is a sister program to something called the “PJ Library” which was founded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. That was launched in 2005 to provide free Jewish children’s books in English every month to American Jewish families along with guides and suggested discussion questions so the parents can talk about the books with their children. The goal was to encourage reading and to instill Jewish values in them. Today more than 70,000 American Jewish families are participating in the PJ Library program. In 2009 the Grinspoon Foundation, the ILC, the Avi Chai Foundation, and several other Jewish philanthropic groups cooperated to establish Sifriat Pajama be’America which does the same thing for Hebrew children’s books. All families with at least one Hebrew reading and speaking parent or caregiver with children ages 3 through 8 can sign up and receive one book every month for free; and they can keep them, and the books do not have to be returned. Within a few months of the program’s start 2,000 Hebrew speaking families signed up and they are expecting that number to double. The books are selected in Israel by a team of Jewish educators and representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Education. An advertisement for the program in a Hebrew-language American newspaper announces “Our Children in America can also enjoy the stories we grew up with – and free.” The first selection was by Lea Goldberg entitled “Hayeled Ha-Ra” (The Bad Boy) which apparently every child raised in Israel once had read to him or her.

In any review of Israeli-American youth-oriented programming, the Tzofim, or Israeli scouts, deserve special mention. This is of course oriented toward older children, ages 8 through 18. Their main headquarters is in New York and they have regional offices throughout the US and Canada – in the Southwest, which includes Los Angeles, the Midwest, the Northwest, Florida, and Toronto. According to Orit Mizner, the Southwest Regional director, who I spoke to, there are several components of the Israeli Scouts, but the youth movement is only for children from Hebrew speaking families. It is not open to general Jewish Americans. In this component they have 20 chapters in the US and Canada with about 2,000 members. They meet every Sunday and it’s common for the Israeli American parents to socialize with one another while their children are meeting. There’s a very strong tie between the Tzofim and the Tzahal, the IDF. About ten to twenty percent of them, depending on the year, actually go to Israel to serve in the army and of those who go about 80 percent end up staying permanently.

The Israeli Scouts in cooperation with the IDF have a month-long summer program in Israel called “Chetz ve’keshet” – Arrow and Arch in English – or “CVK” for short. This program includes touring the entire country and one week of Gadna or the same paramilitary training that Israeli youth receive. Every year approximately 150 Americans go. The program is expensive, over $6,000, but they do offer scholarships. The counselors come from the Education Division of the IDF and are full-time soldiers. They are chosen for their background working with teens and youth and knowledge of Israel. In addition the American participants are matched with several dozen Israeli Scouts who are chosen for their personality, maturity, leadership skills and ability to communicate both in English and Hebrew. The Scouts also offer a program called Tzofim Garin Tzabar, which provides assistance and support to Jewish young adults, ages 18-23, who have chosen to move to Israel and serve in the IDF. In Israel they are adopted so to speak by a kibbutz which becomes their home away from home for the duration of their army service. There is a preparation process which takes place during a period of six months in Los Angeles. Each year about 350 American participants go. This is by the way part of a general phenomenon all over the world of Jewish young men and some women going to Israel by themselves to serve in the army. Altogether that is at least a thousand young people every year.

Another Israeli-American community which is exceptionally well-organized with widespread programming for children is San Diego. The Israeli community there is not anywhere near as large as the ones in New York, Los Angeles or Florida but it is very close-knit and intensive. In 2006 a group of Israelis there formed an organization called “Tarbuton” (Tarbut being the Hebrew word for “culture”) or Ha-Mercaz Le’Tarbut Yisraelit – the Israeli Cultural Center. The goal was to build Jewish and Israeli identity for children growing up in the United States but with strong ties to Israel. Tarbuton today includes a Hebrew speaking playgroup, Hebrew immersion classes for pre-school and elementary school children, and classes for children of all ages about Jewish holidays and all aspects of Jewish and Israeli culture. Activities include music, storytelling, performing arts, an Israeli folk dancing group, and arts and crafts for the children and Israeli films, Hebrew book clubs, lectures and plays for the adults. Part of the funding for Tarbuton comes from the local Jewish Federation and part from the Israeli government itself, from the Ministry of Absorption. They also run an Israeli culture and Modern Hebrew summer day camp. One of the founders of Tarbuton, an Israeli-American woman, reportedly wanted to create a cultural center for the community without the need to become a member of a specific synagogue. Tarbuton also has group celebrations of holidays, and trips for both adults and children together. They also have an Israeli food group that gathers to cook and eat Israeli food and share recipes throughout the years and they have published an Israeli cookbook, both in English-Hebrew and in English-Spanish.

Probably the newest and perhaps the most important organization aimed at Israeli Americans and their children is something called “MITCHABRIM” – in Hebrew the word for “Connections.” It was launched only last year, on May 20, 2012. But it has become extremely active in a short period of time. Their mission statement reads: "Mitchabrim" is an organization for Israelis who are seeking to strengthen their ties with Israel outside religion and the established Jewish communities. The project helps unaffiliated Israeli's build a community infrastructure and connect with other Israelis in their area.”

So far it has three branches – Mitchabrim New York, Mitchabrim Los Angeles, and Mitchabrim Valley – that is the San Fernando Valley. However it will probably have other offices and branches soon. All their activities are directly funded or subsidized by the Israeli government, through the Ministry of the Diaspora (in Hebrew, “Misrad ha-hasbara ve-ha-tefutsot) and the World Zionist Organization. In New York they advertise themselves in Hebrew as “Ha-mercaz ha-kehilati shelcha be-New York” – your Jewish community center. This is the Ministry by the way which is the source of the estimate given about five months ago that there are 550,000 Israeli Americans living in the United States.

