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**Research Proposal for a Ph.D. Dissertation**

A New German Jewish Diaspora? Israeli Migration to Berlin from 2000 to 2019

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# **1. Introduction**

The roots of the Berlin Jewish community date back to 1295, Even then co-existence with the local German was not always easy and accepting. Jews were expelled from the area in 1573 and were not allowed to return until 1669.[[1]](#footnote-1) From that date on, some Jewish presence has continuously managed to survive in Berlin despite multiple threats to the community's existence, most significantly the Nazi regime's attempt at total extermination.[[2]](#footnote-2) Some community members escaped the horrors of the Holocaust, with around 5000 Jews remaining in Berlin after World War II a few of whom found their way to Israel, where they became involved in building the Jewish homeland. Today, some second and third-generation survivors of the Holocaust live in Berlin, having immigrated to Germany from post World War II Europe during the 1970s.[[3]](#footnote-3) Amongst these immigrants descended from German citizens are Israelis descended from German Holocaust survivors, who made their homes in Israel after the war. This is attested by these Israeli immigrants having held German passports before their arrival in Berlin as evidence of their ancestry.[[4]](#footnote-4) This is a significant factor when discussing immigration, as Israelis value German passports highly amongst those of other European Union (EU) countries, possibly due to the social benefits German citizens receive. There may also be a symbolic reason for this, as the passports serve as written evidence of the Nazi regime's failure. On a more pragmatic level, it may be that life in Germany is simply an appealing alternative to Israel with its high cost of living.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Pragmatism aside, the question of why Israelis choose to emigrate to Germany, a country that holds a long and painful history for Jews, must still be asked.[[6]](#footnote-6) There is a particular dissonance when it concerns the children or grandchildren of Holocaust survivors who willingly immigrate to the country where their parents or grandparents were deprived of all human rights, suffered unimaginable horror, and in the best circumstances, were deported. The question becomes even more compelling when considering the reappearance of far-right political parties such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) established in 2013 and the increasingly extreme anti-Semitic behaviors of many in Germany.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Is it the promise of higher salaries, or perhaps the comfort of higher standards of living, that makes Israelis forget their history and ignore the reappearance of antisemitism and the rapid rise of neo-Nazi far-right parties that are increasingly represented in German political landscape.

In this study, I will first examine the issue of migration from a specific perspective: that of Israelis who have immigrated to Berlin. Then, focusing on identifying the motives behind their immigration and the distribution of the various motives within the community to answer why Israelis immigrate to Berlin. I will then examine the Local Jewish Community, focusing on its relationship and points of contact with the Israeli emigrants, trying to answer the question of the connection between these two communities other than their Jewish religion. It is essential to state that in recent years, mainly since 2010, a severe refugee crisis in Syria has affected the Middle East, including Israel. Germany was also greatly affected, having accepted 750,000 Syrian Muslim refugees since 2015.[[8]](#footnote-8) This research will not focus directly on the connection between the Israeli and Jewish communities and refugees, yet this may be a topic that will arise during the research.

This dissertation will also explore the notion of community. There are many definitions for this word. However, the most relevant description for this study is "A body of men [or women] living in the same locality."[[9]](#footnote-9) This applies to a group whose members have common characteristics, such as country of origin, religion, or pursuit. However, these attributes are not necessarily shared by those among whom they live.[[10]](#footnote-10) The community that this study focuses on is the Israeli community in Berlin. This includes the total number of Israeli Jews who previously lived in Israel, immigrated to Germany, and currently lives in Berlin.

# **State of the research**

Today, the Jews in Berlin belong to one of two main groups. The first mentioned above is the "local-native" group which includes people who moved to Berlin from different European countries after World War II, mainly from the Soviet Union and their descendants. This is a community numbering approximately 10,800 members, all of whom are Jews living in Berlin and are registered in the "Jewish community of Berlin." This is the largest Jewish community in Germany. According to the research I conducted for my MA thesis, this is the formal Jewish religious community, which the government and the city of Berlin fund. The community is identified by its religious affiliation, and it operates, maintains, and safeguards various Jewish institutions, including, for example, well-attended schools and synagogues.

