Online Resources for Jewish Economics

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Introduction

In recent decades, a growing number of scholars have become interested in the economic dimensions of Judaism and Jewish life. They have introduced new, social scientific, quantitative methodologies into fields traditionally dominated by qualitative, interpretive approaches. For example, Drs. Barry and Carmel Chiswick have carried out pioneering research on the economic characteristics of American Judaism and Jewish life. During the 2008–09 academic year, scholars gathered at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Jewish Studies at the University of Pennsylvania to study the history of Jewish commercial, financial, and business activities from the Middle Ages to the present. Other factors also have spurred this new interest in Jewish economic history. Today, as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century—under the shadow of the current economic crisis—Jewish communal leaders are energetically seeking to raise and maintain financial capital for the Jewish community. Philanthropy has grown into a big business and it's not surprising to find new studies of Jewish philanthropy. In Israel, meanwhile, after decades of economic fluctuations and a move to a free market economy during the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Jewish state's modest, developing economy has been transformed by high tech industries and new waves of immigration. As a nation-state, Israel, too, is analyzing and reevaluating its social and economic development to better understand how it fits into the global marketplace.

This article provides a sampling of online resources that are freely available for scholars interested in analyzing the changing economic climate at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century and its impact on diaspora Jewish life, particularly in North America and within the state of Israel.

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North America

Data Archives/Statistical Information

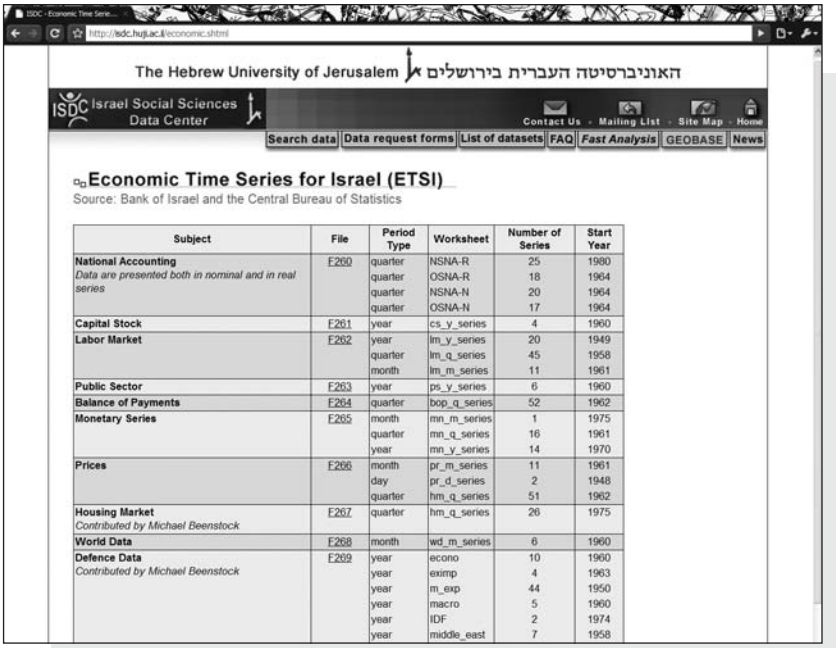
The American Religious Data Archives (www.thearda.com) makes available to researchers a number of data sets on American religion. Users can search data files by topic; they can look at national profiles by nation or region and compare results; they can search through U.S. congregational membership by reports or maps; and they can explore denominational profiles. The sites also include sets of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps of the U.S. enabling users to create reports by areas.

The North American Jewish Data Bank (www.jewishdatabank.org), housed at the University of Connecticut, is the main "repository for social scientific studies" of North American Jewish communities. The site, established in 1986, includes among its holdings national surveys of the U.S. Jewish population in 1971, 1990, and 2000–01. Also accessible via its public, web-based interface are more than ninety local Jewish community studies, dating from the 1960s to the present.

The most comprehensive, contemporary statistics and analyses about the American Jewish community derive from two major surveys that were conducted around the same time: the National Jewish Population Survey (www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=33650) and the American Jewish Identity Survey (http://prog.trincoll.edu/ISSSC/DataArchive/index.asp). The National Jewish Population Survey was sponsored by the United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Federation system. The American Jewish Identity Survey was undertaken by the Center for

Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, with Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar as principal investigators. Both data sets are now publicly available and have been used by Jewish Federations and other Jewish communal agencies for policy and planning decisions.

The full text of the American Jewish Year Book is available online at the American Jewish Committee website (www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=40). It contains demographic, historical, and communal information and analysis about the American Jews, and also Jews internationally.



Subject	File	Period Type	Worksheet	Number of Series	Start Year
National Accounting *Data are presented both in nominal and in real series*	F260	quarter	NSNA-R	25	1980
		quarter	OSNA-R	18	1964
		quarter	NSNA-N	20	1964
		quarter	OSNA-N	17	1964
Capital Stock	F261	year	cs_y_series	4	1960
Labor Market	F262	year	lm_y_series	20	1949
		quarter	lm_q_series	45	1958
		month	lm_m_series	11	1961
Public Sector	F263	year	ps_y_series	6	1960
Balance of Payments	F264	quarter	bop_q_series	52	1962
Monetary Series	F265	month	mn_m_series	1	1975
		quarter	mn_q_series	16	1961
		year	mn_y_series	14	1970
Prices	F266	month	pr_m_series	11	1961
		day	pr_d_series	2	1948
		quarter	hm_q_series	51	1962
Housing Market *Contributed by Michael Beenstock*	F267	quarter	hm_q_series	26	1975
World Data	F268	month	wd_m_series	6	1960
Defence Data *Contributed by Michael Beenstock*	F269	year	econo	10	1960
		year	eximp	4	1963
		year	m_exp	44	1950
		year	macro	5	1960
		year	IDF	2	1974
		year	middle_east	7	1958

Screenshot from Hebrew University's Israel Social Sciences Data Center website, http://isdc.huji.ac.il.

