AN ASSESSMENT OF THE

KORET

ISRAEL

TEEN

TRIP

1996

Dr. Gary A. Tobin, Dr. Joel Streicker,
Diane Tobin, Minna Wolf & Kelly Glazer

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center
for Modern Jewish Studies

Institute for Community and Religion

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

1996.3
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE

KORET

ISRAEL

TEEN

TRIP

THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED THROUGH A GRANT FROM THE KORET FOUNDATION

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Institute for Community and Religion

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR FINDINGS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO WENT ON THE KITT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Background</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity and Participation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY GO ON A TRIP TO ISRAEL?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Aspects</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Aspects</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY GO ON THE KORET ISRAEL TEEN TRIP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DID FAMILIES HEAR ABOUT THE TRIP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO MADE THE DECISION TO GO ON THE TRIP?</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DID FAMILIES EVALUATE THE TRIP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-trip Preparation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Activities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Aspects</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DID KITT IMPACT JEWISH IDENTITY?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational/Communal Identity</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational/Communal Participation</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Individual Identity</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION ORDER FORM</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"I felt proud to be Jewish and always will."
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHIC AREA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>INTERMARRIAGE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DENOMINATION</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH LIFE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FACTORS IN THE DECISION TO GO ON AN ISRAEL TRIP</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PARENTS’ RESPONSE TO IMPORTANCE OF COST, LENGTH AND TIMING</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>PARENTS’ ASSESSMENT OF THEIR ABILITY TO AFFORD AN ISRAEL TRIP</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HOW FAMILIES FOUND OUT ABOUT THE TRIP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>WHO MADE THE DECISION TO GO ON THE TRIP</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>EVALUATION OF KITT</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>EVALUATION OF THE TRIP CONTENT</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH KITT STAFF</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>IMPORTANCE OF BEING JEWISH</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>“I FEEL CONNECTED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE”</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>“JEWISH TEACHINGS AND TRADITIONS HAVE LITTLE RELEVANCE”</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>PARTICIPATION IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>IMPORTANCE OF HAVING JEWISH FRIENDS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>“I FEEL CONNECTED TO MY JEWISH FRIENDS”</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>IMPORTANCE OF DATING OR MARRYING SOMEONE JEWISH</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>“CARING ABOUT ISRAEL IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF BEING JEWISH”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>CARING ABOUT ISRAELIS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many studies have concluded that summer Israel trips have a major positive impact on the Jewish identity of teens, including greater identification with the Jewish people, increased communal commitment, and renewed interest in religious practice. While the organized Jewish community understands the importance of such trips in ensuring the future of American Jewry, there is much debate over how to increase the number of teens who benefit from an Israel experience. Within this debate there is a growing understanding of the need to make Israel trips affordable and accessible to a majority of Jewish families. A recent national study by Brandeis University’s Institute for Community and Religion demonstrates that an Israel trip’s price, along with length, marketing and quality, are major factors in parents’ decision to send a teen to Israel.

The Koret Foundation established the Koret Israel Teen Trip (KITT) to provide a more affordable, high-quality Israel experience for Bay Area teens. Initiated in the summer of 1996, in cooperation with the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay, the KITT was designed as an affordable option for Bay Area teens. Because the KITT lasted three and a half weeks, the Koret Foundation was able to offer the trip for $2975 per participant, significantly less expensive than the six week trips available through the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties and the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay, respectively. Due to the short time in which to recruit participants for a new trip—recruitment began in January 1996—the Koret Foundation also provided a $1000 subsidy to each teen, thus reducing the price to $1975. Additional financial aid was made available in selected cases. A total of 31 teens (13 girls and 18 boys) between the ages of 15 and 18 participated during the summer of 1996.

The length of the KITT (three and a half weeks) and its timing (late July to late August) proved to be crucial in many teens’ decision to go on the trip. Many teens had work, sports, summer school, and other commitments that competed with Israel trips for their scarce free time. The trip’s relatively short duration and its scheduling toward the end of the summer helped induce many teens to participate. Furthermore, the affordable price of the trip was the critical factor in the decision to go to Israel for some participants and their

“The trip was one of the best experiences of my life. I grew immensely as a person as well as a Jew.”
intensively with their peers and Israeli teens, taught teens to be more open-minded and accepting of others.