The second group, the "new-immigrants" group, consists of Jews, former Israeli citizens who immigrated to Berlin, who sometimes refer to themselves in different Facebook groups as "Isra-Berliners." According to the latest report of 31 December 2018 of the Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg (Berlin's official statistical bureau), there are approximately 5,300 Israelis in Berlin. That number includes only Israelis who are not German citizens and have requested or hold a valid visa for education or employment purposes. As of June 2020, the exact number of Israelis in Berlin is unknown due to restrictions in collecting statistical data regarding German citizens from different ethnic origins, including Israelis with a second German passport. This group is secular in nature, mostly see themselves as individuals rather than as a true community, and makes little use of the formal institutions and services of the Jewish community.

The relationship between these two groups is complex, mainly because of the differences which exist between them, both religious and social in nature. According to interviews with Israelis who live in Berlin, their connection to the local Jewish community is surprisingly minor and based mainly on the local community's connection with the authorities who offer assistance with finding work or receiving a visa. As described by Zachary Johnston, "the Israelis in Berlin are not necessarily immigrants in the classic sense" and may more aptly described as transnationals.[[11]](#footnote-11) Nevertheless, they retain many elements of their Israeli identity, including their Hebrew language and strong connections with Israel, where many still have close family members.

The concept of immigration has altered over the last few decades. On the one hand, immigration has become a central element of international concern, focusing on how to prevent immigration rather than how to facilitate safe immigration. Many European countries have experienced a 'migration crisis' over the past few years as men, women, and children strive to find a better way of life, often at any cost. On the other hand, the growing presence of multi-national conglomerates and increases in international trade agreements, and transnational efforts of economic development have created a new pattern of migration, wherein transnationals may maintain their identification with their original homeland and may also migrate between countries multiple times.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The migration of Jews from Israel to other countries is not a new phenomenon: even before the State of Israel was established in 1948, many Jews left what they called Eretz Yisrael (The Land of Israel) when it was still under the Ottoman rule[[13]](#footnote-13) and during the period of the British mandate.[[14]](#footnote-14),[[15]](#footnote-15) Those who left before the establishment of the state were mainly new immigrants who faced great difficulties in acclimatizing themselves to the challenging conditions prevailing in those times. Still, members of the 'Old Yishuv' whose families had lived in the area for generations of both Ashkenazi and Sephardi descent also contended with economic hardships, which may have been a significant motivation for leaving.[[16]](#footnote-16),[[17]](#footnote-17) However, from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the numbers of Jews who migrated overseas were generally insignificant. They ranged between 0.3-0.6 percent of the population.[[18]](#footnote-18) According to current estimates, approximately 7-8 percent of Israelis reside abroad.[[19]](#footnote-19) Compared with other states, this is not an unusual percentage. However, the ideological and social implications of Jewish emigration as perceived in Israel's society have made this subject the focus of highly emotional controversy. The term is given to those who leave '*Yordim,'* meaning those who 'go down, contrasts starkly with the opposite term '*Olim',* those who rise, or ascend, given to those who migrate to the country. While it is possible that in recent years, in line with trends in other countries, attitudes may have changed toward immigrants and those leaving the country.[[20]](#footnote-20),[[21]](#footnote-21)

The research into Israelis immigrating to Berlin can be divided roughly into two time periods that follow in chronological order: The Jewish community in Germany between 1970-1989 and the Israelis arriving in Berlin from 1990 to 2019.