Resources on Nonprofits

In July 2009, Dr. Steven Windmueller, the Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk Professor of Jewish Communal Service and dean at the Los Angeles campus of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, published a paper on the impact and possible repercussions of the economic crisis on American Jews (available at www.jcpa.org). As institutional and communal leaders assess and evaluate their responses to the growing crisis, some tools exist to provide reference data and information.

GuideStar (www2.guidestar.org), a national database of nonprofit organizations, is a leading source of information about American nonprofit organizations declared tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c) of the U.S. Tax Code. The website maintains that it provides information for "individual donors, nonprofit leaders, grant makers, government officials, academic researchers, and the media."

Another clearinghouse of information on the American nonprofit sector is the National Center for Charitable Statistics (http://nccs.urban.org). The site includes an overview of the nonprofit sector; images of the IRS 990 reporting forms for individual organizations that provide information on the filing organization's mission, programs, and finances; as well as data analysis tools.

Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides free evaluations of the "financial health" of more than five thousand American charitable organizations. Users can search by charity name, location, or type of activity.

Israel Statistical, Economic, and Demographic Data

Among the non-Israeli sources providing background descriptions and profiles of Israel is Economist.com. *The Economist*'s Country Briefings Israel (www.economist.com/countries/Israel) includes economic data, the political and economic outlook, and a fact sheet of basic information.

The Federation of International Trade Associations Israel Country Profile website (http://fita.org/countries/israel.html) provides information on Israeli market access, economic indicators, taxes, labor market, and more. The site also includes a link to Exportnavigator (www.exportnavigator.com), which locates surveys of export markets for the international trade community.

Most of the graphic and statistical materials available online about Israel are generated by government agencies or research centers affiliated with universities or non-governmental organizations. Their quantitative and statistical data generally tend to be of high quality and reliability, though it is worth recalling that not all quantitative data is of equal quality or reliability and can vary depending on the sources and methodologies employed in their compilation and presentation. Much of the material is available free of charge to users, with no need to register, obtain a subscription, or pay a fee.

The Israel Social Sciences Data Center (http://isdc.huji.ac.il), located in the faculty of social sciences at the Hebrew University

of Jerusalem, collects and maintains a variety of data of interest to the academic community including economic time series data for Israel. Its geobase provides regional statistics on economic activities, labor and wages, population, transportation, tourism, housing, and construction.

The Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel (www1.cbs.gov.il) is the main body of the Israeli government whose role is to "collect, process and publicize statistical information" on the Israeli population, economy, and society. The site includes last month's price indices, monthly bulletin of prices, and the monthly bulletin of statistics. The information is available in Hebrew and English. Information is available by topic as well as by statistical series and a range of online tools is available to help manipulate the data.

The Bank of Israel website (www.bankisrael.gov.il) is another valuable source of information on the Israeli economy. It provides statistics on the economy and financial systems, information on monetary policy, economic indicators, micro- and macroeconomic information, and banking legislation.

The website at the Israeli Ministry of Finance (http://147.237.72.111) contains economic information from its various departments including the Israeli tax authority, international affairs department, economics and research department, and capital markets, insurance and savings department.

The ministry of industry, trade, and labor website (www.moital.gov.il) includes links to information and online publications about: research and development, investing in Israel, international trade and cooperation, Israeli labor laws, the Israeli economy, and a wealth of other information.

The National Insurance Institute of Israel (www.btl.gov.il) is in charge of social security in Israel. Its website provides a wealth of information about benefits, insurance, laws and regulations, social policy, and calculators to help individuals determine what kind of benefits they are entitled to.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (www.tase.co.il) offers information on shares, currencies, and indices, market summaries as well as derivative trading information. Users can download data files. The site provides a listing of the top one hundred shares by sector and alphabetically and maintains a list of many free publications.

Jewish Law and Secular Life

In today's world observant and even non-observant Jews are often forced to confront complex legal and ethical issues in social, cultural, and economic arenas. The Center for Halacha and American Law sponsors the Jewish law website (www.jlaw.com). This online resource provides information about "Halacha, Jewish issues and secular law." It includes many full-text articles that deal with how Jewish law perceives American law and includes topics such as arbitration and mediation, economics and the marketplace, bankruptcy, property law, and wills, trusts, and estates. A selection of case summaries and legal briefs are given along with a bibliography of articles in law reviews concerning Jewish law.

Conclusion

It is clear that there are many locations on the Web for studying the interplay of economics and Jewish life. This list is just a microcosm of online resources.

Heidi Lerner is the Hebraica/Judaica cataloguer at Stanford University Libraries.

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