In all, this study shows that the trip was a remarkable success in reaching out to teens, achieving its educational goals, affecting the Jewish identity of participants, and expanding the possibilities for more teens to visit Israel.

**INTRODUCTION**

**METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative and qualitative research were conducted. Pre- and post-trip surveys and personal and telephone interviews were carried out to assess the impact of the trip on participants’ Jewish identity. The surveys and interviews also yielded data regarding participants’ sociodemographic traits, Jewish attitudes and behaviors, means of finding out about the trip, decision to go on the trip, and assessment of the trip’s content and structure.

Participants were asked to fill out a short survey at a pre-trip meeting; several of those who did not attend the meeting were sent the survey and asked to mail it back to Brandeis. In all, 26 of the 31 teens returned their surveys. Moreover, 21 participants were personally interviewed prior to the trip in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of their Jewish identity, reasons for going on the trip, and expectations of what they would experience on the trip.

Data from these two sources were then compared with post-trip data collected through a similar survey and interviews. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire one week after returning from Israel; 26 teens completed this survey within the following month. In addition, 19 post-trip personal and telephone interviews were completed with individuals who had been interviewed prior to the trip. The trip organizer and trip leader were also interviewed personally and by telephone.

Phone interviews were also conducted with 30 parents of the teen participants. These interviews elicited parents’ views on the importance of the trips’ cost, length, and timing on their decision to send their children on the KITT.

"If I had to rate the trip I would give it an eleven and a half. It was great."
WHO WENT ON THE KORET ISRAEL TEEN TRIP?

Age
The age range of KITT was from 15 to 18 years of age. Of those who filled out surveys, 8% are 15 years old, 54% are 16, 27% are 17, and 12% are 18 years old.

Geography
The trip attracted participants from throughout the Bay Area, with a majority concentrated in the South Bay, East Bay, and the Peninsula.

Intermarriage
Thirty-two percent (32%) of the KITT participants are from households where both parents were not born Jewish. Fourteen percent (14%) are from families in which one parent was born Jewish and the other converted to Judaism, and the remaining 18% are from mixed married families.

Emigre Participation
The marketing campaign was effective in reaching emigre youth: about one quarter (23%) of the KITT participants were born in the former Soviet Union.

WHY CHOOSE KITT?

Cost
The trip was priced under $2,000 (after a subsidy of $1000). Financial aid was made available to those who needed it. The affordable price of the trip was the critical factor in the decision to go to Israel for many of the participants and their families. Several of the teens would not have been able to go if the trip had cost more.

Length
The KITT consisted of 23 days in Israel and two full days traveling to and from Israel. Most of the trip participants said in post-trip interviews that they would prefer a slightly longer trip. The trip leader concurs that adding a few additional days to the trip would enhance the trip's impact. Four weeks appears to be the preferred length.

Teens thought a four week trip was optimal because it allowed enough time during the summer to work, attend summer school, or participate in sports leagues. Many teens were committed to engaging in these activities during the summer. For example, some teens stated that they could not afford to miss a summer of...
• Time spent with Israeli teens
• Home hospitality—friends & family
• Hikes throughout the country
• The Bedouin tent
• The “disco boat” on the Red Sea
• Masada
• The Kotel
• Yad V’shem

Group Discussions
Every teen interviewed stated that the group discussions were a highlight of the trip. They considered them educational and intriguing. These talks caused them to reflect on Judaism, Israel, and their own Jewish identity. Several of the teens said that they would like to continue exploring their Judaism through further discussion.

Free Time
The personal interviews revealed that most teens wanted more free time to spend with Israeli teens. Some of the teens also said that they wanted additional unstructured time to relax, shop, and/or socialize with friends.

WHAT DID THEY THINK ABOUT THE STAFF?

Trip Leader
The teens report that the trip leader did a first-rate job. They loved his enthusiasm, leadership, and knowledge of Israel. Many teens said they liked the leader’s combined role as trip leader and tour guide.