### 2.1.1 The Jewish community in Germany between 1970-1989

For this study project, I will only look at migration to Berlin from the 1970s onwards. This does not mean that Israelis were not migrating to Germany before the 1970s. However, we only have anecdotal information for a handful of such migrants to both East and West Germany from 1962 – 1970.[[22]](#footnote-22) Their numbers were very small, primarily due to the aftershock of the Holocaust. Moreover, until 1962, traveling to Germany was illegal for Israelis without specific permission from the Israeli Ministry of the Interior. Most of the people who were granted this permission were diplomats and businessmen. Furthermore, as noted by Michael Wolffsohn, all Jewish communities across Germany were rather small in the period from 1945 until 1990, with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in East Germany having become almost clean of Jews.[[23]](#footnote-23)

A few Israelis began to move to Berlin in the early 1970s, but until the 1990s, the numbers remained low. There is almost no data on the Israelis in Berlin between the 1970s and the 1990s, nor is there any data on this as a research topic. The very idea of Israelis migrating to Berlin was too emotionally charged and filled with internal contradictions to attract research attention. During that time, it was rare to hear Hebrew in the streets; the only representation of Israel was through the Jewish community.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Dani Kranz offers fascinating insights into the characteristics of Jews living in Berlin and across Germany from three groups: the descendants of German Jews, Russian Jews, and displaced persons (DPs) from eastern Europe who began immigrating to Germany in large numbers during the 1990s; and Israeli Jews who started arriving there in large numbers during the 2000s.[[25]](#footnote-25) Her presentation of the worlds of selected characters sheds light on how they experience their Jewishness in their various identities. It also explores their motives behind choosing to migrate to Germany.[[26]](#footnote-26) This corresponds with the dominant perspective of migration studies of this era, which raises the question, "Why do people move from one place to another and ignore later phenomena such as globalization?" However, this does not relate specifically to Israelis in Berlin but rather to the Jewish community in Berlin through a post-Holocaust lens. Consequently, most of the academic research in this area is focused on German Jewish communities and their relations with the state of Israel rather than on Israelis who live in Berlin or Germany.

### 2.1.2 Israelis arriving in Berlin from 1990 to 2019

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the changes it triggered may be the key to changes in Israeli migration after this point. This was a time of significant shifts in transnational relations, with changes in worldview correlating with the changes in the domestic lives of Israelis and their perspectives.

Somewhere between 1990 and early 2000, the floodgates broke open. This was also the dawn of the media revolution with the gradual rise in accessibility to the internet. Online magazines flourished, along with chat groups and Facebook groups, which brought more Israelis to Berlin alongside other social media platforms. As this phenomenon gained momentum, the Jewish communities in Berlin attracted more attention than ever before. Several books and dozens of articles (including academic papers) were published in mainstream media discussing the complexity of issues relating to Israelis living in Berlin. [[27]](#footnote-27) Films, television programs, and radio reports dissected the topic. Academic research started to focus on the Israeli citizens in Berlin, rather than solely focusing on the Jews that lived in the city, attempting to comprehend the reasons for their immigration and attraction to Berlin.[[28]](#footnote-28)

As pointed out by Johnston, the migration of some Israelis to Berlin may be regarded as transnationalism rather than traditional immigration.[[29]](#footnote-29) Towards the end of the twentieth century, transnationalism became a growing trend whereby migrants maintained closer contact with their countries of origin. This phenomenon was partially related to the development of transnational corporations whose employees may be expected to work in any part of the world. This is closely related to the concept of globalism and the increasing degree of globalism seen in globalization, whereby networks of economic, cultural, and political practices developed throughout the globe.[[30]](#footnote-30) Some Israelis leaving Israel in the 21st century may be regarded as part of a global trend, with the rapidly growing communications technologies of the 21st century bringing about the de-territorialization of economic and political structures.[[31]](#footnote-31) Therefore, transnationalism may be seen as strongly contrasting with nationalism.[[32]](#footnote-32) It is interesting to note, therefore, that the migration of Israeli Jews to Berlin around the close of the 20th century and the start of the new millennium corresponded with a resurfacing of nationalism in Israel following a slight decline in patriotism. Therefore, an appropriate starting point in studying transnational migration is the question, "What is globalized migration?"

