

“EVERYBODY BENEFITS, EVERYBODY GIVES”: ISRAEL, CHARITY, AND
JEWISH-CANADIAN IDENTITY AT THE TORONTO YMHA DURING THE MID-
TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT/THESIS

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the Toronto Young Men's/Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM/YWHA) operated within its niche as a Jewish community institution to financially support the growth and stability of the State of Israel. In so doing, it asserted the importance of connection to Israel as a means of strengthening Jewish-Canadian identity, making engagement with Israeli culture synonymous with being a good member of the Jewish community. Fundraising for the United Jewish Appeal, taking trips to Israel, and participating in Israeli folk dance were all among actions taken by the YMHA as means of connecting with the state. These contributions to and connections with Israel were advertised and reported upon within the YMHA's newspaper, the *Y Time*, which, through its coverage of Israel-centric campaigns and sentiment, fostered the development of Jewish national self-identification within the organization's members. Analysis of the YMHA's efforts and the motivations behind them provides an interesting look into the survival tactics of diasporic cultural communities and their connections with their "home" countries.

The Toronto YMHA's combined interests in Israel, charity, and Jewish identity were held within the context of the institution's formation and guiding principles. The institution began as a letter patent for the Young Men's Hebrew Athletic Club Ltd. in 1901, eventually operating physically as the Hebrew Association of Young Men's and Young Women's Clubs in 1919.¹ Incorporated as the YMHA in 1930, the association published its first edition of the *Y Time* on December 1st of 1933. The YMHA would continue to publish the newsletter throughout the

¹ "Early History", *The History of the Y.M.H.A.*, OJA Website.

twentieth century. The *Y Time*'s first issue asserted the group's founding precepts to its (then presumably few) readers: that a young Jew with "any self respect (sic)" would support and create his own institutions and make his Jewish identity his highest priority.² In effect, this meant not just attending Jewish institutions, but actively avoiding Christian or secular ones; to be properly Jewish in Canada was to *do Jewish* at every opportunity. It was expected from the start that attendees of the YMHA would attend it in combination with other Jewish institutions, building and strengthening the Torontonians Jewish community. This was during what was a time of understandable concern for its longevity. Compared to the United States, Canada sorely lacked Jewish institutions during the early/mid-twentieth century due to both the small size and the geographical distribution of its Jewish population.³ This made the strength of individual Jewish communities, such as Toronto's, essential.

Though Israel had not yet been formally established, its potential existence was a similarly important (and stressful) topic for Y members in the 30s and 40s. Concern about the safety of local communities translated into concern for the safety of a theoretical Jewish state, with Zionism serving not just as a reflection of local priorities, but as a uniting ideology for the spread-out and distant Canadian Jewish settlements; the establishment of the Canadian Jewish Council in 1919, a staunchly Zionist organization, had given Canadian Jewry across the country a reason to congregate regularly for the first time.⁴ By the mid-twentieth century, almost all Canadian Jews were Zionist, with members of the YMHA being no exception.⁵ Britain's failure to see Israel created in Palestine would be, in the eyes of the *Y Time*'s writers, "to crush for all

² Rabbi Samuel Sachs, "YMHA and the Community", *Y Time*, Vol 1 No 1, December 1st, 1933.

³ Michael Brown, "Divergent Paths: Early Zionism in Canada and the United States," *Jewish Social Studies* 44, no. 2 (1982), pg 157-158.

⁴ *Ibid*, pg 158.

⁵ *Ibid*, pg 156.

time Jewish hopes and aspirations.” To Torontonians Jewry, the future of Israel constituted the future of the entire Jewish world.⁶ Israel’s successful establishment in 1948, then, saw the YMHA primed and enthusiastic to provide financial and social assistance to its development. With the future of the Jewish people protected by the creation of a Jewish state, anxieties surrounding its establishment could be repurposed into motivation to see it grow. The YMHA’s leaders believed that fostering the young country’s success was intertwined with local Jewry’s pre-existing priorities of strengthening Torontonians Jewishness and providing charity to the Jewish community at large. With these dual priorities in mind, the YMHA put considerable effort towards fundraising for Israel’s establishment and towards strengthening Israeli cultural ties within Jewish-Canadian identity. This effort is well documented throughout the *Y Time*.