Counselors
The majority of participants were extremely satisfied with the way the trip’s staff interacted with the group. Most teens saw them as authority figures, as well as good friends and confidants. The majority of teens said they would choose this trip solely for the trip leader and counselors.

Teens were excited by the staff’s knowledge about Israel and the specific places visited. Teens report that the staff’s expertise had an extremely positive impact on their entire trip.

Number of Staff
One staff person for every eight teens (the trip leader and three counselors staffed the trip) seemed to be the ideal ratio to ensure the high level of participant satisfaction and proper supervision.

Guidelines for Behavior
According to the post-trip survey, 100% of the teens agreed that the staff enforced clear rules about acceptable and unacceptable behav-

“He hadn’t been away from home.
I have never been to Israel.
It would make me too uncomfortable to send him on a six week trip.”
members of the KITT group. Some teens interviewed after the trip said that they would be interested in being on the planning committee for a group project.

_Social/Individual Identity_

_Personal Growth_
The KITT taught teens to be more open-minded and accepting of others. Teens said that their interactions with other members of the trip and with Israelis have helped them become more accepting and less judgmental of others.

Many of the teens improved critical thinking skills that will aid them in analyzing and understanding difficult issues such as belief in God and the meaning of Judaism.

Pre- and post-trip surveys and interviews indicate that the trip made a dramatic immediate impact on the Jewish identity of the KITT participants. The trip was successful in prompting teens to examine their beliefs and values, especially regarding Judaism and Jewish identity.

_Having Jewish Friends_
More than twice as many teens reported after the trip that it is important or very important to them to have Jewish friends (72% versus 34%). Most of those who were interviewed after the trip now want to spend more social time with other Jewish teens.

While before the trip 52% of the teens agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel a special connection with my Jewish friends,” 92% agreed or strongly agreed after the trip.

The trip has had a decisive impact on the Jewish character of teens friendship circles. Before the trip, 88% of teens said that few or none of their closest friends were Jewish. In contrast, those who were interviewed after the trip said that many of their closest friends are Jewish as they now consider other KITT participants their friends.

_Dating or Marrying Someone Jewish_
In pre-trip interviews, many teens regarded emphasis on in-group dating and marriage as exclusionary and limiting. Although some teens are still open to dating non-Jews, others say that they now prefer to date only Jews.

"I learned a lot about myself and how to make myself a better person. I also came back from this trip feeling fortunate and appreciative."
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

WHO SHOULD GO ON KORET ISRAEL TEEN TRIP?

There should be a continued effort to attract participants from throughout the Bay Area. There should also be a continued effort to emphasis outreach to diverse groups not normally targeted for this kind of trip.

WHY CHOOSE KITT?

Cost
The KITT Israel trip should remain affordable. Many teens cannot afford to participate on more expensive trips. Some cannot afford the additional costs and some cannot spend the time away from work.

Trip organizers should continue to seek out vendors (i.e. bus companies, airlines, sleeping accommodations, food suppliers) with competitive pricing to maintain trip affordability.

Trip scholarships should continue to be available to encourage all Jewish teens to participate in Israel experience programs.

Length
A four week trip is recommended to improve the quality of the trip. Adding just a few days could help both the educational content and provide some more leisure time.

The trip should be no longer than four weeks to accommodate teens who need to work or who want to spend time in other activities during the summer. The need to work is critical for many teens. A longer trip would discriminate against those who could not afford the lost summer income.

Staff
If the trip expands in the future the ratio of counselors should be maintained to ensure the high level of participant satisfaction and proper supervision.

“Cost was definitely an incentive and necessity for most parents.”
IMPACT ON JEWISH IDENTITY

Personal Growth
The trip's structure and curriculum should continue to emphasize personal growth in the context of challenging teens to explore Judaism and Jewish identity.

Programming
Programming for the KITT teens should be developed to enhance the impact of the trip and to provide them with a forum for continuing to explore the complex questions about their Jewish identity. Teens should meet with the trip leader for in-depth discussions similar to those they had in Israel.

Participation In Jewish Life
Participants should be provided with all available information about the various Jewish educational programs that exist in the area. This should be followed by phone calls to encourage the teens to participate in programs.

