

The Impact of North American Immigrants on Social Life:

A tail of one Israeli city- Bet-Shemesh



Karin Amit, Ruppin Academic Center

Ilan Riss, Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

This study was supported by The Institute for immigration & Social Integration, at Ruppin Academic Center

Five major periods of immigration to Israel

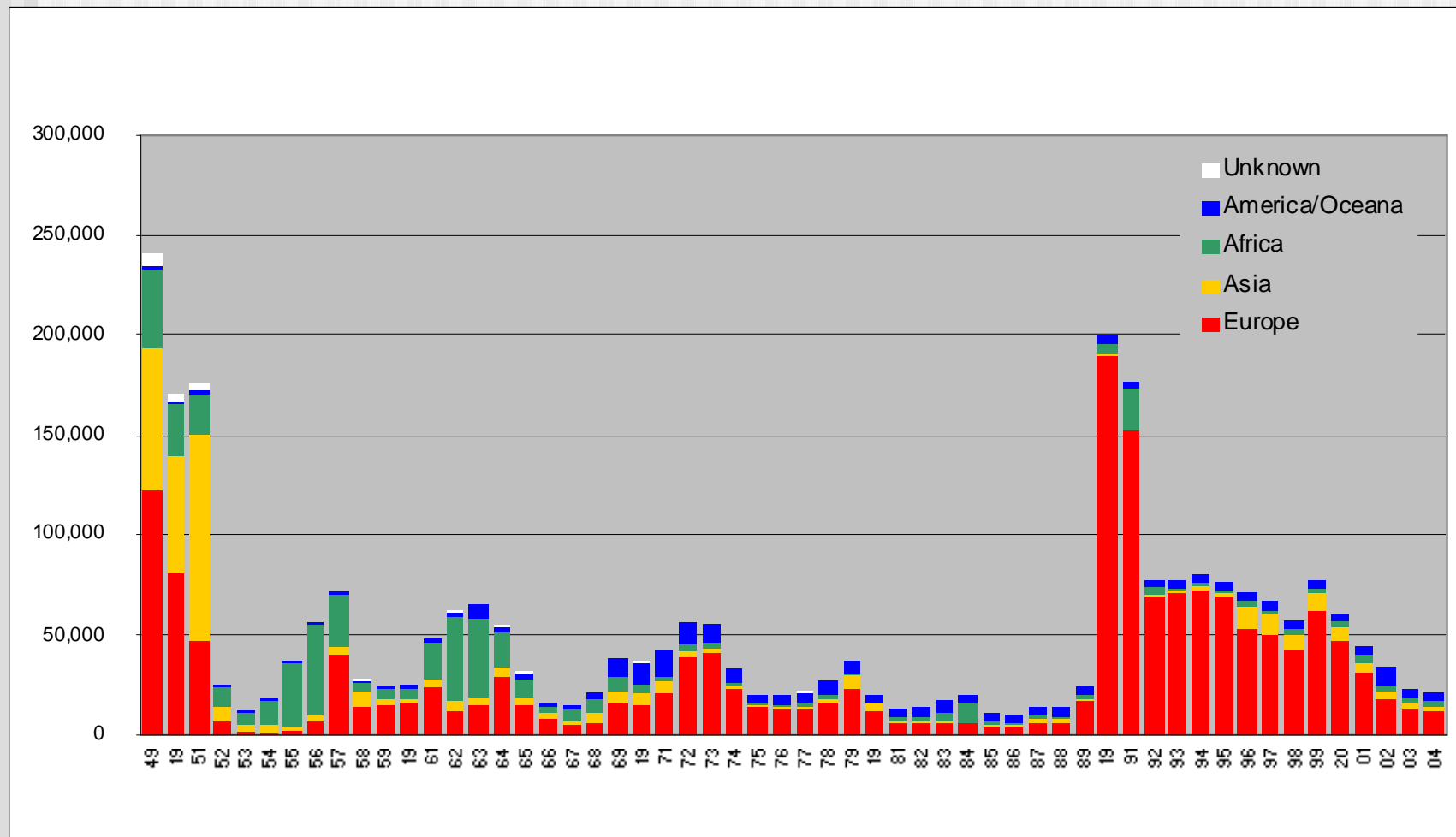
(Semyonov and Lewin Epstein, 2001) :