On a per capita basis, early Canadian contributions to the establishment of Israel were twice that of the United States’, a feat that more than made up for the large difference in population between the two nations.⁷ The Toronto YMHA’s enthusiastic participation in fundraising for Israel reflects this well. Its most plentiful financial undertakings for Israel took place annually during the broader, city-wide United Jewish/Israel Appeal (UJA) campaign. Earlier participation in fundraising for Israel was subsumed within fundraising for the Toronto Community Chest and the Red Cross; this changed when the United Appeal absorbed the Community Chest and other objectives into a greater agency in 1956.⁸ The merger saw the YMHA become an official “participating member” of the appeal, and the organization quickly became serious about UJA drive participation, the appeal receiving “special emphasis” in the *Y Time* from then on.⁹ UJA efforts started small; some of the earliest mentions of UJA campaigns

⁶ “Palestine in Danger”, *Y Time*, May 1939.

⁷ David J. Azrieli, *Rekindling the Torch: The Story of Canadian Zionism*, 2008, pg 130-131.

⁸ “Everybody Benefits, Everybody Gives”, *Y Time*, Vol 24 No 2, October 20th, 1958.

⁹ A YMHA Meeting Minute from 1956.

in the *Y Time* appeared in 1954, with compact advertisements (run both by the UJA and created by the *Y Time* itself) imploring members to donate to orphans in Israel.¹⁰ Events carried out in the name of the UJA covered broad swathes of programming already offered by the YMHA, making use of the organization's pre-existing assets and activities to draw consistent member engagement. Holiday festivals, summer camps, clubs, lectures, sporting events, and even fashion shows were all among the events used to raise money for the UJA.¹¹ Every member was expected to contribute as much as they could within their means, regardless of position. Meeting minutes show that members of the YMHA's boards of directors, alongside other administrators, were even admonished for not donating or campaigning enough; in April of 1959, Mr. Blackstein, a member of the board of directors, chastised his fellow board members for raising only \$6,445 for the UJA through efforts north of Wilson.¹² Every single volume of the paper from 1956 until the mid-1970s mentioned and encouraged Israel-related UJA fundraising. As UJA drives were prioritized in *Y Time* reporting, donating to the UJA became synonymous with paying YMHA fees; so much money was donated to the UJA that the *Y Time* published a table of where *that* money was going, similarly to how it published how membership dues were used.¹³ Giving to the UJA, and thus to Israel, became a duty of YMHA patrons.

Though UJA and other Israel relief efforts were always a top priority of the YMHA, the extent to which Israel relief *overrode* the YMHA's other financial responsibilities was significant. Global factors influenced this dominance. During times of peace, fundraising efforts for Israel ran in conjunction with those for YMHA facilities and local community funds. For example, in 1963, financial records showed a total of \$625,000 raised for the United Jewish

¹⁰ "Harken to UJA", *Y Time*, January 18th, 1954.

¹¹ "Teen Fashion Show held to help UJA", *Y Time*, Vol 9 No 1, February 1964.

¹² A comparison of YMHA meeting minutes from April 13th, 1959, and February 21st, 1963.

¹³ "How Your United Appeal \$ Is Used", *Y Time*, October 1963, pg 2.

Welfare Fund (part of the UJA), which, while a hefty sum, paled in comparison to the \$1,551,950 raised for the YMHA's North Building fund.¹⁴ Tensions surrounding Israel and the Middle East swiftly drew the attention of the YMHA away from local efforts. The Six-Day War in 1967 saw the YMHA and the greater Toronto community establish a "coordinating committee" to fundraise, procure materials and garner public support for Israel.¹⁵

Intracommunity cooperation was so unprecedentedly strong that a *Y Time* journalist referred to efforts as a "fifth moment of truth," or defining historical moment, for the YMHA.¹⁶ While surprising to the YMHA at the time, the group's eagerness to work with other community organizations during the Six-Day War reflected the broader Jewish-Canadian response; Harold Troper explains in his book *The Defining Decade* that the lackluster response from the general Canadian public to the war saw the Jewish community, feeling isolated, "drawn to the only ones they were sure would understand".¹⁷ Despite assertions of its importance to YMHA history, though, coverage and discussion of the Six-Day War in the *Y Time* was surprisingly minimal. Though UJA fundraisers continued to be advertised per issue, the specifics of community efforts were as little commented on as the specifics of the war itself.¹⁸

More heavily discussed was the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in the fall of 1973, which saw the YMHA's fiscal priorities turn *almost entirely* to the support of Israel (to the negligence of other work). Fundraising for the YMHA's North Building, then almost complete, was halted in its entirety in order to redirect all funds to Israeli relief.¹⁹ In the following year, the

¹⁴ YMHA Income Notes from February 21st, 1963.