KITT participants should be put on a mailing list that will provide them with information about Jewish and Israeli cultural events that take place in their area.

FUTURE TRIPS TO ISRAEL

Available Programs
Participants should be provided with descriptions of and a list of contacts for various programs available for teens and young adults in Israel.

"Keep on doing these trips... it's important for the kids."

The Koret Israel Teen Trip
The KITT should again be offered in the late part of the summer. This allows a solid block of time for the teens to work or engage in other activities during the summer.

Evaluation
On-going research and evaluation of Israel programs should be maintained to measure impact and to continually improve the trip and pre- and post-trip programming.
Intermarriage
Of teens who filled out post-trip surveys, the majority (68%) come from families in which both parents were born Jewish. Another 14% are from families in which one parent was born Jewish and the other converted to Judaism, and the remaining 18% are from mixed married families (see figure 3).

Emigre Participation
Twenty-three percent (23%) of the KITT participants were born in the former Soviet Union.

"When I think about Israel, Judaism—our own country. It is different than the Baltic Seas—we moved because of the antisemitism."
**Synagogue Affiliation**
Like most American Jewish families with school-aged children, the majority (88%) of teen respondents’ families currently belong to a synagogue. Of this group, close to two-thirds belong to a Reform synagogue, and one-third belong to a Conservative synagogue (see figure 5).

**Synagogue Attendance**
Few participants can be considered frequent synagogue attendees. Among all respondents (including those who do not belong to a synagogue), only 8% said that they attend synagogue about once a month. More than half (54%) reported attending organized Jewish religious services a few times a year, 23% said that they attend only on the High Holidays, and 15% stated that they never attend synagogue (see figure 6). Of the five respondents who do not belong to a synagogue, three indicated that they never attend organized Jewish religious services, one reported attending only on high holidays, and another reported attending a few times a year.

"The trip definitely had a very positive effect on her Jewish identity. Our Jewish identity, too. We really feel a tie to Judaism through her. This trip was a tremendous experience for all of us.”
Informal Jewish Education
Most teens have also participated in various informal Jewish educational experiences. In the year of the KITT, 36% were involved in some type of informal Jewish experience (see figure 5). In the past, 69% of respondents said that they participated in a Jewish youth group, 57% attended Jewish summer camp, 54% took part in a JCC program, and 19% took part in a Jewish sports league or team.

Many of those who participate in Jewish youth groups value them for providing the opportunity to socialize with other Jewish teens. Explaining why he likes belonging to the American Zionist Association youth group (AZA), one teen said: “It is pretty social. It is pretty much a lot of Jewish teens hanging out with Jewish teens.” Another commented: “I do belong to Walnut Creek USY...I’m interested in it in a general social aspect with a Jewish bunch of people.”
ed by the prospect of returning home with new Jewish friends who lived in the area. Said one teen: "One important reason I am going on this trip is to make real good Jewish friends and Jewish connections." Another teen stated: "I want bonding. I want to bond with people who I will be coming back here with because we will actually be able to do things together."

**Meeting Israelis**
The majority of participants also expressed an interest in meeting Israelis while they were in Israel. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents to the pre-trip survey said that meeting Israelis was an important factor in their deciding to go on the trip, including 24% who considered it very important.
Eighty-six (86%) of parents were not able to afford $5,500 or $4,500 for an Israel trip and 64% could not afford $3,500. Seventy-one percent (71%) of parents felt $2,500 was affordable. "Cost was definitely an incentive and necessity for most parents" (see figure 9).

**Length**

The trip lasted 25 days. The majority (79%) of teen respondents stated that the trip’s length was an important or a very important factor in deciding to go on this trip. Pre- and post-trip interviews indicate that this was one of the key factors in teens’ decision to participate. Several teens stated that they were unable to go on a six week Israel trip due to other commitments such as sports leagues, jobs, and summer schoolwork. For example, one participant was involved in a summer sports league that overlapped with the dates of the six week trip. Thus, she was happy that the three and a half week trip allowed her the opportunity to participate in both the sports league and an Israel trip. Another teen stated: "The trip was the right length, because otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to go: I had a summer job before the trip, and needed time to do summer homework afterwards." Another teen
MARKETING

Advertising
Personnel at the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay designed and implemented a marketing and recruiting strategy for the trip. As noted, the Koret Foundation conceived of the KITT as a shorter, lower-priced alternative to the six week teen trips offered by the East Bay and San Francisco Federations. Consequently, Koret approved a strategy that attempted to respect the constituencies developed by the already existing trips. To this end, the strategy targeted unaffiliated teens, affiliated teens who were not committed to their community’s teen trip, and teens (affiliated and unaffiliated) whose communities do not have teen trips to Israel. Marketing and recruitment began in January 1996 and ended in May 1996.

