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## **Post-Soviet Jewry on the Cusp of Its Third Decade - Part 1**

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- Demographically, post-Soviet Jewry has seen an overall decline resulting from assimilation, intermarriage, low fertility, high mortality, and emigration of younger age cohorts. Some demographers believe that less than 500,000 Jews remain in the post-Soviet states. An intermarriage rate that some view as exceeding 80 percent creates complex situations for those Jewish groups that prefer to confine their programs to halachically Jewish individuals.
- Jewish identity among Jews in Russia and Ukraine is most likely to be expressed as a sense of Jewish heritage, in particular, a common cultural or intellectual heritage, rather than a sense of common spirituality or sharply focused religious practice. Post-Soviet Jews also tend to believe that Jews should be familiar with modern Israel, but not necessarily feel obligated to live in Israel.
- Antisemitism is strongly rooted in both Russia and Ukraine, and popular anti-Jewish bigotry continues in both countries despite the cessation of official state antisemitism. Although Jews at present are not the main target of nationalist wrath, some readily identifiable Jewish individuals have been harassed and synagogues and other Jewish premises have been daubed with antisemitic graffiti or otherwise damaged. Fear of antisemitism remains a powerful catalyst in suppressing active Jewish identification.
- Post-Soviet Jews entered the post-Soviet era ill-prepared to determine their needs and to create and manage an infrastructure to address these needs. Hence, although indigenous Jews are assuming greater control over Jewish organizational life, many Jewish community organizations remain dominated by foreigners at higher levels.
- Through sending hundreds of emissaries to Jewish population centers large and small, the Chabad movement has become the public face of Judaism in much of Russia and Ukraine. Nonetheless, the Hasidic interpretation of Jewish belief and practice has failed to win broad acceptance among educated post-Soviet Jews. For many, no existing Jewish institution or program is appealing; the majority of working-age post-Soviet Jews remain untouched by Jewish life.

- Jewish education remains a critical issue in a society starved of it for three generations. Inadequate financial support plagues all formal Jewish education from day schools through graduate studies in academic Judaica. Building on a long tradition of children's summer camps during the Soviet era, Jewish summer camps appear to be among the most favored Jewish education instruments, but require further development.

## **Introduction**

As the former Soviet republics enter their third decade of independence, observers of Jewish life in these countries find much that has changed from the tumultuous early 1990s and much that has remained the same. The Jewish population has declined dramatically, state-sponsored antisemitism is almost imperceptible, the influence of imported Hasidic rabbis appears to be waning, wealthy Jews in Moscow are beginning to support Russian Jewish community development at home and abroad, and some erosion of basic human rights is evident in both Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, little evidence of Jewish spiritual life is visible and the needs of Jewish elderly remain substantial.

This report, based on extensive interviewing and observation in Russia and Ukraine - the two post-Soviet states in which the overwhelming majority of post-Soviet Jews reside - addresses these and other issues critical to an understanding of contemporary post-Soviet Jewish life.

Russia and Ukraine are adjacent countries with different economic profiles, but increasingly similar social characteristics. Although Russia retains superpower pretensions, it is diminished in size and stature from the former Soviet Union. Its strength lies in its natural resources, particularly oil and natural gas, that permit it to subsidize its weak and underdeveloped domestic economy as well as retain significant influence in the economies of neighboring post-Soviet states. It is working assiduously to extend pipelines - and influence - into Eastern, Central, and Western Europe and into Asia as well.

Its domestic infrastructure in health and medical care, education, jurisprudence, housing, and transportation remain weak. These sectors, along with the development of small and medium-size business, remain hobbled by paralyzing bureaucracy and massive corruption. Russian media is subject to political intimidation, and escalating Russian nationalism has led to an increasing number of hate crimes directed mainly at blacks and at the large number of migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus who now labor in menial jobs in large Russian cities.

In Ukraine, a domestic economy dependent on the export of iron, steel, aluminum, and industrial chemicals has suffered significantly during the current global economic crisis. Further, Ukraine is hostage to neighboring Russia for most of its energy resources, a situation often exploited by Russia, many of whose leaders and citizens find Ukrainian sovereignty and separation from Russian political control to be "unnatural." Ukraine is divided politically between a Russia-oriented industrial east and Europe-oriented west; since elections in 2010, its government has been dominated by those who are more comfortable with Russian social and political customs than with European or Western deportment. The political opposition has been harassed and

media have been constrained. In common with Russia, Ukraine is plagued by corruption throughout its economic, legal, and social systems. Its domestic infrastructure also shares many of the weaknesses of its larger neighbor.

### *Jewish Demography*

Calculating Jewish demography in the former Soviet Union and in the contemporary post-Soviet states is often a contentious exercise with official state data frequently mistrusted and all research bedeviled by differences over defining Jewish identity. Further, certain organizations active in the post-Soviet states are widely believed to posit inflated Jewish population estimates in attempts to attract greater financial support for their programs.

Among the most respected analysts of Jewish demographic trends, Dr. Sergio DellaPergola of Hebrew University and his post-Soviet team headed by Dr. Mark Tolts use *self-identification* as the criterion for establishing Jewish ethnicity. Several international Jewish organizations use provisions of the *Israel Law of Return*, which stipulates a minimum of one Jewish grandparent as the determining factor, and other interested parties recognize Jews only according to *Jewish law (halacha)*, which defines Jews according to matrilineal descent.

Most post-Soviet Jews themselves define Jewish ethnicity according to the Russian/Soviet terminology of nationality or heritage; they are Jewish by nationality or heritage, just as others are Russian by nationality or heritage. One cannot be both Russian and Jewish, although one can be partly Russian or partly Jewish. Because nationality in Russian/Soviet culture usually is determined by patrilineal descent, halachic considerations may seem irrelevant to those reflecting on self-identification. Further, some individuals with partial or even full Jewish heritage deny any identification with Judaism or the Jewish people at all.

All observers agree that the Jewish population of the post-Soviet states has declined dramatically in recent decades, in greater proportion than the general post-Soviet population. The broader post-Soviet population has experienced a negative growth rate since the collapse of the Soviet Union due to high mortality and low fertility rates caused by unusually high rates of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, alcohol and narcotics addictions, cardiovascular disease, suicides, smoking, and traffic and industrial accidents. Poverty, environmental degradation, and inferior health and medical care also take their toll. Life expectancy for men and women in Russia is 60 and 73 respectively, the greatest gender gap of all developed countries.

Extracting data from official Russian statistics, DellaPergola has concluded that the Jewish population in the post-Soviet states enjoys a significantly longer life span than non-Jewish Russians, a consequence of a healthier lifestyle and residence in urban areas with access to more sophisticated health care. However, continuing emigration - albeit in smaller numbers than in previous years - and assimilation continue to deplete the Jewish population. The primary factor in assimilation is intermarriage, which is believed by many to exceed 80 percent. The death-to-birth ratio among post-Soviet Jews is 13:1, that is, 13 Jews die for every Jewish child who is born.