There was a grand opening of the Mitchabrim project in Los Angeles last year on Jerusalem Day, May 2012 which featured celebration, Israeli music, and food. Reportedly hundreds of Israeli-American families attended. The Israeli government representative who was there (his name is Yaakov Hagoel) made this official statement: “We initiated Project ‘Mitchabrim’ in order to meet the basic needs of Israelis living in the Diaspora…. Other goals of the project are to serve as a bridge between the Israeli community in the United States and the land, state, and heritage of Israel. We seek to encourage each child of Israeli parents to love their country, their Judaism and their people’s rich heritage. We will also take care to help every child of Israeli parents feel comfortable visiting Israel… The project respects the decision of Israelis who choose to live abroad and seeks not to change their minds, but to help them build community infrastructure and connect to their needs in their place of residence.” That obviously marks a huge change of heart on the part of the Israeli government.

The Mitchabrim program includes Hebrew language and Israel-oriented education for children of all ages; a youth group; and major events around Israeli holidays such as Jerusalem Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

I spoke to Tzvika Levy, the director of Mitchabrim New York and the main instructor of the afternoon program for Israeli-American public school students. The school is located in Mill Basin, which is a very pleasant neighborhood of single-family homes in Brooklyn. It is called “Little Israel” because there are about 2000 Israeli families living together there in a one and a half square mile. The local grocery store is called “the shuk.” And if they don’t send them to day school almost all the children attend nearby James Madison High School in Brooklyn – Tzvika Levy says there are at least 400 Israeli teenagers in the school, and they all tend to socialize with one another, so this is an interesting example of an Israeli ethnic enclave. He said that the main idea of the program is that “we should have a connection to each other, not so much to the State of Israel even though we are sponsored by it. We want to preserve the culture and the mentality.” The afternoon school meets for two hours twice a week and the curriculum includes Zionism, the history of the state, Israeli songs, holidays, Israeli current events, and above all rigorous instruction in speaking, reading, and writing Modern Hebrew which is extremely important to the parents. The goal as he puts it, is that when they go to visit their grandmothers and cousins and their cousin’s friends in Israel, which most of them do every summer, they should feel at home and able to communicate with them and not just show up speaking only English. He also stresses Israeli geography. For example, he will ask the students, where in Israel do your parents come from, or where does your grandmother live? If the answer is “Petach Tikva” he will give them the entire history of Petach Tikva, when it was founded, who the mayors were and so on. If the answer is “Jerusalem” there is much more to say. He says he serves up to 1600 families all together; there are 120 kids in the youth group that meets three evenings a week and 90 students in the afternoon school. He also runs a summer day camp, with the same goals. Tuition is very low because it is subsidized by the Israeli government.

Finally I come to a program which has no tuition at all and could not have been foreseen even ten years ago, and that is the very rapid formation of public Hebrew language charter schools. In Florida they are known as the Ben Gamla schools (the name of the school is taken from the high priest Yehoshua ben Gamla, who is known in the Talmud for establishing yeshivot throughout ancient Judea). The first one in Hollywood, Florida, opened in the fall of 2007 with an Orthodox rabbi as the principal, and since then at least five more have opened in Florida, with more in the planning stage. Many of the students were before then attending Jewish day schools; the Ben Gamla schools have become so popular that they had to establish a lottery for admission. A charter school is a public school which is state-funded but privately run by an independent board. There are already hundreds of dual-language charter schools throughout the United States, 81 in New York City alone, in such languages as Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Chinese and Korean. And American Jewish philanthropists, seeing what is called the “tuition crisis” of parents who want to send their children to Jewish day schools (which start at $10,000 a year and often go much higher) had the idea, why not start a Hebrew language public charter school? One of the main American Jewish philanthropists behind this movement has been Michael Steinhardt, the same one who funded Taglit, or the Birthright Israel program. The idea has been controversial, because it would appear to violate the principle of separation of church and state which has been so important to American Jews. The way these schools get around it is not to teach religion or anything connected to religion, to be completely non-sectarian, which is a very tall order when one is trying to teach Hebrew but it has been done successfully, at least well enough to satisfy the state legislatures. The curriculum is strictly modern Israeli Hebrew, no Bible or Mishnah or prayer or any of the traditional Jewish texts; and the schools have to be open to students of all backgrounds, not just Jews. Jewish parents have the option of sending their children to after-school programs to learn religious subjects. As for the school itself, all students have approximately 150 minutes of Hebrew language and culture instruction each full week, with an emphasis on literacy and conversational skills. I

In addition to Florida there are Hebrew language charter schools that have opened in New York (one serving the same Mill Basin “Little Israel” population that the Mitchabrim school serves and another in Harlem. In states other than Florida they have different names; there’s the Lashon Academy Charter School that was just approved this year for Los Angeles, the Hatikvah International Academy in East Brunswick, New Jersey, the Kavod Elementary Charter School in San Diego, and the Sela Public Charter School in Washington DC. Steinhardt and other Jewish philanthropists started the Hebrew Charter School Center in 2009, a non-profit organization, to promote and fund the establishment of such schools all over the country. Their goal is to have at least 20 such schools operating by 2015. And it is assumed that these schools will prove to be very attractive to children from Israeli-American families, especially those who do not feel entirely comfortable with the level of religiosity required by the Jewish day schools or the high tuition.

And so, it can be seen from this brief review that Israelis living in the United States, the general American Jewish community, and the Israeli government itself are taking very seriously the goal of educating the next generation in the hope that they will maintain their ties to the Jewish homeland. Thank you.

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