The majority of marketing and recruitment efforts focused on the South Bay Jewish community because it lacks a community-sponsored trip. The trip organizer met with South Bay Federation leaders to explain the trip’s structure, content,
Recruitment
Recruitment was adversely affected by the late starting date and the wave of terrorism in Israel just prior to the start of the trip's marketing campaign. Trip organizers stated that four teens who had expressed interest in the trip withdrew due to safety concerns, and others were undoubtedly deterred from making inquiries about the trip.

DECISION-MAKING
Recent studies indicate that most Jewish teens have a considerable influence on their families' vacation decisions, and that they have even more influence on decisions regarding Israel trips. Teens who went on the KITT by and large had a great deal of responsibility regarding the decision to go on the trip. In most cases (65%), teens and their parents and/or grandparents shared this responsibility. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of teens reported that they made the decision mostly by themselves. Fifteen percent (15%) said that their parents made the decision mostly by themselves (see figure 11).

"The cost was very important in our decision making process."
SITES

All participants rated the sites visited in Israel as excellent or good; the vast majority (92%) rated these sites as excellent (see figure 13).

Most of the teens were pleased with the fast pace of the trip and the number of activities scheduled. However, at times some found the schedule somewhat hectic.

Sites and activities most frequently mentioned as highlights of the trip included:
- Time spent with Israeli teens
- Home hospitality—friends & family
- Hikes throughout the country
- The Bedouin tent
- The “disco boat” on the Red Sea
Making New Friends
Nearly all the teens stated that making new friends was one of the trip’s highlights. Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents reported that making new friends was an excellent or good feature of the trip, including 73% who said that it was excellent. One teen stated: "I made lots of friends who were more than acquaintances. It was startling how easy people became friends.” Another added: "I've been seeing my friends [from the trip] almost every weekend [since returning]. I've made a lot of friends on the trip."

Meeting Israelis
Most teens considered meeting Israelis a highlight of the trip. Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents rated this aspect of the trip as excellent or good, including 50% who said that it was excellent. The remaining 15% rated it as fair. One teen felt particularly touched by the Shabbat hospitality that each teen enjoyed with an Israeli family twice during the trip. She said: “I feel more connected to people in Israel. We stayed with them for three or four days and that was the best part. I was so worried because I usually don't get along with people. I didn't expect them to be so friendly. I gained so many Israeli friends and I felt like I knew them my entire life.”

STRUCTURE

Length
Seventeen of the 19 teens (89%) interviewed stated that the trip’s length was either optimal or could have been improved by being extended several days. For example, one teen stated: “The [trip] length was perfect. It gave me time to work during the summer. We did so much in three and a half weeks.” Another remarked: “The length was perfect. I got to become close with pretty much everyone. At the end of the trip I was ready to go home. If I had a few more days that would be great, but I wouldn't want the trip longer than four weeks.”

Food
Over half (54%) of respondents rated the food on the trip as good or excellent; 35% said that it was fair and 12% rated it as poor.

Housing
Seventy-three percent (73%) of the teens rated the trip’s housing as excellent or good, 23% rated it as fair, and 4% rated it as poor.

“The length was perfect.
I got to become close with pretty much everyone.
At the end of the trip I was ready to go home.
If I had a few more days that would be great, but I wouldn’t want the trip longer than four weeks.”
would choose this trip solely for the group leader and counselors. Forty-six percent (48%) of post-trip respondents reported that the counselors’ teaching performance was excellent, and 50% said that it was good (see figure 14).