The DellaPergola team at Hebrew University estimates that the Jewish populations of Russia and Ukraine have declined severely in recent decades, from perhaps slightly more than one million in 1989 just before the collapse of the USSR[1] to less than 300,000 (210,000 in Russia and 74,000 in Ukraine) in 2009.[2] Further, the age profile of the Jewish population resembles less the normal bell curve than a mushroom, that is, a disproportionately large older cohort at an umbrella-type top and a much thinner "stem" of active younger people. The DellaPergola estimates of post-Soviet Jewish demographic loss are supported abundantly by anecdotal evidence of significantly declining enrollments in post-Soviet Jewish day schools (although the low quality of some such schools also must be considered) and other programs targeting youth and young adults.

Jews are concentrated overwhelmingly in Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia, and in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, and Kharkiv in Ukraine. It is unlikely that any other post-Soviet city hosts a Jewish population of even 15,000.

Three further demographic observations should be noted. First, although a background of Ashkenazi (Central/North European) origin provides the context for almost all references to Russian-speaking Jewry, several major cities in Russia and Ukraine are home to significant groups of Jewish migrants from Georgia, other areas of the Caucasus Mountain region, and Central Asia. Many such Jews are of Persian Jewish background and speak native languages deriving from Persian. It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of all Moscow Jews are of Georgian or Bukharan, i.e., Central Asian, origin. Persian-background Jews often pursue livelihoods as market traders or other occupations that require little formal education. They socialize separately from Ashkenazi Jews and occasionally come into conflict with majority Ashkenazi Jews in such venues as synagogues and day schools. Several rabbis, including both Chief Rabbis of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt and Berel Lazar, have provided separate prayer halls in which Persian Jewish customs are observed; several Moscow Jewish day schools enroll significant numbers of Persian-background Jewish pupils.

Second, apart from career choices of Persian-background Jews, strong evidence exists of a post-Soviet change in the occupational profile of Russian and Ukrainian Ashkenazi Jews.[3] Whereas Ashkenazi Jews were very prominent in the arts and sciences, higher education, and other intellectual pursuits during the Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, observers report a significant shift of younger Jews into business and law. It is likely that the Jewish abandonment of intellectual and cultural careers reflects new opportunities in commerce following the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the reduction by Russian authorities of generous Soviet-era state subsidies for educational, scientific, and cultural institutions. The decline of Russian state support for higher education, scientific research, and art and culture is frequently noted in the Russian press.

Third, reports of the return of large numbers of Russian-speaking Israeli *olim* (immigrants), as well as Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants to other countries, to Russia and Ukraine appear to be exaggerated. Although Russian-speaking Israelis can be found in all major Russian and Ukrainian cities, many breadwinners are commuting between Russia/Ukraine and Israel and others have returned to Israel during the current global economic crisis. A large proportion of Israeli adolescents whose families return to Russia or Ukraine never fully integrate into

Russian/Ukrainian society and voluntarily return to Israel for army service, further education, and eventual adult residence.

### *Antisemitism*

Official antisemitism has almost completely disappeared in Russia and Ukraine since the collapse of the USSR. No longer does the state orchestrate an antisemitic campaign in public media, educational institutions, and unpunished anti-Jewish street attacks. A blatantly antisemitic crusade by a private Ukrainian university (Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, known by its Ukrainian acronym, MAUP) between 2002 and 2007 ceased suddenly in response to local, national, and international outrage and its instigators were removed from positions of influence; such bigoted undertakings continued uninterrupted for much longer periods during the Soviet era, largely unresponsive to protests from any source.

Notwithstanding the cessation of state-instigated antisemitism, street-level anti-Jewish bigotry continues to exist throughout Russia and Ukraine, driven mainly by nationalist groups in each country. Nationalist zeal in Russia usually is directed against blacks and migrant workers from Central Asia and/or the Caucasus Mountain region before focusing on Jews. Specific anti-Jewish assaults appear to be more common in provincial centers outside Moscow and St. Petersburg. Antisemitic bigotry in Ukraine is most common in its western regions, long the most nationalist area of the country. In both Russia and Ukraine, antisemitism finds adherents among "skinheads," football (soccer) hooligans, and other groups associated with younger, often less well-educated males. The appearance of Russian-language nationalist and antisemitic websites is being monitored, albeit unsystematically, with great apprehension by several observers. Reflecting technology and cost issues, use of the Internet is less extensive in Russia and Ukraine than in Western countries; however, few are optimistic that Russia's rich tradition of antisemitic literature will elude large-scale migration to the Web.

The most common targets of antisemitic assault are individuals in identifiable Hasidic attire and institutions clearly associated with the Jewish population, particularly synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. Most Jewish institutions regard antisemitic attack as a serious risk, and many employ security guards; some also maintain sophisticated electronic security systems. Jewish community leaders complain that police often appear reticent in pursuing offenders, even when institutions are able to provide assistance in identifying them. Whether corruption, i.e., failure of Jewish institutions to pay bribes to police, is a factor cannot be determined with certainty, but the police and justice systems in both countries are notoriously corrupt. Further, apprehended wrongdoers frequently are charged with relatively minor misdemeanors, such as hooliganism, rather than with more serious crimes of ethnic bigotry.

Exceptionally wealthy Jews, that is, Jewish oligarchs, increasingly are targets of antisemitic commentary, particularly in Internet postings. In both Russia and Ukraine, a significant number of extraordinarily prosperous Jews are closely identified with Jewish organizations as donors and officers.

Acknowledging the continuing threat of antisemitic attack, many buildings housing Jewish organizations (such as heseds, i.e., Jewish welfare centers) are not identified as such by public signage. Some Orthodox rabbis attired in traditional clothing venture outside their synagogues only when accompanied by security personnel. Many middle-aged and older Jews ask that Jewish organizations send mail to them in unmarked envelopes without return addresses, and some Jewish and partly-Jewish public figures deny their Jewish heritage. Jewish welfare organizations distributing food and other items to Jews in smaller towns report requests from large numbers of clients that the Jewish source of these provisions not be identified so that the recipients not be recognized as "privileged Jews."

Many younger Jews, however, appear much more relaxed about public acknowledgment of their Jewish identity. Having few or no memories of the Soviet period, they are less fearful of official antisemitism and more confident of their ability to overcome the street antisemitism of contemporary Russia and Ukraine.

### *Jewish Identity*

In 2007, the Institute for Jewish Studies in the C.I.S, which operates under the auspices of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, completed a study entitled *The Paradox of Jews and Judaism in Russia and the Ukraine*. The research project confirmed what most experienced observers of post-Soviet Jewry had concluded on their own, that is, that Jewish identity among Jews in Russia and Ukraine is most likely to be expressed as a sense of Jewish heritage, in particular, a common cultural or intellectual heritage, rather than a sense of common spirituality or sharply focused religious practice. Part of the paradox noted in the title is that 93 percent of post-Soviet Jews queried in the study believe that Jews should be familiar with Jewish tradition, but 82 percent also believe that one can be a "good Jew" without *observing* Jewish tradition.