¹⁵ "J. Irving Oelbaum Memorialized at Community Anniversary Meeting", *Y Time*, October 1967, pg 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, University of Toronto Press, 2010, pg 129.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg 126. This is especially surprising given that the information that did get through spoke almost exclusively of Israel's impending doom.

¹⁹ "Campaign Continuation Discussed", *Y Time*, December 1973.

YMHA cancelled its yearly Y Drive to fundraise for the UJA, with any worker who would have worked on the drive released to work for the appeal.²⁰ These efforts came shortly after the YMHA's celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Israel's establishment, with the organization already focused on celebrating and aiding Israel and thus prepared to continue to provide.²¹ In March of 1973, just months before the war, the Y dedicated a \$5,000 dollar mural to the eleven Israeli athletes murdered at the Olympics by Palestinian militant group Black September. This mural, which would be painted on the North Building after its completion, stood to remind YMHA members during the war itself of their connection to Israel; Torontonians were to remember that the state's grief was their grief,²² and mitigating their grief was essential. While efforts surrounding the Yom Kippur War saw the UJA raise a whopping 26.5 million dollars,²³ the YMHA saw this sharp uptick in donations from previous years as proof that its members had not been giving all they could give to Israel before. While donations skyrocketed, the *Y Time* expressed its disappointment in its readership for not giving enough to the "global community."²⁴

Perhaps *Y Time* journalists complained because they could afford to; the dedication of YMHA members to the larger Jewish community was in abundance in the mid-twentieth^h century, especially among the youth. Among YMHA membership, young people played the largest role in fundraising and campaigning for Israel. The Combined Youth Appeal, or CYA, called upon the plentiful youth clubs within the YMHA to make use of their skills, connections, and youthful energy to raise money and awareness. Concerts, talent shows, bake sales, odd jobs,

²⁰ "Y Drive Gives Way To UJA", *Y Time*, December 1974.

²¹ "Y Celebrates Israel's 25th Anniversary", *Y Time*, Volume 37 No 4, December 1972.

²² "'Y' Commemorates Israeli Athletes", *Y Time*, Volume 38 No 1, March 1973.

²³ "Y Supports U.J.A.", *Y Time*, Vol 39 No 4, December 1974.

²⁴ Ibid.

and comic book sales were all among the money making methods the youth of the YMHA put to use in order to raise money for Israel.²⁵ However, while the CYA made the majority of the YMHA's money for the UJA, the Y's reasoning for having youth take the lead was primarily cultural, based in the needs of the community in Toronto; in the words of one *Y Time* writer, "the educational process far exceed[ed] the amounts raised."²⁶ While canvassing was important, emphasis was on both teaching Jewish-Canadian children about the needs of Jewish youth in Israel and the importance of participation in Jewishness for their "cultural survival."²⁷ Slogans such as "give today, enjoy tomorrow" encouraged Jewish children to tie their own wellbeing and happiness to that of their brethren across the sea.²⁸ Youth were even encouraged and allowed to make contact with non UJA affiliated Jewish groups on their own for fundraising and community outreach purposes during CYA drives.²⁹ For the YMHA, these drives became a way of encouraging children and teenagers to be active in their local Jewish community and to absorb Israeli culture. In participating in these drives, the YMHA was simultaneously raising funds for Israel and ensuring the younger generation's connection to it. Efforts like these contributed to the UJA becoming responsible for the most extensive of Canadian Jewry's youth education and leadership development programs.³⁰

Reflecting the importance of youth to the community, appeals to adult members of the YMHA to contribute to the UJA also often referred to the importance of Jewish children's wellbeing. Israeli orphans were a commonly brought-up needy party, with the money and

²⁵ "Combined Youth Appeal", *Y Time*, February 9th, 1959, Page 3.

²⁶ "Combined Youth Appeal For UJA Starts", *Y Time*, Vol 9 No 1, February 1964.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Expect CYA Result Top All Other Years", *Y Time*, March 3, 1958, pg 2.

