PART TWO

JEWS AS A PARADIGMATIC SPACE OF CASES
CHAPTER ELEVEN

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF JEWS

Sergio DellaPergola

Transnational diasporas reflect the existence of personal and institutional networks among people who maintain social relations and collective identities across states’ boundaries. Transnational identities and connections can emerge as a consequence of geographical mobility and of the evolving patterns of identification of individuals with their proximate or more distant social environment—in both spatial and ideational terms. As a necessary prerequisite to the assessment of transnational relations among contemporary Jewry, this chapter reviews some of the main quantitative and structural developments of Jewish migration over the last decades. This chapter, therefore, pays attention to what can be termed the systemic, hard, versus the individual, soft, aspects of transnational diasporas. Nonetheless, we should constantly be aware that the features described here at the aggregate level reflect a deeper layer of personal needs and community patterns whose discussion would better benefit from a qualitative approach.

From the standpoint of the environmental influences and in-depth change of the global Jewish experience, the consequences of international migration were no lesser than the other two founding events of the twentieth century: the Shoah and Israel’s independence. The difficulties incurred, the world left behind in the communities of origin, and the creation of a new world in the lands of destination constituted formative steps in the lives of the many millions of individual actors involved. Beyond the personal experiences, the impact of international migration throughout the twentieth century permanently changed the demographic, cultural and socioeconomic profile of the global Jewish collective (see for example, Bachi 1977, DellaPergola 1998).¹

¹ Yearly data on Israel migrations are available from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, Jerusalem.