Globalization, characterized by accelerated worldwide interconnectedness, has linked people across borders and is changing the migration pattern.[[33]](#footnote-33) It has also been assumed that there have been increased migration rates over the last fifty years, with migrants traveling longer distances. However, this has been contested, with increasingly complex patterns not necessarily accompanied by increased volume.[[34]](#footnote-34) In addition, the diverse expressions of transnationalism accompanying globalization further complicate migration patterns[[35]](#footnote-35). Technological advancements such as global mass media, accessible international connectivity enabled by the Internet, and modern international air transportation fostered the emergence of complex cross-border identities. Today the most predominant way for Israelis in Berlin to connect is through Facebook groups, the combination of which have more than 20,000 registered members.

Most books and articles dealing with the topic of Israelis in Berlin tend to be personal accounts of experiences and opinions rather than research based on data. This is the case with the three most seminal books regarding the lives of Israelis in Berlin, which have been dubbed the 'big three': *Israelis in Berlin* by Fania Oz-Salzberger (2001); *Germany at Odds: A Contemporary Testimony* by Eldad Beck (2015); and *Israelis in Berlin: Community in the Making* by Shoki Stauber (2017). Moreover, a recent scholarly article by Uzi Rebhun, Dani Kranz, and Heinz Sünker (2015) analyses a survey of Israelis living in Berlin.[[36]](#footnote-36) The extensive research of these scholars is soon to be published in a book focussing on the characteristics of Israelis in contemporary Germany.[[37]](#footnote-37) Their research has revealed that the typical characteristics of Israelis in Berlin are that they are agnostic, politically positioned left, and usually have a bachelor's degree or more advanced academic degrees.

Some scholars claim that the waves of immigration to Berlin have been different in almost every decade, with motivations for immigration changing from personal and social reasons to economic incentives (as seen in 2000) and considerations of welfare (in 2011).[[38]](#footnote-38)

Moreover, most of the Israelis living in Berlin moved there with the support of their families as their motivation revolves around their aspirations to improve their careers or acquire cheaper education than they could in Israel, where the cost of living is still rising rapidly. This rise in the cost of living in Israel may be connected to some extent, at least to a period of rapid globalization that occurred during the 1990s.[[39]](#footnote-39) One of the outcomes of this process was accelerated privatization and individualization of society, which further undermined the strength of Zionism as a collective force.

## 2.2 Current Contexts Israel-Berlin 2010-2019

According to Zachary Johnston, the waves of Israelis immigrating to Berlin each had different characteristics, decade by decade.[[40]](#footnote-40) Still, in general, those Israelis who came to Berlin before the year 2000 appear to have assimilated into Berlin's culture. Most seem to have been attracted to live in what was then the trendy area of Kreuzberg and Schöneberg in West Berlin, before the Berlin Wall came down. Its residents were artists, actors, and social misfits (not unlike today).[[41]](#footnote-41)

Today, many Israelis have settled in East Berlin neighborhoods such as Friedrichshain, Prenzlauer Berg, and Mitte (although the old West Berlin is still represented by a large population of Israelis living in Kreuzberg and Charlottenburg). However, Israelis initially generally maintained a low profile. Filmmaker Zachary Johnston reported that he was aware of Israelis living in Berlin up until 2010 and could "spy a poster for an event hosted by Israelis. A blue Star of David would catch your eye, attached to a window or lamppost".[[42]](#footnote-42)

A significant change took place from 2011 onwards, with the impact of social media when 'Israelis in Berlin' became a Facebook sensation, currently a closed and invite-only Facebook group with over 17,000 active Israeli members. This forum allows Israelis to prepare for their move to Berlin and even helps many decide to move. Most importantly, this Facebook group 'Israelis in Berlin' provides a single place where Israelis, and by default Jews, can navigate life in the German capital with a familiar and 'safe' place to refer to (the group is private). As more Israelis moved to Berlin, nightclubs with Israeli orientation became regular venues for drinking and dancing. In addition, boroughs such as Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, and Kreuzberg began to pop up Israeli restaurants with Israeli themes and menus.