Among the other highly ranked attributes of "authentic Jewish identity" are familiarity with Jewish history (96 percent), defending the honor of the Jewish people (93 percent), remembering the Holocaust (92 percent), assisting other Jews (89 percent), not concealing your ethnicity (88 percent), and familiarity with modern Israeli history (82 percent). The 4 *least* highly ranked of 15 listed attributes of "authentic Jewish identity" are believing in G-d (71 percent), synagogue attendance (57 percent), marrying a Jew (47 percent), and believing in Zionist principles (46 percent).

Just as post-Soviet Jews believe that it is important for Jews to possess an intellectual understanding of Jewish tradition, but not necessarily observe Jewish tradition, they believe that Jews should be familiar with modern Israel, but not necessarily feel obligated to live in Israel. Dr. Baruch Gur, who initiated and then directed Jewish Agency efforts in the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev years and early post-Soviet era, wrote in *Jewish Identity under Tsarist, Soviet and Russian Rule* (2008) that a maximum of 40 percent of Jews remaining in the post-Soviet states may be considering aliyah; he also believes that 50 percent are unwilling to emigrate to Israel under almost any circumstances. Dr. Gur observed, as have many others, that most educated middle-aged and older Jews are not willing to leave Russia and the other post-

Soviet states; they have made their careers there and are intimidated both by the need to learn a new language and by the likelihood of losing personal stature as newcomers in a different country. Younger Jews, concludes Dr. Gur, view emigration as an economic decision; if economic opportunities decline in the post-Soviet states, they will consider emigration options. Israel may not be their preferred destination; Zionism is not a driving factor. In an attempt to create a Zionist direction, the Jewish Agency and the Israeli government offer a number of Israel-focused programs targeting Jewish adolescents and young adults in the post-Soviet states.

## **Jewish Communal Organization: Religion and Education**

Although indigenous Jews are assuming greater control over Jewish organizational life in the post-Soviet states, particularly in Russia, many Jewish community organizations remain dominated by foreigners at higher levels. The foreign imprint is so strong that some resentful local Jews refer to the situation as "international Jewish colonialism." Others see the control exercised by foreign-born Hasidic rabbis over Jewish spiritual life as replacing the control exercised by the Communist Party during the Soviet period. Whatever analogy is offered, post-Soviet Jews entered the post-Soviet era ill-prepared to determine their needs and to develop and manage an infrastructure to address these needs.

Foreign Jewish groups quickly moved to fill the gaping void in religious services, Jewish education, social services, and community-building. Although much has been accomplished - particularly in services to Jewish elderly and several forms of Jewish education - much remains to be done. Nearly all sources concur that only a small minority - less than 20 percent - of pre-retirement post-Soviet Jews are active in any Jewish activity.

To be sure, local bureaucracy has not been kind to nascent organizations; governments in both Russia and Ukraine churn out a sea of regulations that even natives find difficult to navigate. In Ukraine, especially, some Jewish nonprofits have changed their registrations to that of standard commercial operations so as to escape government policies that are especially burdensome to philanthropic organizations. Corruption is endemic in both countries, generating a major psychological toll, as well as financial burden, on those confronted with it.

### *Religious Institutions*

Chabad is the dominant Jewish religious force in Russia and Ukraine, posting rabbis in approximately 40 cities in the former and 30 in the latter. Most rabbis operate synagogues and many sponsor other institutions - particularly schools and small-scale welfare operations - as well. Hasidic community rabbis have adopted the title of "Chief Rabbi" of the cities in which they work, a title almost always endorsed by local government officials, even if they are the only rabbi in the area. They have become the public face of Judaism across these two countries, a circumstance not always welcomed by local Jews.

Chabad rabbis operate independently in each Jewish population center, but are represented by an umbrella organization known as the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS, which itself is divided into separate similarly-named organizations in each of the post-Soviet republics. As suggested by their name, Chabad representations promote themselves as encompassing Jewish organizations similar to Jewish federations in North America; affiliates refer to themselves as "the Jewish Community of Moscow," "the Jewish Community of Dnipropetrovsk," and so on, as if they represent all Jews in the specific area. Their rabbis sometimes attempt to impede efforts by other Jewish denominations to organize.

In addition to promoting Chabad interpretations of Judaism through synagogues and various educational programs, FJC (commonly known by its Russian-language acronym, FEOR) usually provides a range of community support services reflecting the size of the local Jewish population in a given city or town and the fundraising and management skills of the local Chabad rabbi. These programs almost always include holiday celebrations, welfare support to impoverished elderly Jews, Jewish day schools, and summer camps for Jewish children, but also may include Jewish community centers, residential programs for at-risk children, and other activities.

Early support of the far-reaching Chabad enterprise was provided by Lev Leviev, a London-based, Tashkent-born oligarch with major holdings in the diamond industry and international real estate, and George Rohr, a U.S.-based investor with significant commercial interests in Russia. Roman Abramovich, a Russian-born oligarch currently living in London, has become a noteworthy Chabad donor in recent years. Although Mr. Leviev has financed multiple dimensions of the Chabad venture in the post-Soviet states, he is most closely identified with the Chabad Ohr Avner school network and other Chabad educational institutions. Individual Chabad rabbis across Russia and Ukraine also have been successful in soliciting considerable support from other foreign sponsors and from a number of wealthy local Jews who are not observant themselves. However, the Chabad institutional network has suffered significantly in the current financial crisis as Mr. Leviev himself, heavily leveraged in his real estate ventures, and other donors have been forced by circumstances to reduce support of their philanthropic endeavors. Some rabbis have lost proportionately more income than others as the dependence on foreign sponsors varies among them.

Perhaps no Chabad rabbi has been more successful in attracting local followers, raising money, and developing infrastructure than Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki of Dnipropetrovsk, an industrial city of slightly over one million inhabitants in eastern Ukraine. Known as Ekaterinoslav until 1926, the city is legendary among followers of Chabad as the childhood home of the late Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson during the early years of the twentieth century while his father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, was Chief Rabbi of the city. Although the Jewish population may have been as high as 50,000 when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it probably is 30,000 or less today after decades of emigration to Israel and assimilation of many of those who remain.

Rabbi Kaminezki has built a Chabad community of 70 to 80 families, at least half of whom are local Jews who have adopted the Chabad lifestyle while the remainder are Israeli followers of Chabad who manage Chabad institutions or operate various businesses. The Chabad infrastructure includes a day school, children's residence, a pedagogical college for local young women, a seminary for Chabad young women, and one of only two Jewish senior adult assisted

living homes in all of Ukraine and Russia. A mammoth Chabad Jewish community center, financed entirely by two important Ukrainian Jewish businessmen, is under construction adjacent to the choral synagogue. The relatively large local Jewish population and Rabbi Kaminezki's leadership and charisma have attracted strong representations of the Israeli government in the form of a consulate and cultural center, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to the city. A sister-city relationship between the Jews of Dnipropetrovsk and the Jews of Boston is one of the most extensive and productive in the post-Soviet states. On the darker side, Rabbi Kaminezki is sufficiently influential with various parties to have effectively banned the Progressive/Reform movement from Dnipropetrovsk and created a monopoly there for Chabad.

Two other large-city Chabad rabbis in Ukraine, Rabbi Moshe Moskovitz of Kharkiv and Rabbi Avrum Wolf of Odesa, also are accomplished and admired in their respective cities. In Russia, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Pewsner is highly respected in St. Petersburg. Among other successes, Rabbis Moskovitz and Pewsner have presided over the restoration of large choral synagogues in their particular cities.