- 1) Immigration prior to statehood (1948)
- 2) Mass immigration immediately after the establishment of the state (1948-52)
- 3) Sporadic migration during the following three decades (1953-89)
- 4) Mass immigration following the downfall of the Soviet Union (1989-95) alongside with immigration from Ethiopia
- 5) Sporadic immigration from Western countries and developed countries such as Argentina, France and the United States (1995-present)

The two peaks are the period immediately after statehood (1948-52) and the beginning of the 90's (1989-95).

Immigration to Israel by year and continent of origins: 1948-2004

Source: Israeli National Bureau of Statistics.



Stages in the Israeli Immigration Policy

“Migration is a creature of policy”. Kingsley Davis.



Immigration policy accepted in Israel ideologically based on Zionist principle of ingathering of exiled Jews in their historical homeland. Thus migration of Jews to Israel can be characterized as returning Diaspora. Israeli fundamental law, the Law of Return, of 1950, states: “Every Jew has the right to immigrate to the Land of Israel.”

- From its beginning and till the 1980's, Israeli absorption policy was principally centralized. Immigrant absorption was intended for reaching national goals such as population dispersion and securing of Jewish majority in remote areas.
- During the mid-eighties a new concept of integration began to evolve - direct absorption. The new concept declares the new immigrants' freedom of choice as to where to go in the country and freedom of choice in using the funds granted to them during their initial stage in Israel.

Settlement Policy and Spatial Dispersion of Immigrants



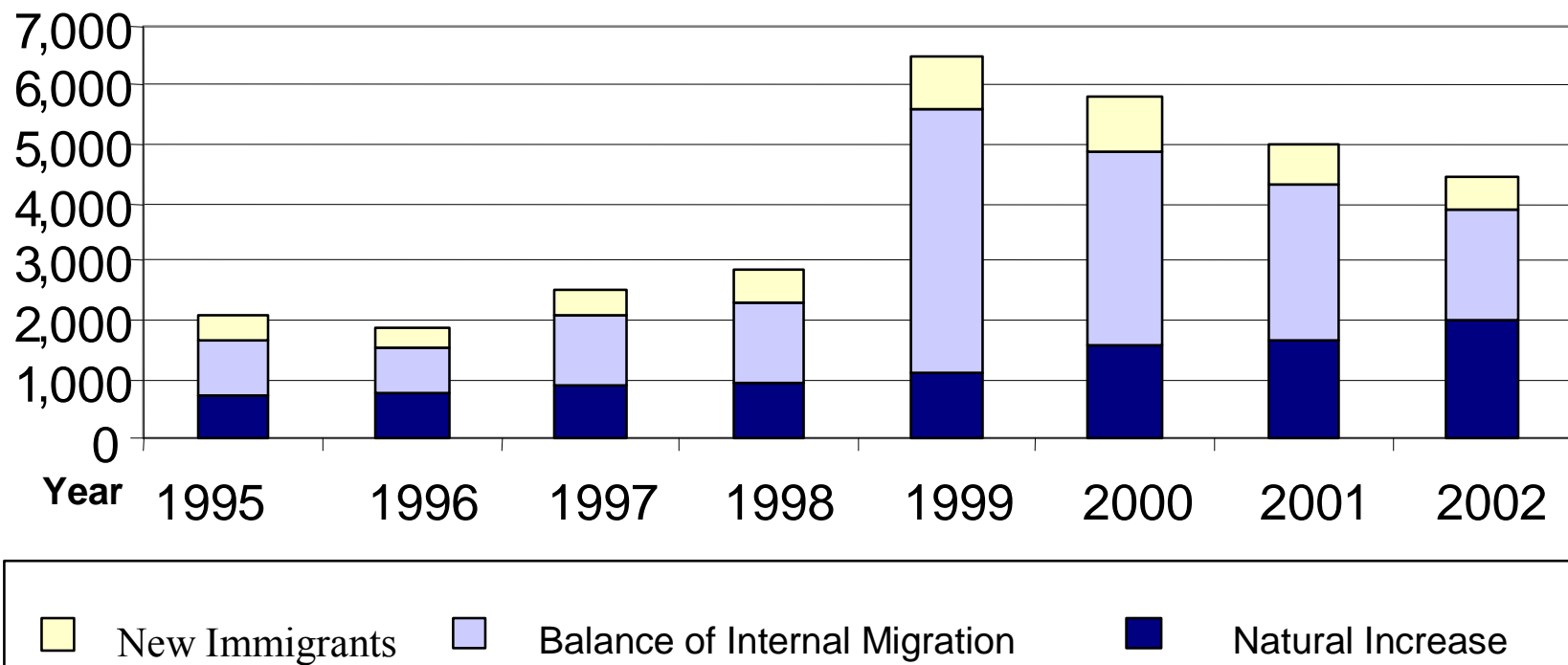
- In the 50's Israel has had a policy of encouraging immigrants to settle in the peripheral areas in the North and the South of the country. A majority of the immigrants at that period lived in temporal housing accommodations.
- Immigrants began moving into permanent housing and tended to purchase in the more peripheral areas where housing was cheaper and to move into locations where the Government offered special grants to be used for the purchase of an apartment which further cheapened the price of the housing.
- The direct absorption policy in the sphere of settlement could not be consistent. Thus, while the primary idea of direct absorption was to grant the immigrants the free choice of place of residence, in 1991, the government sanctioned about 11,000 dwelling to be built in Beer Sheva and other remote regions in the Negev, in spite of well known preference of the immigrants to settle in the central parts of the country.