Guidelines for Behavior
According to the post-trip survey, 100% of the teens agreed that the staff enforced clear rules about acceptable and unacceptable behavior on the Koret Israel Teen Trip, with 58% strongly agreeing.

Number of Staff
Four counselors staffed the trip. The ratio of teens to counselors (8 to 1) seemed to be ideal to ensure the proper supervision.

Gender Balance
A number of teens mentioned that they liked having two men and two women counselors. The gender balance worked well for both male and female participants. One teen stated: "I liked that there were two males and two females. It kept a balance."

Americans and Israelis
Teens liked having two Israeli and two American counselors. They were able to see and experience Israel from the perspective of both Israelis
was on the spot where Abraham left his donkey, wow, I can trace that straight to me. It hit me all of a sudden. The whole culture and passing it down, that is the most important part of being Jewish."

**Connection to the Jewish People**

The Israel experience prompted even more teens to feel more identification with other Jews in general. Most teens felt connected to the Jewish people in general before the trip. Before leaving for Israel, the majority (80%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel connected to the Jewish people. After the trip, all teens (100%) agreed that they feel connected, including 39% who agreed strongly (See Figure 16)

**Knowledge of Jewish Life and History**

The trip strengthened teens' already appreciable respect for the need for knowledge about Jewish life and history. Prior to the trip, the vast majority (88%) of respondents said it is important or very important to have knowledge of Jewish life and Jewish history, including 23% who said it is very important. All post-trip respondents (100%) said that this is important or very important, including 54% who said that it is very important.
Torah and the Talmud...I want to do this to satisfy my own curiosity, for a sense of understanding. I want to learn more about what I believe in.”

EDUCATIONAL/COMMUNAL PARTICIPATION

Jewish Observance
Most teens consider it important to celebrate Jewish holidays; the trip apparently had little effect on this attitude. Eighty-one percent (81%) of pre-trip respondents indicated that it is important to them to celebrate Jewish holidays, including 42% who said that it is very important. Of post-trip respondents, 85% indicated that it is important, including 15% who think that it is very important. A teen explained the impact of the trip on her family’s religious observance: “I learned a lot about Judaism in relation to myself. My family doesn’t celebrate Shabbat and when you are in Israel you have to celebrate Shabbat. I like that. When I came home I bought candle holders for my parents and now we light candles on Shabbat.”

Synagogue Attendance
Teens’ attitudes toward synagogue attendance also changed as a result
Participation in a Class about Judaism
The trip also boosted teens’ estimation of the importance of participating in a class, study group, or discussion about Judaism. Before the trip, half (50%) of respondents said that it is important or very important to participate in such activities, while 69% of respondents after the trip reported that this was important or very important.

SOCIAL /INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

Personal Growth
Most teens believe that the trip helped them grow both as individuals and as Jews. For example, the teens reported that the KITT taught them to be more open-minded and accepting of others. Teens said that their interactions with other members of the trip and with Israelis have helped them become more accepting and less judgmental of others.

Moreover, many of the teens improved critical thinking skills that will aid them in analyzing and understanding difficult issues such as belief in God and the meaning of Judaism.

Pre- and post-trip surveys and interviews indicate that the trip made a dramatic immediate impact on the Jewish identity of the KITT participants. The trip was successful in prompting teens to examine their beliefs and values, especially regarding Judaism and Jewish identity.

One teen’s comments demonstrate the link that most made between growth as an individual and growth as a Jew: “The trip was one of the best experiences of my life. I grew immensely as a person as well as a Jew.” A result of the trip, another added: “I learned a lot about myself and how to make myself a better person. I came back from this trip more in touch with myself because I learned so much and also experienced a lot. I also came back from this trip feeling fortunate and appreciative.”

Jewish Friendships
Prior to the trip, most teens did not have predominantly Jewish friendship circles. Only one respondent (4%) to the pre-trip survey said that all her/his friends are Jewish, another two (8%) said that most of their friends are Jewish, 21% said that it is more important to marry someone Jewish.

Dating someone Jewish is important...
because if I date people who are Jewish now then it’d be easier to marry someone Jewish later.”
Most teens returned from the trip with a greater appreciation for the importance of having Jewish friends and for the difference in friendships between Jews and non-Jews. For example, one teen stated: “It is very important to have Jewish friends. I have a strong bond with Jewish people. I never really had Jewish friends. I feel really close with them. I love them. I really care about them.”