²⁹ YMHA Meeting Minutes from May 17th, 1956.

³⁰ Azrieli, *Rekindling the Torch: The Story of Canadian Zionism*, pg 151.

support of YMHA members needed to help them thrive as Jews.³¹ Events run by children were advertised the most heavily, with the attendance of parents, family members, and friends made easier to secure by the potential for a disappointed son or daughter. The substantial involvement of children, then, stuck to the YMHA's ethos not just by encouraging youth to participate in Jewish ideals and support Jewish institutions, but by forcing their parents to continue to do so by proxy.

While the YMHA's guiding principles had remained concrete from its establishment and didn't need to be changed to foster care for Israel, the organization brought Israel-related programming still deeper into its mandate over time. A visible shift in the usage of an event for fundraising purposes, for example, came in the form of the YMHA's yearly Purim carnival, which was held every spring and served the triple duty of as a form of entertainment, religious expression, and fundraising. During the early 50s, *Y Time* coverage of the Purim carnival made no mention of the UJA or Israel.³² By 1958, though, the YMHA's Purim carnival had become part of the community center's UJA drive, consolidated as part of its CYA efforts. In an article titled "A Call For Unity," the *Y Time* asserted to its readers that Purim was not just a celebration, but a call for unity and mutual aid, and that members of the Y were expected to contribute to the spirit of the holiday by attending the event.³³ Nine hundred dollars ended up being raised by the event that year.³⁴ In the years that followed, any mention of the Purim carnival could not go without a mention of the fundraising being done for the UJA, with the success of these fundraisers of just as much note as the event itself. This continued into the 60s and early 70s, with the YMHA's Purim carnival often contributing all its profits to charities such as the "Israeli

³¹ "Give For Today And Tomorrow", *Y Time*, March 24th, 1958, pg 2.

³² Eiyer Newsy Twosome, "And Very Pleased Too With Purim Carnival", *Y Time*, March 28, 1955, pg 4.

³³ "A Call For Unity", *Y Time*, March 3, 1958.

³⁴ "Echo of a Fine Carnival", *Y Time*, March 24, 1958, pg 2.

Emergency Fund.”³⁵ Even when the YMHA had other fundraising priorities, it never returned to pooling money for itself exclusively; in 1968, during the height of its Northern Branch building fund, it still allocated some of its Purim carnival’s profits to the construction of a YMHA in Jerusalem.³⁶ The YMHA’s Purim carnival was not originally synonymous with fundraising for Israel, though it may have already been associated with charity and unity by nature.³⁷ By solidifying a connection between the United Jewish Appeal and the Purim carnival, then, the YMHA was creating a new mental link between Israel and Purim itself. To YMHA members, celebrating Jewish holidays within the organization was an important part of Torontonian Jewishness. Given the context of Purim as a celebration of Jewish strength in the face of adversity and discrimination (or of “the triumph of good over evil,” in the words of one *Y Time* writer),³⁸ tying the carnival to fundraisers for Israel asserted to YMHA members that contributing to Israel’s growth was a demonstration of that strength. By creating and upholding this seemingly small financial tie, the YMHA encouraged its members to think of giving to Israel as synonymous with the celebration of Purim far into the future.

Perhaps the best example of a less financially focused effort to embed Israel into Torontonian Jewish identity would be that of the cultivation of an Israeli folk dancing craze. While Israeli folk dancing events were occasionally held as fundraising efforts, embedding Israeli culture within that of Jewish Toronto was their primary goal. Israeli folk dance as a phenomenon within the YMHA began as early as the mid-50s,³⁹ with the first “annual” folk dance festival held and reported upon in the final quarter of 1957.⁴⁰ Dancing became a staple of

³⁵ “Carnival 1969”, *Y Time*, March 1969, pg 2.

³⁶ “Carnival Time”, *Y Time*, Vol 33 No 2, March 1968.

³⁷ “A Call For Unity”, *Y Time*, March 3, 1958, pg 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ “Teenage Department Program Schedule”, *Y Time*, September 15th, 1954, pg 3.