The City of Bet-Shemesh

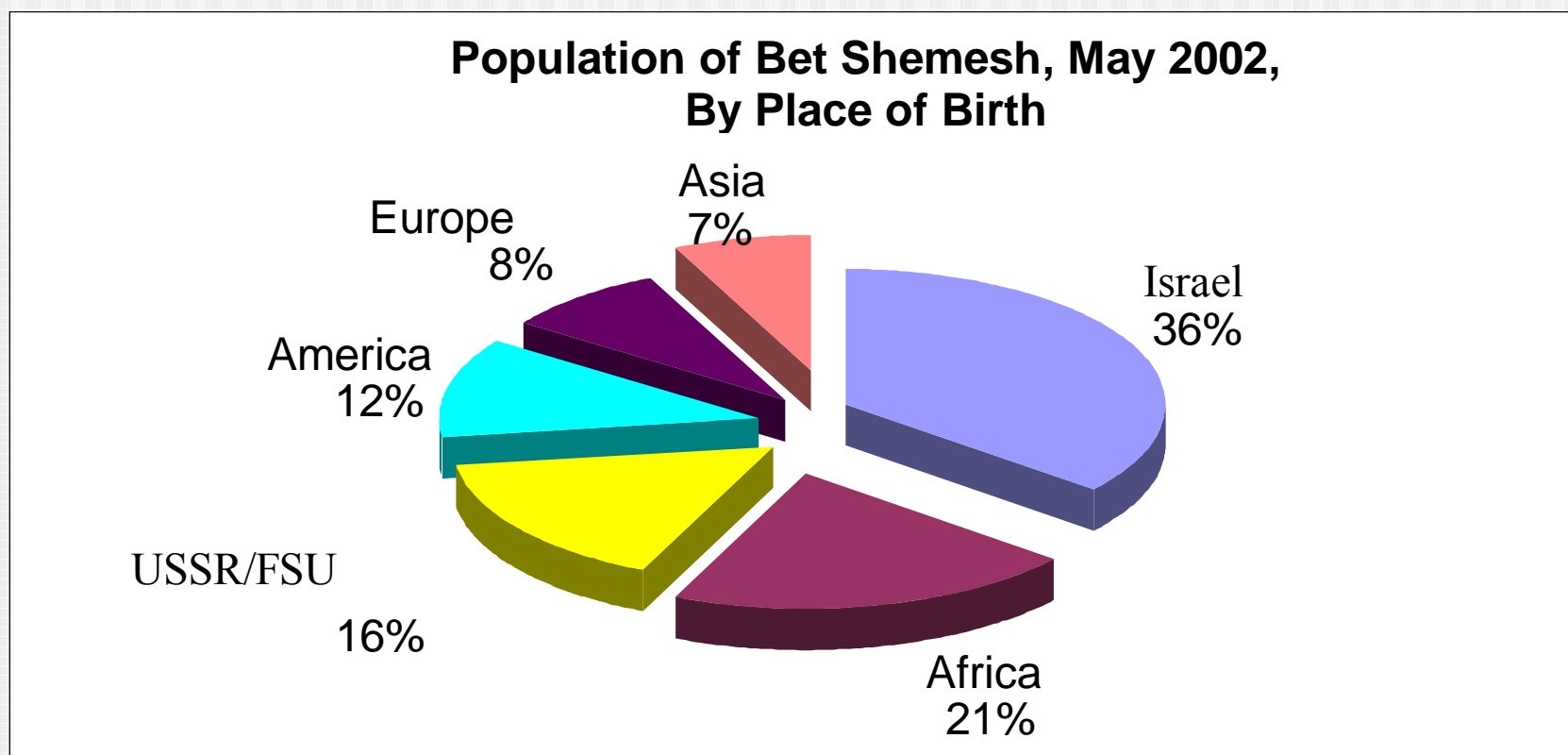
- Bet-Shemesh is located in the center of Israel, on the way to Jerusalem.
- According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics socio-economic classification of settlements (2005), Bet-Shemesh's Rank is 4 out of 10 (1=low, 10=high).
- The city of Bet-Shemesh is defined as a “developmental town” (Adler, 2004).
- In the city of Bet-shemesh about 80,000 habitants, 22% new immigrants (after 1989).