In 2015, a study by Shuki Stauber indicated that three primary waves of Israeli immigration to Berlin had taken place.[[43]](#footnote-43) The first wave is defined as continuing until 2000 and was characterized as the 'romantic' wave of immigration. The second wave occurred during the twenty-first century's first decade and was described as the 'social-political' migration wave. Finally, the third wave occurred around 2015 and was characterized as the 'economic' immigration wave. The study also indicated that four main factors influenced Israelis when deciding to migrate to berlin. These were: personal dissatisfaction with the individual's life in Israel, whether stemming from social, political, or economic factors; the opportunity for personal and career development; a relationship with a German national and finally, the low cost of living in Berlin.

Today, almost twenty Facebook groups deal with various issues that concern the Israelis in Berlin and provide a virtual meeting place for them. 'Israelis in Berlin' is the largest group, but other groups such as 'Normal Israelis in Berlin' and 'Our Berlin' have significant numbers of members. Many Israelis searching for meaning in their lives have made their own contributions to Berlin's culture with art, music, and food, and their presence has heralded a new era in the Israeli-Berlin relationship. Nowadays, Hebrew can often be heard on the streets or while waiting at a U-Bahn-Station. Berlin is also attracting many young Israelis who simply wish to leave Israel for a while to experience life elsewhere. They may stay in Berlin or use it as a convenient gateway from where they can explore the rest of the world. Thus, the Israeli community of Berlin can be defined as a community in progress. The state of Israel is also showing buds of change in its attitude toward migrants. A manifestation of this can be seen in the willingness of the Israeli Embassy in Berlin to establish ties with the Israeli community there.

Nevertheless, the exact number of Israelis in Berlin today remains unknown. Formal data refers to about 5,000 people, but because many Israelis in Berlin also hold German citizenship, they are not counted in the formal data. As a result, it appears that the most accurate number of the population is given by Tal Alon, editor of the Israeli magazine *Spitz*, who claims that the number is closer to 7,500.

### 2.2.1 Current antisemitism in Berlin

One factor that could conceivably influence the choices of Israelis when considering living in Berlin is the number and severity of antisemitic acts reported in the city. Antisemitism is defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) as "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals, their property, and Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."[[44]](#footnote-44)

In recent years, levels of antisemitism have increased across Europe, including Germany in general and Berlin in particular.[[45]](#footnote-45) The rise in antisemitism in Berlin had been noticed to the degree that in January 2015, the "Association for a Democratic Culture in Berlin (VDK e.V.) established the "Department for Research and Information on Antisemitism" (RIAS Berlin).[[46]](#footnote-46)

When describing the antisemitism in Berlin today, the most common point of reference is the events that led to the Jewish Holocaust, the daily acts of violence against Jews that accumulated into something unimaginable. Almost a century after these events, the atrocities are still present. In August 2019, graves of Jewish soldiers killed in World War I were defaced in a large Jewish cemetery. Later that month, a Jewish woman in Berlin received a letter containing ashes. In 2019, the federal government in Berlin took the initiative to put together a local plan to combat antisemitic hatred at a local level also indicates the gravity of the situation regarding antisemitism in Berlin.[[47]](#footnote-47) Berlin's antisemitism commissioner, Lorenz Korgel, who was appointed in May 2019, warned that 'Berlin Has Serious Antisemitism Problem'.[[48]](#footnote-48)

In 2020, German authorities recorded 2,351 antisemitic crimes. This is a 16% increase in reported cases from the previous year, and it is estimated that the number of unreported instances was maybe three times as high. In 2018 RIAS recorded 1,083 antisemitic incidents, a rise since the 951 recorded in 2017.