⁴⁰ Teme London Kernerman, “Israeli Dancing The Rage”, *Y Time*, December 2nd, 1957, pg 4.

the CYA's fundraising efforts, presumably passed on to the youth division due to the desire for young people to be the most involved in Israeli culture. According to the *Y Time*, participating in Israeli folk dancing expressed Israeli pride, a sentiment very much in line with the idea that the YMHA wanted members to see themselves as Israeli as much as they saw themselves as Canadian.⁴¹ Though teenagers within the CYA were encouraged to be the ones organizing folk dancing events, the participation of younger children in folk dance was heavily emphasized, with a Junior Israeli Festival being mentioned in the journal as early as 1958.⁴² By 1975, the children's dance festivals were sponsored by the Board of Jewish Education, with Torontonians decked out in the colours of the Israeli flag and instructed by Israeli taught professional dancers.⁴³ The involvement of either dance professionals or other organizations in the YMHA's dance endeavors signaled their importance. On multiple occasions, dance festivals at the YMHA were sponsored by the Zionist Youth Council of Toronto, asserting the events' value to creating a Zionist mindset among children.⁴⁴ Notably, Israeli dancer Shalom Hermon, originator of the Israeli Independence Day Dance Parade in Haifa, taught a workshop at the Toronto YMHA in March of 1969.⁴⁵ In a direct reflection of this "outsider" engagement, the YMHA also took Israeli folk dancing outside of its walls and to the greater Jewish community of Toronto. After its establishment in the late 50s, the association's Dance Centre became responsible for sending Israeli folk dance instructors out to Torontonians Jewish schools and youth groups to spread the practice among metropolitan Jewish children.⁴⁶

⁴¹ "Dancing Expresses Israel's Pride", *Y Time*, Vol 25 No 6, February 17th, 1960.

⁴² "Israeli Festival Annual Event", *Y Time*, March 3rd, 1958.

⁴³ "Rikudiyah" - Children's Israeli Dance Festival", *Y Time*, June 1975.

⁴⁴ "Ten Groups Perform March 1st In Israeli Dance Festival at 'Y'", *Y Time*, Vol 24 No 5, February 9th, 1959, and *Y Time*, February 17th 1960.

⁴⁵ "Israeli Folk Dance Workshop", *Y Time*, March 1969.

⁴⁶ YMHA Director's Report from 1958.

Dance, it seemed, was the most heavily utilized of the YMHA's athletic programming in campaigns for Israel; despite the prevalence of sports within the association from its beginning, sporting events were seldom used for fundraising and community building compared to other efforts used to connect with Israel. This did not mean that they did not come into play at all. Most notably, the Maccabiah Games gave members of the Toronto YMHA a way to participate in financially and culturally strengthening Israel while bringing home sporting accolades for the community. The Maccabiah Games, often called the "Jewish Olympics," are a sporting event open only to Jewish athletes held in Israel every four years. Canada first participated in the 1950 Games, the first Maccabiah since its postponement during World War II. Nine members of the Toronto YMHA debuted at the 1953 Maccabiah Games,⁴⁷ where Canada proceeded to place fifth overall despite sending the smallest team of any nation attending.⁴⁸ Though the *Y Time* cheered on its athletes, articles on the Maccabiah often saw the competition itself come second to bringing Jewish athletes and youth together and "acquainting them with the pioneering efforts of Israel."⁴⁹ One article on a YMHA member's trip to the 1957 games hardly mentioned the competitions themselves; instead, the *Y Time* journalist reported on how impressed they were with Israel and its people (even bringing up how the tents they stayed in were won from the Egyptians during the Sinai Campaign).⁵⁰ This very much reflects the YMHA's continued prioritization of Israel at home, with events themselves often seeming overwhelmed in their coverage by appeals to donate and reports of the proceeds. As the Maccabiah Games were not a fundraising or Israeli awareness event, but a sporting event, the fact that they were treated like

⁴⁷ "Nine YM-YWHA Athletes With Canadian Team At Maccabiah Games", *Y Time*, Vol 19 No 1, September 28th, 1953.

⁴⁸ "Canadian Maccabian Team Wins Nineteen Medals", *Y Time*, Oct 26, 1953.

⁴⁹ "Vie For Positions on Maccabi Team", *Y Time*, Vol 22 No 9, May 21st, 1957.