Another teen reported that being in Israel made him realize that he has a special connection to his Jewish friends: “I was in Israel, I was actually part of that culture for a while. I want to continue that here. Being part of the culture also includes being Jewish. I want to spend time with my Jewish friends. I can now see a reason to be friends with people from temple or AZA. They are not just my Jewish friends, but they are part of the culture, too.”

Although more than half of pre-trip respondents said that having Jewish friends is not important to them, more than half (53%) also valued participating in Jewish social/cultural events with their friends. The trip affected teens slightly with respect to this issue: 66% of post-trip respondents said that participating in Jewish social/cultural events with their
After the trip, many more teens considered dating or marrying a Jew to be important. Almost two-thirds (62%) of post-trip respondents said that it is important, including 23% who said that it is very important. Of the remaining respondents, 27% said that it is not very important, 8% said that is not at all important, and 4% were unsure (see figure 21).

In post-trip interviews most teens reconsidered their previous indifference to the idea of dating and marrying a Jew. One girl gave this assessment of the girls’ thinking on the issue: "When the girls on the trip first talked about marrying someone Jewish no one seemed to think it mattered—as long as they were in love. But after the trip they were thinking about it a lot more. They were thinking how it would be a lot easier if they married someone Jewish. It got a lot of people on the trip thinking about it." Another girl stated: "Now it is more important to me that I marry someone Jewish. Dating someone Jewish is important . . . because if I date people who are Jewish now then it’d be easier to marry someone Jewish later.”
tioned a new understanding about the debate over the Golan Heights. One teen reported that she now “understand[s] how [Israelis] feel and why you should feel that way. Now when I watch the news, I will have a better understanding of what they are actually talking about. They are not just talking about something I have never seen. I’ve actually been there. I can form an opinion.”

Learning about Israel
Teens felt that the trip taught them a lot about Israel and Israelis. In pre-trip interviews most teens stated that they knew very little about Israel or Israelis, despite the fact that modern Israel is included in the curricula used at the religious schools that most teens attended. One teen stated: “I knew nothing about Israel before I left. Not a thing. I learned a lot about it. I learned a lot of geography since we traveled over the entire state. I learned a little bit about the leaders, a little bit about the history.” Another teen remarked: “We were exposed to a lot. I learned a lot about the culture.”

Moreover, the trip sparked teen’s interest to learn more about Israel and Israeli politics. Post-trip interviews indicate that teens are now more interested in current events and news coverage about Israel than they were before the trip. For example, one teen stated: “I think I’ll be more interested in learning about Israel now... If I see anything in the news, I’ll be more interested in that now than I think I would have been if I didn’t go to Israel.” Another teen registered her interest: “I’m also curious about Israeli history, and about Jewish mysticism, as opposed to rabbinic studies. Maybe I’ll take a course on this in college.”

Feelings Toward Israelis
The trip enabled teens to feel close to Israelis. Fifty-seven percent of pre-trip respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they “feel close to the people of Israel.” After the trip this figure rose to 77% (see figure 23). As one teen stated: “I feel more connected to Israelis. It is hard to explain. I feel like I can always go to Israel and I will always be welcome there and people will protect you.” Another teen said: “Since I’ve been there and I’ve seen how [Israelis] live...now I feel closer to them because I know what it’s like more and I guess I’d want to help them more than I’d want to help another country.”
The Jewish community has come to view the Israel experience as a key means to ensure teens’ enduring commitment to the Jewish people, Judaism, and the state of Israel. As concerns over the transmission of Jewish identity intensify, Jewish leaders have begun to look for ways to increase the number of teens who can participate in a summer Israel program. Reducing the cost of such trips is one mechanism for making the trip more widely available. The KITT was established as a more affordable trip whose lower price relative to other trips was achieved largely through a shorter duration.