*Figure.1 – Violent antisemitic acts registered with the police in Germany 2001-2018*



However, as in the statistics from 2020, the reported cases are only a fraction of the total, as many incidents go unreported. Also, RIAS Berlin recorded 46 antisemitic threats in 2018 – an increase of 77 percent compared to the previous year. Although the current study relates to Israeli migration to Berlin from 2000 to 2019, some of the processes associated with antisemitism in Berlin have been seen more clearly during the time of the pandemic from the end of 2019 to 2022. For example, in a recently released report covering the first six months of 2021, RIAS reported recording more antisemitic events than in any similar period since the organization's establishment showing that antisemitism intensified further since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.[[49]](#footnote-49) Moreover, there appears to be a pattern whereby increases in incidents of antisemitism are associated with external factors, such as the Gaza protests of 2014, anti-Israel protests in May 2021, and demonstrations protesting against policies put in place to combat Covid-19 known as Querdenken demonstrations.

One element involved in antisemitism has been a plethora of conspiracy theories, such as those expressed in the famous fictional publication of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion One aspect of the 'rehabilitation' of antisemitism is through endorsing personalities who promoted antisemitism and disseminated conspiracy theories against Jews. For example, in 2009, the Berlin University of Applied Science, founded in 1971, was renamed after Christian Peter Wilhelm Beuth (1781-1853), a Prussian statesman and virulent antisemite. He called for the murder of Jews and, inter alia, embraced blood libel accusations. This type of antisemitism has also been seen in recent years, with antisemitic tropes being involved in many conspiracy theories disseminated since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Old labels have been revived, with Jews being blamed for the spread of the Covid-19 virus. RIAS reported a drastic increase in antisemitic myths at this time, with right-wing communities involving anti-Jewish sentiment in their conspiracy theories regarding the inception of the pandemic.[[50]](#footnote-50) In August 2020, the Berlin Jewish community protested the open antisemitism at a Berlin coronavirus protest attended by over 20,000 people calling for an end to restrictions associated with the struggle to contain the virus.[[51]](#footnote-51) The rally was supported by neo-Nazi groups who openly displayed antisemitic slogans.

The political spectrum to which most antisemitic threats are attributed is right-wing extremism: 17 out of the 46 threats made (or 37 percent) in 2018 came from people with a far-right background. Threats from people with an Islamist background were also common, with 15 percent of the threats belonging to this demographic. It is striking that compared to other types of antisemitic incidents, a disproportionate number of threats came from the district of Neukölln, three of which were motivated by left-wing supporters and two by the far-right. While many antisemitic incidents in Berlin are related to those on the far-right, there is also a dominant trend whereby intense Israel hatred and intense antisemitic hatred go hand in hand. Monika Schwarz-Friesel has described this as “the Israelization of antisemitism,” which she describes as “the most dominant manifestation of anti-Judaism today.”[[52]](#footnote-52) While discussing antisemitism on the world wide web Schwarz-Friesel cites many cases of antisemitism in the real world. For example, the German music industry awarded a prize to rappers who included lines mocking Auschwitz victims and the text "Make another Holocaust come again, come on with the Molotov," with the lines being accepted as expressing artistic freedom.[[53]](#footnote-53) The Palestinian-led *Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions* (BDS) movement against Israel, which has wide support amongst left-wing circles, is evident across Europe. BDS activists have interrupted speeches by Israelis at universities throughout Europe, including in Berlin. On 25 September 2019, a pro-Palestinian demonstration was held at the Brandenburger Gate. Only a few hours before, Berlin's Senator of the Interior, Andreas Geisel (SPD), prohibited the participation of two rappers, Shadi al Bourini and Shadi al-Najja, whose songs included the lines: "Burn Tel Aviv down, we want to burn Tel Aviv down" and, about Jews: "I want to trample you under my feet."