Chabad Rabbi Berel Lazar, Chief Rabbi of Russia, is in a class of his own, a close ally of the Russian government and sometimes referred to as "Chief Rabbi of the Kremlin." His government ties led to the effective displacement of Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, a native of Switzerland, and Rabbi Adolph Shayevich, a native of Birobidzhan (the so-called Jewish Autonomous Republic in the Russian Far East), as Chief Rabbis of Moscow and Russia respectively. Rabbis Goldschmidt and Shayevich remain in Moscow and retain their titles in a formal sense; Rabbi Goldschmidt continues to preside over the Moscow Choral Synagogue and enjoys the respect of many in the city and elsewhere.

Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, a Brooklyn-born Karlin-Stolin Hasid, is Chief Rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine, although family and fundraising responsibilities limit his presence in the Ukrainian capital, weaken his institutions, and generally lessen his influence in a country in which Chabad is the dominant Jewish religious expression. The only other significant non-Chabad rabbi in Ukraine is Rabbi Shlomo Baksht, who is one of two Chief Rabbis of Odesa; Rabbi Baksht shares that title with Chabad Rabbi Avrum Wolf. The two Odesa rabbis, who barely speak to one another, appear to be locked in an almost mindless competition, developing and maintaining competitive programs. Although each is respected, their rivalry is a source of embarrassment to, and ridicule among, Odesa Jews.

Among the small-city rabbis, several associated with Chabad stand out. Among the most accomplished in Ukraine are Rabbi Levi Stambler of Dniprodzerzhinsk and Rabbi Yosif Wolf of Kherson. In Russia, several rabbis in Siberia have gained prominence, among them Rabbi Levi Kaminezki of Tomsk. (Rabbi Wolf of Kherson and Rabbi Wolf of Odesa are brothers, and Rabbi Kaminezki of Tomsk is the nephew of Rabbi Kaminezki of Dnipropetrovsk.)

The World Union for Progressive Judaism (Liberal/Reform) has placed Russian/Ukrainian-origin rabbis in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, and the Crimean peninsula. Poorly funded in comparison with Chabad, their synagogue facilities are unimpressive and their general infrastructure is weak. They do, however, operate summer camps, various youth activities, and a

training institute in Moscow that prepares paraprofessionals for community work in the post-Soviet states and screens potential candidates for rabbinic study outside these states. The Masorti/Conservative movement is even weaker, having no rabbis in the post-Soviet states and offering only very limited youth and young adult programs in Kyiv and several other Ukrainian cities. Modern Orthodoxy, too, is characterized more by its absence than its presence. An Orthodox Union (New York) effort in Kharkiv that once included a day school and university student center has all but collapsed in recent years as OU leadership withdrew support and a local leader became embroiled in a financial scandal.

That Hasidic rabbis play such an outsized role as the public face of Judaism in the post-Soviet states is due not only to the indisputable talents of some such rabbis, but also to the absence of other Jewish leaders and to other voids in the post-Soviet Jewish space. Civil Judaism has been slow to develop in the post-Soviet states, thus depriving post-Soviet Jewry of prominent lay and professional Jewish leaders that have emerged in other countries in various Jewish community organizations, particularly in North American Jewish federations and Jewish membership groups, such as the American Jewish Committee. Finally, it is broadly posited among those familiar with Russian/Ukrainian history and culture that government officials in those countries perceive distinctively-garbed Hasidic and other Orthodox rabbis as religious authority figures similar to their own exceptionally-attired Orthodox Christian (Pravoslav) priests; familiarity bestows on Hasidic rabbis a certain respect and privilege that is accorded much more hesitantly, if at all, to other Jewish religious leaders.

Nevertheless, Jews in Russia and Ukraine have not been eager to flock to Hasidic rabbis' synagogues. With the exception of elderly individuals who are attracted to dining rooms and other social services offered by some synagogues, many Orthodox prayer halls draw mainly those who work in Jewish communal institutions and a few local donors, some of whom can be observed in mobile-telephone conversations or other diversions during the worship service. Even the resolutely nonobservant, however, may welcome the restoration and maintenance of grand synagogues, perceiving their very existence as symbols of acceptance of Jews and the Jewish people. Grand choral synagogues, in particular, are seen as approximate equivalents of imposing Russian/Ukrainian Orthodox churches, those often onion-domed and colorful sanctuaries of the Other, the majority populations that do not entirely embrace the Jews in their midst.

### *Formal Jewish Education*

Jewish educational institutions in the post-Soviet states include almost all types of such institutions known in other diaspora countries, such as Jewish preschools, Jewish day and Sunday schools, yeshivot and women's colleges, Jewish summer camps and community centers, youth and young adult clubs, specialized research institutions dealing with the Holocaust, and university departments of Jewish studies. Supporters include international Jewish religious streams, international and local Jewish organizations, and independent philanthropists, many of whom are diaspora-based. Until recently, few indigenous Jews have supported Jewish education programs; however, the Genesis Philanthropy Group of Moscow now supports certain academic Judaica programs, Hillel and other youth/young adult programs, and some Jewish summer

camps. This group was founded in 2007 by wealthy Moscow Jews with a mission to build Jewish identity among Russian-speaking Jews.

Among the first Jewish educational institutions to be established as the Soviet Union collapsed were Jewish day schools. About 100 Jewish day schools exist throughout the post-Soviet states today, most of them small (under 250 pupils) and most losing enrollment due to the general Jewish demographic decline and the failure of many such schools to provide high-quality secular education.

The largest operator of post-Soviet Jewish day schools is Ohr Avner, a Chabad-affiliated group whose major supporter, as noted, is Lev Leviev. According to Chabad, Ohr Avner sponsors 72 Jewish day schools enrolling approximately 12,000 pupils. The second largest Jewish school system is ORT, which subsidizes (to varying degrees) approximately 18 schools, all with enhanced computer technology programs. Some ORT day schools enroll significant numbers of youngsters with no Jewish ancestry.

Many post-Soviet Jewish day schools are housed within the buildings of former preschools built and supported by state-sponsored Soviet trade unions; deprived of state support at the end of the Soviet period, unions abandoned the facilities, which subsequently became superfluous in a period of declining population. A smaller number of conventional public schools also were closed. These buildings were made available to other institutions, including nascent Jewish day schools. However, many such structures have proved poorly designed for contemporary education; some are cheaply constructed and/or located in relatively remote areas that necessitate lengthy commutes for pupils and teachers. Preschools designed for small children often are difficult to convert into institutions suitable for older youngsters, that is, schools with science laboratories, physical education facilities, and classrooms and hallways with dimensions appropriate for growing adolescents. Basically good buildings, such as the flagship Shorashim ORT school in St. Petersburg, are the exception. Among the five Jewish day schools in Kyiv, not one is housed in a structure well suited for middle or high school programs. Soaring property and construction costs, massive local corruption, and inexperience in Russian/Ukrainian business transactions have prevented many rabbis and other day school sponsors from upgrading existing facilities or obtaining new premises.