Components of Population Growth

The Source of Population Growth, Bet Shemesh, 1995-2002



Immigrants in Bet Shemesh by Place of Birth



Groups of immigrants in Bet-Shemesh

- **FSU immigrants** – About 8,000. Highly educated, not religious, have a special education system promoting excellent achievements (MOFET), and are politically organized.
- **North American Immigrants**- About 7,000. Highly educated, working in professional occupations (high-tech), religious, families with children, learn in the religious education system. Live in segregated neighborhoods. Most of the municipality activity with this community is in the educational field.
- **Ethiopian immigrants**- About 2,000. Low educational level and high level of unprofessional with high levels of unemployment. Live in segregated neighborhoods. Are supported by an “Absorption Center” activated by the municipality in the following main issues: occupation, welfare and education.
- **Immigrant from France**-About 1,000. Highly educated, working in professional occupations, religious, families with children, learn in the religious education system. Live in one neighborhood. Most of the municipality activity with this community is in the dwelling field.

Municipality Local Policy Bet-Shemesh

- The Ministry of Absorption supports the newly arrived immigrants to in Bet-Shemesh in two ways:
 - 1. **Regular support** to all newly arrived immigrants in their first years in Israel (“absorption basket”, occupational integration etc.)
 - 2. **Community support:** The Ministry of Absorption financially supports the local municipality in the absorption of different immigrants communities according to their needs (absorption center for Ethiopians, Hebrew learning centers for North Americans etc.)

North American immigrants in Bet-Shemesh

- The largest group of immigrants arriving to Bet-Shemesh in the last 5 years.
- Their presence in the city is evident (English, education, religious life).
- An Interesting case of migration from developed countries into a city defined as “undeveloped”.
- An interesting example of “immigration by choice” to Israel.