⁵⁰ Umi Cooper, "Impressions of the Maccabi Games". *Y Time*, Volume 23 No 2, Nov 4, 1957.

the former points to the idea that, when relevant, Israel was to be put first in all YMHA events and publications. *Y Time* readers were expected to feel as if Israel itself was more interesting than the participation of YMHA members in the Maccabiah (or the Maccabiah itself).

Outside of the Maccabiah, sending youth and seniors alike to Israel also became a large part of the YMHA's mandate during the mid-twentieth century. Often presented as "study missions," these trips were meant both to raise money for the YMHA/Israeli groups and to instill a love for Israeli culture in members of the Jewish Canadian community. In 1957, the YMHA had begun sending young members of the YMHA to Israel as part of the United Jewish Appeal. Sponsored by the Israeli government in 1959, the third annual study trip saw young members of the YMHA meeting "Israel's great leaders," an act that was seen as evidence of Toronto Jewry's continued commitment to the nation.⁵¹ Commitment to Israel and pride in the country's development continued to be a theme in trips taken by Y members. In 1966, teenagers from the YMHA, after returning from Israel, were published referring to it as "a country we [Jewish-Canadians] should be very proud of."⁵² Trips for Jewish youth (or young adults aged eighteen to twenty-five) were prioritized as formative experiences that would instill within them a lasting love for the state.⁵³

The YMHA's desire to send its youth to Israel was echoed by the youth's own desire to go, a desire that was especially strong in the months preceding the Six-Day War. Tensions in the Middle East saw Jewish youth across Canada lining up to go to Israel, their eagerness to volunteer physical aid surprising but gratifying for Jewish community leaders.⁵⁴ The *Y Time*'s

⁵¹ "Four Members On Study Mission", *Y Time*, November 27th, 1959.

⁵² "Three Toronto Y Teenagers Report On Trip To Israel", *Y Time*, December 1966.

⁵³ "Israeli Summer Institute Open to Y Seniors And Young Adults", *Y Time*, Vol 28 No 1, February 1963.

⁵⁴ Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, pg 134-135.

coverage of youth trips during this period, then, both worked to create the desire to travel in YHMA youth and profited off pre-existing, nationwide eagerness.

Beyond making Jewish-Canadian youth care about Israel, visits for youth organized for the YMHA were also meant to directly transplant Israeli culture into the lives of young Jewish Canadians. Experiences such as Youth Canada, originally titled Camp Canada, saw young members of the YMHA participate in distinctly Israeli facets of life during their time abroad. Under the supervision of Israeli Deputy Minister Yigal Allon, 1971's Youth Canada trip turned its thirty-five participants into "honorary Israeli kibbutznik[s]" by having them live and work on a kibbutz, a traditionally agricultural community unique to Israel.⁵⁵ Upon their return, it was understood that YMHA youth would apply the things they had learned in Israel to the way that they lived their lives in Canada; by participating in these trips, YMHA youth would both contribute to Israel's economy and intertwine their understandings of Canadian Jewry with Israeli experience.

Visits to Israel for older members of the Jewish Canadian community were less focused on creating an appreciation for and connection to the country. Older generations of YMHA members already understood Israel as the homeland of Judaism and were quite typically very vocal in community efforts to assert as much. Their trips, then, primarily focused on raising funds for Israel alongside reinforcing these preexisting understandings. In the summer of 1971, the Northern YMHA's Good Age Travel Club organized a seventeen-day trip for members of the association aged sixty or over.⁵⁶ Primarily a sightseeing trip, it cost 825 USD and involved the sponsorship and adoption of a "grandchild" in Israel for members of the organization to spend

⁵⁵ "Youth Canada", *Y Time*, May 1971, pg 2.

⁵⁶ "Israel Trip", *Y Time*, March 1971, pg 3.

time with.⁵⁷ Since these seniors didn't necessarily need to be taught the importance of Israel, the YMHA could instead make use of a philanthropic effort to reinforce the idea that Jews in Israel are family; giving their older members a child to visit in Israel strengthened this idea while continuing to financially and socially contribute to the country.