In accordance with the customs of many European countries regarding religiously-affiliated day schools, Jewish day schools in most post-Soviet states are supported in part by state subsidies allocated for instruction in core secular subjects, such as mathematics, science, the dominant local language, and other general courses. Basic school maintenance and a meals allowance for impoverished students also may be provided. However, individual Jewish day schools must pay for all instruction in Jewish subjects and for kosher food. Unstated, but also necessary are significant bonuses to attract gifted teachers and other payments to support sophisticated technology programs demanded by parents, physical plant upgrades, security measures, and bus transportation between home and school. Approximately 45 of the post-Soviet Jewish day schools receive operating subsidies from the Israeli Ministry of Education, and some schools charge modest tuition, transportation, and/or lunch fees. However, the imposition or increase of such fees often spurs an exodus of students whose families cannot afford the cost and are embarrassed to request exemptions.

Typically, Jewish day schools in the post-Soviet states offer six to eight class periods in Jewish studies each week. Half of these classes are devoted to instruction in Hebrew and the other half to a mix of Jewish tradition, history, and culture. Jewish holidays are observed, and the more ambitious schools have succeeded in attracting funding (often from the Avi Chai Foundation) for occasional Shabbatonim at local resorts.

In large cities, Jewish day schools are competing with classical Soviet/post-Soviet specialized schools that provide double periods of instruction in foreign languages, mathematics, science, or another subject; nominally free public schools, these institutions impose additional fees on families to cover special textbooks and other supplies, teacher bonuses, facility maintenance and upgrades, security, and other items. Too often, Jewish day schools are unable to match either the quality of education provided by these elite public schools or the quality of their buildings; instead, many day schools attract large numbers of single-parent and underprivileged families seeking extended-day programs that keep their children in safe, warm quarters with various welfare benefits, such as hot lunches and free bus transportation. The Jewish middle class - and many of those Jews who aspire to middle-class status - prefer other surroundings for their children, especially as they reach high school age.

The most highly acclaimed Jewish day school in Russia is School #1311 in Moscow, also known as the Lipman School in reference to its principal, Grigory Lipman. The Lipman School, one of the few Jewish day schools in the post-Soviet states whose enrollment is growing, is nondenominational in orientation, although Mr. Lipman describes its philosophy as "traditional." Its curriculum includes six to seven class hours in Jewish studies each week, as well as a strong secular studies curriculum. Unlike many other Jewish day schools, #1311 has a strong parental support group and is expanding its physical facilities. No Jewish day school in Ukraine enjoys a reputation equal to Lipman, which attracts middle-class families.

Notwithstanding the success of the Lipman School, the future of Jewish day school education in the post-Soviet states is uncertain at best. Particularly vulnerable are schools under Hasidic or other Orthodox auspices whose interpretation of Jewish tradition and practice is unappealing to the largely secular majority of post-Soviet Jews; additionally, such schools often are unable to satisfy parental demands for high-quality secular education. Further, although some Chabad schools are quietly admitting small numbers of non-halachically Jewish children, the estimated 80 percent intermarriage rate of post-Soviet Jewry may push these schools over an as-yet undefined limit of such youngsters. Several schools that follow a policy similar to that of Agudat Israel decline to admit any halachically non-Jewish children at all and are enduring unsustainable enrollment losses as a result.

The number of Sunday school programs in Russia/Ukraine is difficult to determine because (a) some indigenous Sunday schools never establish contact with larger institutions and thus are unknown outside their own locales, and (b) some Sunday programs described by their organizers as schools are more accurately defined as recreational programs with modest formal Jewish education content. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, some observers estimate that approximately 100 Sunday Jewish educational programs for children exist throughout the post-Soviet states, enrolling perhaps 3,500 youngsters. Such programs generally target families with children aged six to thirteen, and usually focus on superficial celebrations of Jewish/Israeli holidays,

Jewish/Israeli music and dance, Jewish-theme arts and crafts, local Jewish history, and general activities, such as English and computer lessons that appeal to families unable to provide private or specialized school instruction in these subjects. A strong Israeli element is included in those programs sponsored by Israeli organizations. The best such programs also offer concurrent Jewish-topic instruction for parents. Sunday schools are sponsored by local groups, the Jewish Agency, Israel Culture Centers (attached to Israeli consulates), and the Reform/Progressive and Masorti/Conservative movements. In many cases, they provide the only Jewish contact for Jewish families. Most are open to children who are not halachically Jewish.

Teachers of Jewish studies are prepared in several venues. The Jewish Agency and the religious movements provide some training in seminars, as well as teaching materials, for instructors in both day and Sunday schools. Several Chabad pedagogical colleges in the post-Soviet states enroll local young women for early childhood certificate or degree programs; teachers of Jewish studies in Orthodox middle and high schools often are recruited from Israel. Russian- or Ukrainian-born instructors of Hebrew may have learned the language in Jewish Agency or other *ulpan* classes; several colleges and universities in larger cities also offer undergraduate preparation in Hebrew and in Jewish history. Some Hebrew instructors are offered stipends by the Jewish Agency for advanced study in Israel.

Printed teaching materials are problematic. Few Jewish education professionals are satisfied with available Russian-language textbooks in either the Hebrew language or Jewish studies. Teacher groups under the auspices of several different Chabad rabbis have produced Russian-language Jewish studies textbooks, but these publication ventures are not coordinated by any central body, have not been developed as a comprehensive age/grade-related series, sometimes appear primitive in pedagogy, and usually lack appeal to non-Chabad organizations. Translations of diaspora textbooks often are insensitive to local cultural conditions.

Institutions of higher education (post-secondary school level) offering Jewish study programs include yeshivot, dual-curriculum colleges and quasi-universities in several cities, secular Jewish-focus colleges in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and Jewish studies courses in universities. Additionally, both the Jewish Agency and the Joint Distribution Committee offer seminars, usually on the graduate level, for educators and social service workers respectively, and the Reform/Progressive movement operates a three-year *machon* (study program) for paraprofessionals. The Jewish Agency and JDC also support promising teachers and social service workers in Israel-based graduate-level programs.

A number of Chabad and other Orthodox rabbis sponsor yeshiva programs in their own communities, usually providing up to two years of intensive Jewish studies before sending promising young men to yeshivot in Israel or other countries for completion of courses leading to *smicha* (ordination). Those who do not move on to full ordination may become kashrut supervisors or teachers of Jewish subjects in Jewish schools. The quality of Russian/Ukrainian yeshivot varies from institution to institution; some have acquired reputations less as serious study programs than as refuges for young men from impoverished families attracted by free room and board, as well as stipends, provided by rabbinic sponsors.

Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki of Dnipropetrovsk opened a post-high school seminary for young women from Chabad families in 2010. Part of its appeal to Chabad families is its location in an area rich in Chabad history.