Data gathering

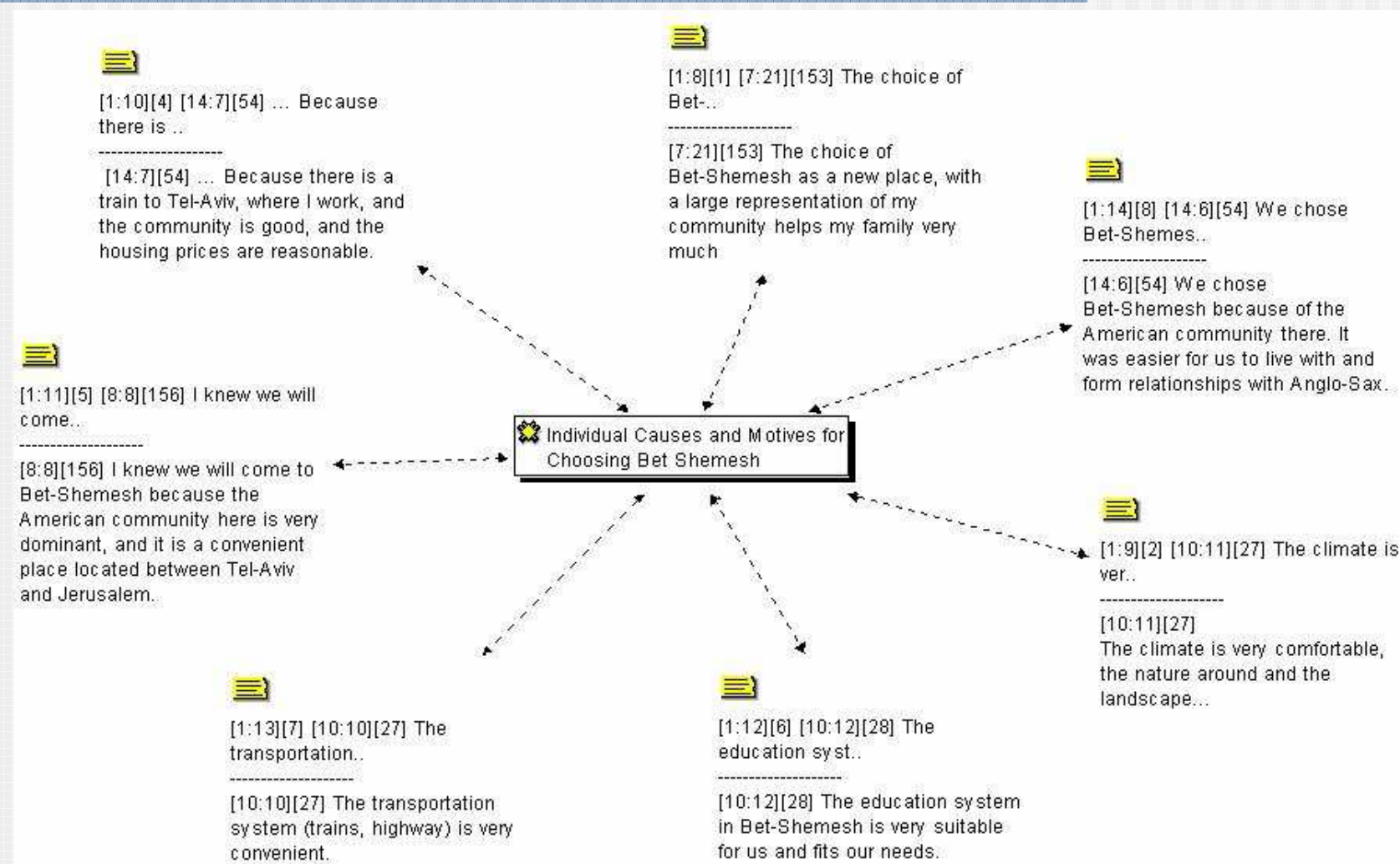
North American immigrants

- We have conducted 10 **in-depth interviews with key personnel** involved with the immigration and absorption of North American immigrants in Israel and in Bet-Shemesh.
- We have conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with **North American immigrants** in Bet-Shemesh. The first interviewees were taken from a list given to us by the Bet-Shemesh Community Center (MATNAS). Then we reached about half of the interviewees using a "snow-ball" method.

Individual Causes and Motives for Choosing Bet Shemesh

- **Location of city:** In the center of Israel, near Jerusalem and not far from Tel-Aviv, easy traffic accommodations.
- **Children's education:** Religious education systems accommodated to this population.
- **Supportive community:** Neighborhoods of North American immigrants with social community activities (chain migration).