Fundraisers, trips, cultural events, and so on all allowed Israeli culture to be transplanted into the YMHA. Doing so also involved transplanting a YMHA into Israel, one of forty-two Israeli facilities for education, sports, and welfare sponsored by Canadian Jews.⁵⁸ First mentioned in the *Y Time* in January of 1954 and first campaigned for by the Toronto YMHA's "HyTeen division,"⁵⁹ the inaugural Israeli Y, to be built in Jerusalem, had been conceptualized and had its development facilitated by Israel and the United States Council of YMHAs.⁶⁰ Toronto's early stake in the Jerusalem Y's establishment had been minimal; efforts had amounted to drives run by youth members to purchase school supplies for the still non-existent building.⁶¹ With the building's completion in the 60s, though, the Toronto YHMA began to take more of an interest. The Jerusalem YMHA's construction on September 1st, 1964, provided YMHA members with the opportunity to take a twenty-day trip to Jerusalem to tour the building alongside Israel proper.⁶² Interestingly, the trip's timing saw members spending both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in Israel rather than Toronto, giving them the chance to strengthen their bond with the country and culture. This was probably intended by the Toronto YMHA and the World Council of YMHAs, the latter of which asserted its desire to facilitate participation

⁵⁷ "Y.M.H.A Good Age Club Finalizes Israeli Trip", *Y Time*, May 1971.

⁵⁸ Azrieli, *Rekindling the Torch: The Story of Canadian Zionism*, pg 150.

⁵⁹ "Form 9 New Interest Groups Stage Drive For Jerusalem Y", *Y Time*, January 18th, 1954.

⁶⁰ "Children and Adults Raise Funds For Jerusalem Y", *Y Time*, Vol 33 No 1, January 1968.

⁶¹ "Form 9 New Interest Groups Stage Drive For Jerusalem Y".

⁶² "Jerusalem YMHA Breaks Ground September 1st", *Y Time*, Vol 29 No 6, June 1964.

and advertised the overlap as an “added pleasure” for attendees.⁶³ Canada, though, was not satisfied with one Israeli YMHA. In 1968, Samuel J. Granatstein, president of the Canadian Council of YMHAs, began spearheading the effort to establish a Canadian-funded Jerusalem YMHA facility, with a goal of one hundred thousand and quota of twenty-five thousand set upon Toronto.⁶⁴ Events such as the Purim carnival were used to raise this money alongside raising money for the UJA, with youth again put at the forefront of fundraising; according to the *Y Time*, their work was “an example of [the YMHA’s] children’s desire to assume the responsibilities of good citizenship.”⁶⁵ However, no article on whether a second Israeli Y was built could be found within the *Y Time* archive.

During its time in the limelight, the original Jerusalem Y was not so much discussed as a brother Y, but as an Israeli institution that needed help like any other.⁶⁶ This did not mean the fact that it was a Y was not cared about at all. Rather, it closely mirrored the Toronto YMHA’s observable perspective on all its efforts: Israel first whenever relevant. The fact that a new Y was built was something to celebrate, the fact that it was the first YMHA in Israel was better, and when put alongside other financial efforts for Israel, the fact that it was a Y did not make it any more *or* less important. With the Jerusalem Y’s stability, discussion of it in the *Y Time* dropped off, and could thus return to the appeal, folk dance, and newer, greater, more Israeli things.

While the YMHA’s efforts to “Israelify” its members developed with time and context, it was the establishing principles of the YMHA, created before Israel’s formation, that guided these efforts. As stated in the *Time*’s first issue, holding one’s Jewish identity in the highest priority, supporting and attending Jewish institutions (and creating them when they don’t exist), and

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Children and Adults Raise Funds For Jerusalem Y”.

⁶⁵ “Carnival Time”.

⁶⁶ “President’s Report”, *Y Time*, June 1969.

connecting with other Jews were the association's guiding convictions. Early members of the Toronto YMHA also saw the creation of Eretz Israel in Palestine as the future of the Jewish people, the "one sanctuary" required to ensure their survival.⁶⁷ With the successful establishment of Israel, it makes sense that these members would hold strong to the tenets that the organization laid out on its creation to see the state flourish. Supporting the growth of Israel and its culture through financial and educational means would have been the natural conclusion of what the YMHA was created to be, allowing the community to ease their anxieties about Israel's safety by contributing to its development. During times of peace, this meant contributions to funds like the UJA could be conducted in conjunction with community fundraisers without guilt about not doing enough. In times of war, where the idea of losing Israel was unthinkable, the community could pool their money into protecting the state and feel especially secure in the strength of the Jewish world when Israel survived. Canadian Jews also more broadly saw themselves (and other diaspora Jews) as the only people that Israel could confidently call upon during conflicts in the Middle East.⁶⁸ To them, Canada itself, alongside other Western countries such as the US and Britain, could not be trusted to help Israel. The *Y Time*, describing Canadian Jews and Israelis alike as "modern Maccabees," asserted that Canadian Jews were the only ones that Israel could depend upon, spurring its readers to contribute on the threat that no one else would.⁶⁹