Rabbi Shlomo Baksht of Odesa plus several Chabad rabbis also sponsor tuition-free colleges that offer undergraduate degrees in selected fields (such as education, speech pathology, information technology, accounting, or business) along with a required parallel curriculum of religious studies. Perhaps best known of such institutions are the grandly-named Institute of the Twenty-First Century in Moscow (Chabad, for men) and Beit Chana Jewish Women's Pedagogical College (Chabad) in Dnipropetrovsk. Two coeducational Jewish "universities" in Odesa compete with each other - Odesa Jewish University, sponsored by Rabbi Baksht, and the newer Southern Ukraine Jewish University, sponsored by Chabad Rabbi Avrum Wolf. Enrollment in such institutions typically is small (300 or fewer students), limited to halachically Jewish young people, and free of charge. Qualified faculty members from conventional universities and colleges generally teach the professional courses; actual degrees in professional subjects may be conferred by these same outside universities and colleges. Rabbinic sponsors of such programs openly acknowledge that among their principal goals is provision of an environment in which Jewish young men and women socialize mainly with each other and thus find other young Jews for the purpose of in-marriage and the raising of Jewish families. Clearly, the full scholarships offered by rabbis are the main attraction of such programs; some of them are magnets to young Jews seeking an escape from dreary smaller cities and towns.

Secular indigenous Jewish-focus colleges and universities include Maimonides State Classical Academy in Moscow, which offers degrees in a number of non-Jewish and Jewish subjects, including Hebrew, and the Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies (also known as Petersburg Jewish University), which offers degree concentrations in Hebrew, Yiddish, and other languages, as well as in Jewish history. Each of these institutions has placed graduates in teaching positions at a number of Jewish day schools in their respective cities. International Solomon University, a proprietary Kyiv-based institution with a branch in Kharkiv, once conferred degrees in Jewish studies but has sharply curtailed its offerings in the field in recent years. It no longer enrolls significant numbers of Jewish students.

The prestigious Moscow State University hosts the only full-fledged Department of Jewish Studies in a Russian or Ukrainian university; struggling with inadequate financial resources, the department is enriched by a program of visiting professors from Hebrew University and is the first university program of Jewish studies to have attracted support from the Genesis Philanthropy Group in Moscow. Interdepartmental centers for Jewish studies are located at the Moscow-based Russian State University for the Humanities and at the well-regarded European University of St. Petersburg, a graduate-level institution. University-caliber research on Jewish subjects also is done by academics associated with the Russian Academy of Sciences. Sefer, the Moscow-based Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, attempts to support university-based Jewish studies through sponsoring and coordinating various conferences, publications, and forums for young scholars and research specialists.

Jewish history, particularly Russian and East European Jewish history, is the principal focus of almost all academic Jewish studies programs. Exploring the Jewish past is a product both of

newly opened state archives and a level of comfort with the familiar discipline of history. Jewish culture and Jewish sociology may be secondary fields. Academic examination of Bible, Talmud and rabbinic commentaries, Jewish philosophy, and several other areas of Jewish studies await a generation of scholars more at ease with Judaism and Jewish tradition. Further, post-Soviet researchers remain constrained by an inadequate command of relevant languages - such as Hebrew, Yiddish, and English - and by inadequate preparation in undergraduate-level Jewish studies.

Several thousand Russian/Ukrainian Jews annually may be enrolled in distance learning courses offered by the Open University of Israel. The 15 to 20 available Russian-language subjects include Jewish history, Jewish and Israeli literature, Bible and other Jewish texts, and Israeli government. Courses are accredited toward degrees from the Open University and other Israeli institutions. Students participate by Internet, sometimes gathering in Internet cafes for group instruction, and meet periodically with instructors from Israel who visit for occasional in-person lectures or for examinations. Russian-language textbooks are provided, although the cost of these sometimes exceeds the resources of individual students.

Three separate post-Soviet research institutions study the Holocaust, each understandably focusing on the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union. These are the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Center in Moscow, led by Dr. Ilya Altman, which receives financial support from both the Russian federal government and the municipality of Moscow; the Dnipropetrovsk-based Ukrainian Holocaust Research Center - Tkumah, led by Dr. Igor Schupak, which receives support from the Philanthropic Fund of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish Community (associated with Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki), the Joint Distribution Committee, and several European foundations; and the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kyiv, directed by Dr. Anatoly Podolsky, which lacks a stable funding base. All three institutions maintain collaborative relationships with Yad Vashem in Israel and Holocaust research groups in other countries.

Avoiding acknowledgment of Jewish suffering during World War II, Soviet authorities generally prohibited research into massacres of Jews on Soviet territory; almost all such work began only in the late 1980s under *perestroika* as long-closed archives gradually were made accessible to scholars. In addition to conducting archival and site research and interviewing survivors, the three centers publish their findings, operate educational programs for teachers and youth, and create museum displays. Similar work on a smaller scale and less professional level is done by community groups in perhaps a dozen cities and towns near Holocaust massacre sites.

### *Informal Jewish Education*

Informal Jewish education efforts include Jewish community/culture center programs, summer and winter vacation camps, family retreats, organizations for students and young adults, and a burgeoning number of Russian-language Judaica websites. Travel programs to places of historic Jewish interest within Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova have proved popular and often are led by local historians trained in formal Jewish education programs.

Indigenous Jewish cultural centers play an important educational and cultural role in several cities, most notably St. Petersburg and Odesa. In St. Petersburg, the Jewish community center on Rubenshtein Street under the direction of Alexander Frenkel houses an important Russian-language Judaica library, a Jewish music archive, an art gallery/lecture hall, and several classrooms. It sponsors a literary club, lectures and concerts on Jewish themes, vocal ensembles, and children's Jewish cultural activities. A more varied program has been developed at the Migdal International Jewish Community Center in Odesa under the leadership of Kira Verkhovskaya; a second center, Moriah, under the direction of Gennady Katzen, is smaller, but has also made an important contribution to the restoration of Jewish culture in Odesa. Although the Frenkel Center now is receiving a subsidy from the Russian Jewish Congress, all three organizations operate under significant financial pressure, having been effectively abandoned by the Joint Distribution Committee in favor of larger, modern JDC community centers with minimal Jewish content.

The Joint Distribution Committee has been the driving force behind the development of newer, more comprehensive Jewish community centers in Jewish population centers throughout Russia and Ukraine. Typically, these centers include premises for both the local hesed (JDC welfare center) and various community social and cultural activities. They range in size from suites of rooms in smaller towns to mid-size buildings to the well-known large centers in St. Petersburg (the Yesod Home of Jewish Culture) and Odesa (Beit Grand). The latter two have acquired substantial notoriety in their home cities and beyond due to their construction with little significant local community input, their development with insufficient financial resources to cover either construction or operating costs, and their deliberate lack of intensive Jewish programming in favor of upscale cultural activities intended to attract the developing Jewish middle class. To generate needed revenue, both centers rent out potentially useful program space to commercial concerns and impose high participation fees for those community activities that remain. A number of more modest JDC Jewish community centers - for example, Krivoi Rog (Ukraine), Novosibirsk (Siberia), and several district facilities in Moscow - have proved much less offensive to the Jewish populations in these locales.

Chabad also is in the community/cultural center field, operating a large facility at Marina Roscha in Moscow and the smaller Ma'or Center in St. Petersburg, which is attached to, and used by, a Chabad school as well as the broader Jewish population. In addition to other small centers in various cities and towns, a massive Chabad community center is under construction in Dnipropetrovsk, surrounding that city's major synagogue on two sides. Participation fees in Chabad centers are modest or nonexistent.