Almost 78 years after the Holocaust, this resurgence of antisemitism in Germany and across Europe is thought by some to reflect a deeply rooted antisemitism that is integral to European culture.[[54]](#footnote-54) In 2002, the UK Chief Rabbi made the alarming observation that in certain European circles, "nobody will ever forgive the Jews for the Holocaust."[[55]](#footnote-55) The demonization of Jews is spreading, along with the irrational hate based on the idea that the Jews are the root of all evil.

# **3. Research Questions**

"Why should Israelis move to Berlin?" is a post in the Facebook group 'Olim Le Berlin' that encourages Israelis to leave Israel and move to Berlin. In this post, there are thousands of responses and opinions about the reasons to pack your belongings and catch a plane to Berlin. It seems better sooner than later.

While the notion of Israelis immigrating to Berlin seems slightly paradoxical because of the city's history, the concept of Israelis who emigrate to seek a better life is not novel.

Immigration from Israel is now a typical migration pattern that is part of the phenomenon of globalization. However, peripheral emigration from Israel is relatively low compared to other Western countries. This is surprising, considering the geopolitical circumstances of the state of Israel. On the other hand, it is appropriate to examine the characteristics of human capital leaving Israel, especially the properties of those who do not return.

There are many thriving Israeli communities outside Israel in countries such as the United States and Australia[[56]](#footnote-56).

The research that examines Israeli communities outside of Israel is broad and diverse, mainly focusing on the larger communities of Israeli living abroad. Scholars over the years looked at different parts and aspects of the question "why oh why do Israelis immigrate elsewhere?" meaning outside of Israel. For example, in the United States, where almost 140,000 Israelis live, it is a dominant financial, work-related motive suggested by Steven J. Gold.[[57]](#footnote-57) Even the 2nd generation of Israeli immigrants in the United States tend to examine the financial gains of returning to Israel more than other aspects of immigration.[[58]](#footnote-58) Dr. Limonic Laura suggests that the Jewish identity of Israelis living abroad is somehow compromised and affected by the act of migration.[[59]](#footnote-59) Yet to that extent, the Israeli emigrants are not different from any other group of emigrants, the Turks in Germany, who pursued a better life, and formed a large community in Germany.[[60]](#footnote-60) India diasporas around the globe and Syrians are immigrating to the Western Balkan countries and their reasons for returning to the war-struck country.[[61]](#footnote-61) Israelis moving to Berlin appears to be an anomaly.

The anomaly lies with Israelis who willingly decide to move to Berlin. This city was once at the epicenter of the regime that committed the worst genocide against Jews worldwide. Antisemitism not only existed in the past but is rising again today as the far-right in Germany strengthens socially and politically. These factors lead to my research questions

1. What is the distribution of the various motivations (economic, cultural, political, educational, and personal reasons) of Israelis for immigrating to Berlin between 2000 and 2019?
2. In what way does the rising antisemitism affect the motivations of Israeli emigrants in Berlin to return to Israel?
3. How have the religious differences affected the relationship between the Israeli emigrants and the local Jewish community in Berlin?

The findings of this study suggest that some immigration motivations are more prominent than others. Throughout the last decade, Berlin has been described in the media and in the relevant literature as an affordable, cultural, and modern city to live in – with the cost of living being much lower than in Tel Aviv or Haifa and salaries higher. Considering the German government's emphasis on social welfare and the generous benefits that immigrants received, it was natural to expect that the economic incentive would be the most significant driver of immigration for Israelis who immigrated to Berlin between 2010-2019.

Evidently, according to formal German statistics[[62]](#footnote-62) and media reports,[[63]](#footnote-63) antisemitic behaviors and sentiments are on the rise in Germany today. If all other immigration motivations were disregarded, the existence of rising antisemitism would compel hopeful Israeli immigrants to remain in Israel or choose another place to move to. However, this is not the case. Many contexts must be considered, including Israel, Germany, and Berlin's social, economic, cultural, personal, and political situations.