Developing Jewish-Canadian identity as synonymous with obligation to Israel didn't just provide a point of connection to global Jewry for Canadian Jews, then, but a consistent cause to work towards and lobby for. Having a cause was important for the same reason that the YMHA prioritized the participation of youth in fundraising efforts so heavily; the idea that youth would

⁶⁷ "The Year 5700", *Y Time*, October 1939, pg 2.

⁶⁸ Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, pg 125-126.

⁶⁹ "Channukah", *Y Time*, December 1969, pg 2.

lose their culture through assimilation was constant (a fear that plagues many diaspora communities today). In the Jewish-Canadian community specifically, the elevated socio-economic standing and resulting “Canadianness” of the new generation saw estrangement from Jewishness an especially pressing concern.⁷⁰ Raising money for Israel gave kids a reason to participate in a Purim Carnival, or for teens to debate Jewish issues, or for young adults to consider joining the Maccabiah. In turn, Israeli folk dance, film and fashion, and trips to Israel let youth’s contributions feel repaid and let the state take root in their senses of Jewish self. The YMHA’s success here meant that its members’ dedication to Israel would be consistent in the years to come because it was entrenched in how they thought about themselves as Jewish Canadians rather than exclusively related to whether the country was experiencing a crisis. In this way, the YMHA’s dedication to Israel can be seen as something of a survival tactic for the Torontonians Jewish community. By ensuring that members consistently saw their connection to Israel as important to Jewish identity, the YMHA kept them participating in Judaism and contributing to the Toronto Jewish community outside of their organization, specifically through participation in Israeli fundraisers and cultural events. It was a way of keeping both communities alive.

On a basic level, study of the *Y Time* periodical invites consideration of how community groups like the YMHA contribute to their local communities through contributions to global communities (and vice versa). The Toronto YMHA specifically offers a prime example of how global communities can become *subsumed* into local communities through thought. The YMHA’s prioritization of Israel alongside its Toronto works and the tone it takes in discussion of Israel indicates that it sees Israel as not just part of the Jewish community, but *as its*

⁷⁰ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000, pg 151.

community; the act of thinking about Israel as part of Torontonians Jewishness erases the physical divide. Israel is a monumental physical distance from Toronto, and its citizens are not members of the Toronto YMHA, but it saw the same amount of, if not more, financial, and institutional attention from the YMHA as Toronto does. Intentional or not, this is because of the thought process required to make YMHA members see Israeli culture as synonymous with Jewish-Canadian culture. Assertions that the more connected to Israel and Israeli culture you were, the more Jewish you were, made seeing oneself as Israeli in a YMHA member's best interest. Donating just as quickly to Israel as Jewish Canadians might have to their own neighbours was made to feel "natural."; the mindset facilitated the idea that Israel was their neighbour, too. If the Jewish community of Canada saw the global Jewish community as their own community, subsuming Israeli identity into Jewish Canadian identity could be seen as more or less a marriage of two facets of the self. The inverse, seeing an Israeli person as inherently Jewish Canadian, was not required to make this possible.

None of this is to say that, in the present day, Jewish Toronto sees itself as Israeli. The YMHA was not a monolith, and there have doubtlessly been many changes to it alone since the 1970s: for example, a change in name to the Jewish Community Centre. Instead, it is to say that, for a period of decades, a diasporic community organization provided for and developed itself through the financial support of what it saw as its motherland (a country that did not exist before it). Through fundraising, advertising the transplantation of Israeli culture, and clever and consistent use of connective language, the YMHA used the *Y Time* to intertwine Israel and Jewish Toronto in the minds of its readers. Dance columnist Teme Kernerman's 1958 assertion,

then—that “Israel [would] immigrate to Toronto for two weeks”—seemed well to be right: just for a couple of decades longer.⁷¹

⁷¹ Teme Kernerman, “Rifkah Sturman Back For Israeli Dance Festival”, *Y Time*, February 10th, 1958, pg 2.