Israel Culture Centers, controlled by Nativ (the former Lishkat Hakesher), are funded by the Israeli government and are attached to Israeli consulates in major Russian and Ukrainian cities. These installations offer Hebrew classes, Israeli/Jewish-focus clubs and interest groups for different age groups, and, in a new pilot program, a version of the Israeli Scout movement designed to appeal to Russian and Ukrainian Jewish teenagers. Israel Culture Center facilities often include Russian-language Judaica libraries, computer laboratories with general and Israel-focused programs, and multipurpose rooms that are made available to local Jewish groups for their own activities. With increased influence of Russian-heritage individuals in the Israeli government, the Israel Culture Centers are relatively well financed - and many of their programs

are thriving and expanding while those of other groups are curtailed in the current economic climate. After an unfortunate early history in which the ICC parent organization often was hostile to other Israel-based organizations and to Orthodox rabbis, Nativ and local Israel Culture Centers now are substantially more collaborative in local communities.

Jewish summer camps in the post-Soviet states succeeded a long Soviet tradition of children's camps operated by the Pioneer Communist youth organization. The Jewish Agency is the largest single organizer of summer camps, using 18 sites that enrolled approximately 6,000 children, adolescents, and college students in the summer of 2010. In addition to its own camps, the Jewish Agency also has subsidized camps operated by other Jewish organizations, such as Chabad, the Conservative/Masorti and Reform/Progressive movements, and indigenous groups. (Adain Lo of St. Petersburg and the Va'ad of Ukraine probably are the best-known indigenous Jewish summer camp operators.)

Although attendance was free of charge to campers and camp sessions were as long as four weeks during the 1990s, financial pressures have forced imposition of camp fees and a reduction in camp-session duration to as little as one week in recent years. In many camps, management staff is brought in from Israel and local Jewish university students are trained and employed as camp counselors.

Few camp organizers own their own sites; instead, they must negotiate leases every year with owners of former Pioneer camp properties or with resorts. Typically, accommodations are in hotel-type or dormitory structures, rather than the small cabins customary in American children's summer camps. Few camps engage in classical outdoor camp activities; instead they emphasize informal Jewish and/or Zionist education and various recreational programs.

For many Jewish youngsters, attendance at a Jewish summer camp serves as their entry point into Jewish life. The Jewish Agency and certain other organizations endeavor to engage campers in year-round Jewish activities, but funds for such programs are not always available.

Supported by the Genesis Philanthropy Group and a substantial grant from a North American Jewish federation, the Jewish Agency organized a two-week Israel-based summer camp for 240 Russian-speaking adolescents from Israel and several cities in the post-Soviet states in 2010. The campsite was a youth hostel near Netanya.

The Joint Distribution Committee and the Conservative/Masorti movement organize family camps that introduce family units to Jewish practice in informal settings. Whereas JDC generally holds its family camps at middle-class resorts - and sometimes finds that families are much more interested in typical resort activities than in the Jewish content of such programs - Masorti family camps usually are held in the same campsites used for children's summer camps.

A variety of programs target Jewish students and young adults, a demographic cohort favored by the Genesis Philanthropy Group. The best known of such efforts probably is the Hillel student association. Launched in the post-Soviet states in 1994 with significant financial support from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Hillel was effectively controlled by the Joint Distribution Committee in its early post-Soviet operations. In 2007, the organization

separated from JDC, a move reflecting both a desire for independence and a bid to garner local support. Indigenous individual and institutional donors (such as the Genesis Philanthropy Group) were reluctant to invest in a program of Joint, which is perceived as both bureaucratic and foreign. Hillel currently sponsors groups in 15 cities in Russia and six in Ukraine, as well as six others in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia. Organized on a city-wide basis, rather than the campus model common in the United States, Hillel offers a variety of educational, cultural, social, and community activities. As is the case with young people elsewhere, volunteerism is increasingly popular in the post-Soviet states - and many Hillel participants now assist Jewish elderly or impoverished Jewish children, and/or engage in general community projects, such as building or upgrading playgrounds in low-income areas.

Lo Tishkach (Do Not Forget) was established in 2006 as a joint project of the Conference of European Rabbis and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. It engages Jewish young adults in establishing both a comprehensive database of all European Jewish burial grounds and a compendium of local laws affecting their protection and preservation. In addition to acquiring information that facilitates advocacy for the maintenance of these sites, Lo Tishkach also acquaints young people with pre-Holocaust Jewish life and culture in surrounding areas. Participants are expected to undertake practical work in the preservation and protection of these sites. The Genesis Philanthropy Group has supported the expansion of Lo Tishkach to a number of different Jewish population centers.

Approximately 10,000 Russian-speaking Jews between the ages of 18 and 26 have participated in the Taglit project (known as birthright Israel in the United States), free 10-day tours of Israel, since the program's inception. The Genesis Philanthropy Group has made a significant financial commitment to Russian-speaking groups in Taglit. A smaller number of Russian-speaking young people enroll in the longer MASA programs, which often serve as a springboard for aliyah.

Economic incentives play a major role in the expansion of STARS and other stipend-based part-time education programs sponsored by Chabad and other Orthodox providers. STARS (Student Torah Alliance for Russian Speakers) aims to educate halachically Jewish young people between the ages of 18 and 25 in Orthodox Jewish tradition, philosophy, lifestyle, and history. It was introduced in the post-Soviet states in 2006 and now enrolls approximately 3,500 participants who receive stipends to attend weekly classes. The program is supported by Lev Leviev and by Elie Horin of Brazil and engages both Chabad and non-Chabad Orthodox instructors. In its initial years, young people were required to attend two weekly sessions, each for two and one-half hours, held in synagogue premises so as to bring young people into synagogues. Stipends were calculated according to the cost of living in specific cities; Moscow participants were paid \$130 monthly, St. Petersburg and Kyiv attendees were paid \$110, and residents of other major Ukrainian cities (Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa) \$90 each. Participants in smaller population centers were paid incrementally less. However, following the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008, major sponsors reduced their support of STARS and the number of sessions and amount of subsidy were decreased by 50 percent in all but a few areas in which local rabbis were able to raise funds that ensured the continuing operation of the original program.

In some cities, participating rabbis have mandated separate STARS classes for young men and young women; in others, such as the highly regarded St. Petersburg Chabad program, coeducational instruction is the norm and is considered a key reason for the popularity of the local STARS endeavor. Most STARS undertakings, whether based on coeducational or single-gender formal instruction, also include occasional coeducational Shabbat dinners or other social events so that halachically Jewish young men and women have opportunities to meet one another in informal Jewish settings.

In Dnipropetrovsk, the STARS program has led to the development of additional stipend-based education programs that target halachically Jewish young people for further teaching. Participants are paid according to attendance and, in some cases, examinations.