It is well known that there is a large gap between the cost of living in Israel and that in Germany, particularly in Berlin. This factor acts as one of the most substantial and most compelling forces that have influenced the decision of Israelis to seek a better standard of living elsewhere. The existence of such a stark contrast – that is, the distinction between the cost of living in Israel and Berlin – reveals that the decision of Israelis to immigrate to Berlin does not exist in a cultural or political vacuum but rather depends on the numerous and nuanced components of an individual living under the wing of a nation, bringing with it all the ensuing political, historical, and cultural complexities. Therefore, it can be assumed that despite rising antisemitic sentiments in Berlin, the Israelis who moved to Berlin between 2000-2019 persisted due to the lure of economic comfort, which proved to be stronger than the rising of extreme right-wing and antisemitism.

# **5.** **Proposed Methodology**

This research project focuses on Israeli immigrants living in Berlin and is conducted from a social perspective. This study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering data.[[64]](#footnote-64) The types of data generated by these two methods complement each other and prove to be particularly effective in immigration studies. Qualitativetools, such as interviews, can generate rich descriptions focusing on detailed questions, which add details to the overall picture generated by quantitativemethods, such as surveys.

The quantitative part of the study involves an opinion survey that will be delivered online, by social media, to the targeted groups of Israelis living in Berlin. The qualitative part will involve interviews with Israeli immigrants living in Berlin and leading members of the local Jewish community, also independent observations on the connection between the two communities. The interviews are to be conducted after receiving the initial results of the survey. Furthermore, there will be a relevant literature review on the following subjects:

1. The Israeli and Jewish communities in Berlin.
2. Distributing drivers for immigration and community studies.
3. Jewish history in Germany and Berlin.
4. The rise of antisemitism in Germany as a whole, yet specifically focusing on Berlin, using up-to-date data (newspaper and statistics from the last five years statistics)

The survey will be undertaken by distributing 500 questionnaires among Israeli-Jews living in Berlin. The survey will focus on different age groups (25-30, 30-40, 40+). There will be at least 50 questionnaires for each group. The diversity of the population participating in the survey will allow a deeper understanding of the whole picture. Performing twenty depth interviews with Israeli immigrants currently living in Berlin and relevant people in the local Jewish community, at least ten interviews will be held within each group, and the interviews will be conducted in Berlin.

Statistical data analysis to retrieve coherent findings regarding the research questions. Using the SPSS program for the survey and ATLAS.TI for identifying the themes appearing in the results of the study. Mixed methods, though sometimes more challenging to execute, enrich the understanding of an experience or issue through the confirmation of conclusions, an extension of knowledge, or by initiating new ways of thinking about the research subject.

# **6.** **Limitations of this study**

In this study, some limitations should be noted. Firstly, I will focus only on a specific period (2000-2019). Immigration from Israel to Berlin has occurred before and after this period, but my focus on the last two decades may prove exciting and revealing. Future studies may include a broader period of time and provide a better understanding of Israeli immigration to Berlin. Secondly, the study survey might include a slightly higher percentage of female/male respondents, which could lead to a possible bias. However, it should be mentioned that there will be an equal balance of male and female interviewees.

Thirdly, advertising the survey only through Facebook might bias the data toward specific demographics. Israeli immigrants who do not use that particular social network, especially young immigrants who tend to use other social networks such as Instagram, etc., may not be included in the survey.

# **7.** **Timetable for Completing the Thesis**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2022** | | | **2023** | | | **2024** | | |
| Jan-Apr | May-July | Aug-Dec | Jan-Apr | May-July | Aug-Dec | Jan-Apr | May-July | Aug-Dec |
| Literature Review |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Research Proposal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of the Survey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data collection and interviewees selection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interviews and observations in Berlin |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Analysis of data |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Thesis write-up |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submission of thesis |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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