This study shows that a shorter trip can have a tremendous immediate impact on teens’ Jewish identity. Teens returned from the trip feeling more connected to the Jewish people, avid to pursue Jewish interests, and eager to have more Jewish friends. The trip enabled teens to make more Jewish friends and, with proper follow-up built into the trip’s structure, it can help them become more involved in Jewish activities and organizations. For nearly all the teens, the trip was a—perhaps the—decisive Jewish experience in their lives thus far. Contrary to the expectations of some observers prior to the trip, the trip’s shorter length actually proved to be a strength. Most teens who participated indicated that the length was an important factor in their decision to go, mainly because they had other commitments such as summer school, work, and sports during the summer. The trip’s timing (late July to late August) also was attractive to these teens as it did not interfere with these other commitments. Cost was also an important factor in teens’ decision to participate on this trip. Had the trip cost more, many teens would not have been able to take part.

It is imperative that the Jewish community make the Israel experience accessible to a greater number of Jewish teens. The 1996 KITT demonstrates that a shorter, more affordable trip can provide teens with the experiences necessary to make a dramatic immediate impact on teens’ Jewish identity. The KITT is a valuable resource in the Jewish community’s effort to ensure the transmission of Jewish identity.

“I do feel like I’ve made thirty-one new friends who are Jewish and we have that tradition, that culture behind us. It makes me more proud of it and makes me want to explore more.”
PHILANTHROPY • VOLUNTEERISM
- American Jewish Philanthropy in the 1990s: Executive Summary, by Gary A. Tobin (1995), $12.00
- A Profile of Major Donors’ Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Jewish Philanthropic Giving, by Gary A. Tobin (1992), $4.50
- Trends in American Jewish Philanthropy: Market Research Analysis, by Gary A. Tobin (1992), $5.00
- Voluntarism Among American Jews, by Gabriel Berger (1991), $6.50

FOUNDATIONS
  - Research Note, $2.00
  - Executive Summary, $7.50
  - Final Report, $15.00
- The Impact of Foundations With Jewish Interests on the North American Jewish Community: The 1993 Alexander Brin Forum, $15.00

JEWISH WOMEN
  - Research Note, $2.00
  - A Call to Action, by Amy L. Sales, $7.50
  - Final Report, $15.00

JEWISH EDUCATION
- Teach Your Children When They Are Young: Contemporary Jewish Education in the United States, by Sylvia Barack Fishman & Alice Goldstein (1993), $6.50
- When They Are Grown They Will Not Depart: Jewish Education and the Jewish Behavior of American Adults, by Sylvia Barack Fishman & Alice Goldstein (1993), $6.50

INTERMARRIAGE
- Intermarriage and Jewish Philanthropy in the 1990s: Research Note by Gary A. Tobin (1995), $2.00

JEWS IN YOUTH
- Jewish Youth Databook: Research on Adolescence & Its Implications for Jewish Teen Programs by Amy L. Sales (1996), $10.00
- A Look at Today's Jewish Youth: Research Note by Gary A. Tobin & Amy L. Sales (1996), $2.00
- Jewish Youth Sourcebook: A Planning Guide for Youth Programs by Amy L. Sales & Simon Klarfeld (1996), $15.00
- Serving Bay Area Jewish Teens, by Gary A. Tobin & Joel Streicker et al. (1995), $7.50
- Orange County Jewish Community County-wide Youth Services Committee: Youth Development Report, by Gary A. Tobin & Joel Streicker, (1995), $7.50
- The Levis Jewish Community Center—S. Palm Beach County Jewish Federation: Youth Development Report, by Amy L. Sales, (1995), $7.50
- Fundraising for Youth Programs in Jewish Community Centers, by Marvin Ciporen, Gary A. Tobin & Joseph Harris, (1994), $10.00

ISRAEL
- An Assessment of the Korel Israel Teen Trip, by Tobin, Streicker, Tobin, Wolf, & Glazer (1996), $10.00
  - Research Note, $2.00
  - Final Report, $15.00
- Israel and the Changing Character of Fundraising, by Gary A. Tobin (1994), $6.50
- Israel and American Jewish Philanthropy, by Gary A. Tobin (1990), $3.50

JEWS IN LEADERSHIP
- Profile of Hillel Leaders, by Lawrence Sternberg (1990), $3.50

Please see reverse side for more PUBLICATIONS, ordering information and order form