Individual Causes and Motives for Choosing Bet Shemesh



North American Ethnic Neighborhood

- **Local Segregation:** North American immigrants are concentrated in **three areas** in South Bet-Shemesh (Statistical areas 6, 8 & 13). More than 50% of North American immigrants are living in one neighborhood (Ramat-Bet-Shemesh). They are 20% of this neighborhood's residents.
- **Synagogues:** Over 200 in all of Bet Shemesh. The synagogues with large Anglo populations include: Givat Sharett (Bet Shemesh) - Bet Knesset Feigenson (Nofei Aviv), Kehillat Hagivah (Givat Savion), Netzach Menashe, Ohel Yona Menachem, and Bet Midrash Torani Leumi. In Ramat Bet Shemesh Aleph - Ahavat Yisrael, Ohr Shalom, Beis Tefilla, Carlebach, Pnai Shmuel, and the Gra.
- **Rabbis:** There are many English speaking Rabbis in Bet Shemesh. Partial list of "shul" Rabbis and poskim: Rav Avishai David, Rav Shalom Kurtz, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, Rav Elimelech Kornfeld, Rav Shlomo Zalman Perlstein and Rav Shabtai Vigder. There are a number of other English speaking Rabbis who are involved in education.
- **Email Lists:** There are three active email English language email lists in Bet Shemesh. Each has a different emphasis and different rules

From the interviews...

- We live in an anglo-getho... I work in an High-tech company and speak English at work, my children speak English with their friends at school and here at home and in our neighborhood, we have American and Canadian friends and we feel like living in Canada but with an Israeli weather ...

Socio-Economic Rank of Bet Shemesh (1=low, 10=high)

Ranking of Beit Shemesh			
Year	Cluster	Rank	Population
1992	3	20	18400
1995	4	89	24900
1999	5	112	38500
2001	4	82	49100

Segregation & integration

Distribution of residents of Bet-Shemesh by statistical areas by continent of origin compared to distribution of total population (2002)

Continent of Origin	Israel	Africa	Former USSR	America	Europe	Asia
Segregation Dissimilarity Index	0.20	0.26	0.35	0.34	0.21	0.16

- As we can see, the Segregation Dissimilarity Index is higher for two groups (comprised mainly of immigrants): FSU and North American immigrants.

The Correlation between Gini Index and Percent of Immigrants in the Locality

City	Socio economic rank (2001)	Gini Index (2002)	Percent immigrants
Akko	4	0.3643	20.8
Ashdod	4	0.4108	35.8
Ashkelon	4	0.4135	34.7
Bet Shean	4	0.3483	7.4
Bet Shemesh	4	0.4103	23.1
Dimona	4	0.3940	23.0
Jerusalem	4	0.4722	8.3
Kiryat Gat	4	0.3638	32.7
Kiryat Mal'akhi	4	0.3621	21.9
Lod	4	0.3720	27.5
Maalot Tarshikha	4	0.3508	37.4
Migdal Haemek	4	0.3674	28.6
Or Akiva	4	0.3419	43.6
Ramle	4	0.3641	21.3
Sderot	4	0.3535	38.4
Tiberias	4	0.3866	18.0
Zefat	4	0.4106	19.2

- Coefficient of correlation between % of immigrants (1990+) and Gini index = -0.38
 - The more the percent of immigrants in the cities -- the smaller is the inequality in the salaries of salaried employees.
- Bet-Shemesh is an exceptional case: The inequality is higher compared to the percent of immigrants, due to high share of North American immigrants

Conclusions



- Absorption of a large amount of even high skilled immigrants is a heavy burden for receiving locality in the short run.
- It may be beneficial in the long run.
- Absorption of high skilled immigrants increases inequality.
- Absorption of greatly differed groups of immigrant produces isolated migrants' enclaves.
- Geographical location of locality may be a stronger pull factor for immigrants than local social negative push factors. In such case spatial separation of the immigrants and veteran population will be significant.

Thank You!



Questions

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Remarks