The STARS program and its offshoots have been controversial since their inception for several reasons. First, many observers - including some participating rabbis - consider the stipends to be little more than bribery. Not surprisingly, a large number of STARS participants are from impoverished families. The payment of stipends has generated an expectation among some students of remuneration for *any* Jewish activity, an anticipation that may be detrimental to the development of a self-supporting indigenous Jewish community. Second, by limiting enrollment to halachically Jewish young people, STARS is insensitive to the extraordinarily high rate of intermarriage in the post-Soviet states; it is likely that the majority of self-identified young Jews are excluded from its ranks. Third, more liberal Jews feared that Chabad sponsorship would lead to a dogmatic presentation of Judaism and Jewish practice. In some large cities, however, it appears that the third fear has not been realized, in part because many of the instructors are indigenous *baalei tshuva* (newly Orthodox Jews) who are well aware of local sensitivities.

Limmud, a program of pluralistic Jewish educational conferences that originated in Britain almost 30 years ago and has since been replicated in other countries, has operated in the post-Soviet states since 2007. Typically, a Limmud conference convenes at a college or resort and offers several days of lectures and meetings on a variety of Jewish subjects, including Jewish texts, history, culture, and current events. Presenters are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, and participants are from a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice, from totally secular to observant. The atmosphere is informal, and meals and various common events bring people together for socializing. Limmud is broadly perceived as providing an environment in which post-Soviet Jews are able to study and enjoy Judaism without the restrictions imposed by Orthodox rabbis who dominate post-Soviet organized Jewish life. Although Limmud can boast of extraordinary success in making Judaism more accessible to many post-Soviet Jews, it remains a largely foreign program with foreign advisers and continuing dependence on foreign financial support. In common with a number of other Jewish programs in the post-Soviet states, Limmud will be fully at home and fully user-friendly to post-Soviet Jews only when its organization and financing are controlled by those whom it intends to serve.

Indigenous Jewish young adult activities also include both Jewish-theme intellectual games roughly comparable to trivia contests in the West and mobile midnight scavenger hunts. The latter may involve as many as 20 teams in cars searching for Jewish-related sites, both permanent and temporary (such as symbols on billboards). Jewish young adults also organize Jewish-theme dances and holiday parties.

Commercial coffee houses with a strong Jewish cultural influence appeal to some urban Jews who are unaffiliated with any "official" Jewish institution. Owned and operated by Jewish intellectuals in a few major cities, these cafés may feature readings of Jewish-theme poetry, Jewish cabaret singers, popular expositions of Jewish holidays, or other entertainment with a Jewish focus.

Russian-language Judaica websites abound, many sponsored by Chabad or other religious groups and a few maintained by individuals. Perhaps the most comprehensive and among the most user-friendly is the new (2010) *Activi* site developed by education specialists in Israel and posted by the Joint Distribution Committee. *Activi* is a massive anthology (also available in print format) of information on Jewish tradition, holidays, history, culture, and literature. It also includes program material for teachers and group leaders, including various activities and games.

In a category of its own is Project Keshet, a women's group that pursues a multifaceted agenda focusing on Jewish women and girls, including intensive Jewish education for its members, leadership development, women's and family health advocacy, computer skills (in cooperation with ORT), general community service, and family financial management. Project Keshet is active in approximately 150 cities in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia, and is supported mainly by contributions from Americans and grants from foundations and several governments that encourage community development in the post-Soviet states.

Several Jewish educational service organizations provide important support to Jewish education efforts in the post-Soviet states. First, the Jewish Agency teaches Hebrew in *ulpan* classes, organizes informal Jewish education programs for different age groups, operates its own Jewish camps and subsidizes camps of other Jewish groups, organizes Taglit and other Israel trips, trains teachers of Hebrew and other Jewish subjects, trains camp counselors and youth group leaders, provides teaching materials, and arranges a variety of other educational programs. However, severe budget cuts in recent years - caused mainly by pre-recession decisions of some North American Jewish federations to reduce support of overseas programs - have forced severe budget cuts in all of the Jewish Agency's program areas and have eroded its influence.

Avi Chai, a private foundation endowed in 1984 by investor Sanford (Zalman) Bernstein, publishes high-quality Russian-language Judaica for adults and children, sponsors sophisticated Jewish-interest cultural gatherings, supports academic Jewish studies, funds support services and enrichment programs at Jewish day schools and summer camps that increase their attractiveness to Jewish families, and encourages local Jewish leadership in Jewish communal activity. Although Avi Chai exercises influence in a number of major post-Soviet cities, the focus of its operations is Moscow.

The Institute for Jewish Studies in the C.I.S., operating under the auspices of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, initiated activities in Moscow in 1989. Its current activities focus on professional leadership development for teachers of Jewish subjects and leaders of Jewish organizations as well as development of Jewish educational materials, including distance-learning programs and Jewish educational games. Although based in Moscow, the Institute for Jewish Studies conducts workshops in a variety of locales. It is pluralistic in approach and works with numerous local and international Jewish organizations.

Although not formally a Jewish education service organization, the Moscow-based Genesis Philanthropy Group has emerged as potentially one of the most important organizations supporting Jewish education for Russian-speaking Jews, as alluded to previously. Funded by five prominent wealthy Russian Jews, GPG was established in 2007 with a mission focusing on building Jewish identity among Russian-speaking Jews in the post-Soviet states, Israel, and other countries in which Russian-speaking Jews reside. From its inception, it has been operated with the collaboration of experienced Western professionals in relevant fields. To date, it has made major financial commitments to the Jewish Agency in support of Jewish schools and Jewish summer camps in the post-Soviet states, to Hillel in the post-Soviet states, to academic Jewish studies programs in Russia, and to the Adain Lo education/welfare group in St. Petersburg.

GPG also pursues professional training of Russian-speaking staff and comprehensive evaluations of all undertakings. Well aware of antipathy among post-Soviet Jews toward Chabad and other Orthodox groups, GPG is focusing on secular and pluralist Jewish identity-building initiatives.

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## Notes

[1] The last official Soviet census, in 1989, showed 570,000 Jews in Russia, 487,000 in Ukraine, and 112,000 in Belarus at the beginning of 1989. The aggregate Jewish population in the remaining 12 republics was 310,800. Although Soviet census figures were broadly mistrusted, because it was assumed that respondents were reluctant to acknowledge Jewish heritage to official census takers, Professor DellaPergola and his team have found that government data proved consistent and logical over time from the Soviet era to current conditions.

[2] The 2009 estimates were provided by Professor DellaPergola in a Chicago interview on December 7, 2009. The team associated with him at Hebrew University advises that the 2009 estimate of 348,000 Jews in all of the post-Soviet states (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic states, and the former Caucasus and Central Asian republics) be multiplied by three to account for self-identified Jews and their non-Jewish family members who might accompany them to Israel under provisions of the Israeli Law of Return.

[3] For statistical evidence regarding changes in the socioeconomic profile of Moscow Jews, see Sergio DellaPergola, *Some Demographic and Socio-Economic Trends of the Jews in Russia and the FSU*. Unpublished manuscript, Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 2009. The principal project investigator and writer was Mark Tolts. See also DellaPergola, *World Jewish Population, 2010* (2010, No. 2), Current Jewish Population Reports, North American Jewish Data Bank, New York.

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