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Identity transformations of Ukrainian Jewry during the Russian–Ukrainian war: Odesa’s communities and religious leaders at home and in exile

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ABSTRACT


Russia’s extended war on Ukraine has profoundly affected the country’s religious communities, institutions, and congregational networks. These networks were built on deep historical, cultural, and familial ties across the region. Most literature on identity transformations during the war has focused on the macro-level analysis of Ukraine’s majority populations and the relationship between Russian and Ukrainian cultural and linguistic elements in the rise of civic Ukrainian identity. This article expands this discussion by examining the experiences of Ukraine’s Jewish ethnoreligious minority as well as the roles of its community organizations and religious leaders in shaping attitudes and orientations towards emerging identities. It argues that the war has triggered a multidirectional process of identity transformation, and it challenges its conventional understandings of belonging in wartime Ukraine and in communities of the displaced. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews conducted virtually and in the field, primarily with Jews from Odesa, the author shows how Jews at home and in exile have come to position themselves as more and more Ukrainian while at the same time deepening their Jewish identity through active participation in Jewish communal life.

RÉSUMÉ

La guerre prolongée menée par la Russie contre l’Ukraine a profondément bouleversé les communautés religieuses du pays, ainsi que leurs institutions et réseaux fondés sur des liens historiques, culturels et familiaux. La majorité des recherches sur les transformations identitaires en temps de guerre se concentrent sur les dynamiques à grande échelle, notamment l’affirmation d’une identité civique ukrainienne face aux influences culturelles et linguistiques russes. Cet article élargit la perspective en examinant l’expérience de la minorité ethno religieuse juive d’Ukraine, ainsi que le rôle de ses organisations communautaires et de ses responsables religieux dans la reconfiguration des identités. Il soutient que la guerre a déclenché un processus multidirectionnel de transformation identitaire, remettant en question les conceptions traditionnelles de l’appartenance, tant en Ukraine que dans les communautés émigrées. À partir d’un travail ethnographique et d’entretiens réalisés en ligne ainsi que sur

KEYWORDS

Ukrainian Jews; Odesa; Russian–Ukrainian war; identity transformations; ethnoreligious minorities

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le terrain, notamment auprès de Juifs d'Odesa, l'article montre comment les Juifs, en Ukraine comme en exil, se positionnent de plus en plus comme Ukrainiens tout en approfondissant leur identité juive à travers une participation active à la vie communautaire.

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has deeply affected Ukrainian religious communities, institutions, and congregational networks, many of which extend across the now-contested Russian-Ukrainian border. For the first time since World War I, two nations with significant Jewish communities deeply connected through familial and organizational ties are at war with one another.¹ Here I seek to show the war's impact on Ukraine's Jewish communities by focusing on the city of Odesa. Located on the coast of the Black Sea in the south of the country, Odesa is a city with a rich Jewish history. Its Jewish communities, vibrant prior to the war, have been altered by refugee flight out and by displaced Jewish persons from across the country coming in, refashioning a Jewish-Ukrainian identity in the process.

With Russia's war on Ukraine, we have seen a growing scholarly interest in the topic of identity shifts, primarily focused on questions of ethnicity, nationalism, and language.² Many of the recent publications addressing identity on the level of nation or region focus on civic identity and a collective national consciousness.³ However, little research has examined the impact of Russia's full-scale invasion on the cultural identities of non-ethnic Ukrainians.⁴ This article seeks to sharpen our understanding of identity transformations and the evolving sense of belonging within Ukrainian society since the start of the full-scale war, specifically pertaining to the reorientation of social relations, language, and religion as they evolve in wartime conditions.⁵ I trace these dynamics through a careful appraisal of Ukraine's Jewish communities.

The war has created conditions for realignments, with new forms of solidarity, defiant resilience, and new practices, communities, and identities taking root across Ukraine.⁶ Through the experience of war, members of Odesa's Jewish population have come to see themselves as part of a broader Ukrainian Jewry, integrating linguistically and culturally with the wider Ukrainian population while still maintaining a strong urban connection. Concurrently, for many ordinary Jews, the experience of war and displacement has deepened their Jewish identity and strengthened their engagement with Jewish community life, which has become an important pillar of humanitarian, moral, psychological, and spiritual support for Jewish residents and refugees both within and outside Ukraine. Thus, we can see how Jews from Ukraine are actively linking their Jewishness and Ukrainianness, blurring lines of civic, ethnic, and religious belonging.

My ethnography provides insight into the ways war has shaped Jewish identities and reconfigured Jewish community life both for those remaining in Ukraine and for those who have been displaced abroad as refugees.⁷ While the position of prominent Jewish public figures and the Jewish elite may be analyzed through the media, access to the experiences of ordinary Jews and the role of community leaders in specific urban centres is made possible by long-term ethnographic fieldwork and interviews conducted both virtually and in person.⁸ By looking beyond the public discourse of Jewish communities online and the positions of official Ukrainian Jewish Associations, this study examines how

Jews in and from Odesa and the city's religious leaders have reacted to the dramatic loss, migration, and dislocation of community members as well as to the broader reconstitution of allegiances and orientations of Jewish ties to Ukraine.⁹ Through the example of Odesa's Jews, I demonstrate that the war has intensified their participation in Jewish community life while simultaneously reinforcing their sense of belonging to a unified Ukrainian nation. In other words, the war has made them simultaneously more Jewish and more Ukrainian.

Methodology

As Viktoriya Sereda has noted, complementing quantitative data with in-depth interviews often reveals the nuanced and multi-layered nature of one's sense of belonging.¹⁰ While large survey analysis can point towards macro-formations, qualitative data offers a more fine-grained understanding of changes on the ground. Ethnography, in particular, allows us to observe how personal perspectives evolve over time. As one observant Jewish woman told me in an interview, "If you interview me in the first, second, and third year of the war, you have three different people." Long-term engagement with interlocutors, many of whom I knew prior to the war, has allowed me to track shifts in attitudes, perspectives, and experiences. As Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki argue, fieldwork is not a static event, but rather a process of knowledge-making that often takes one in unexpected directions.¹¹ This temporal dimension is particularly crucial in the context of war and migration, where individuals continuously renegotiate their senses of belonging.

My ethnographic research with Jewish communities and organizations in Odesa has spanned nearly two decades, but this study is primarily based on fieldwork I began in March 2022 in Germany, where many families I knew from Odesa had arrived as refugees. My engagement with them began with helping some 120 people: children from the Odesa Chabad Jewish orphanage, youth from the Jewish University in Odesa, teachers, caretakers, religious leaders, and families from the community. The majority were women and children, with the exception of a few men outside of conscription age (25–60) and those permitted to leave the country on the basis of having three or more children. During the next year, I made regular trips to Berlin. Following my interlocutors, I moved between a few locations, but much of my research took place in two old hotels that had been repurposed as communal homes for the large group of refugees from Ukraine. Although the original group was from Odesa, Jews from other cities joined them, drawn by the practical, educational, social, and religious support available.

Between February and August 2023, I volunteered at two Ukrainian Jewish family camps in Hungary and Romania organized by the Jewish Distribution Committee. There, I conducted interviews and interacted with parents, children, and educators from Odesa, as well as with internally displaced Jews from Kherson and Mykolaiv who had initially fled to Odesa from the east. At the same time, I conducted virtual interviews and maintained regular communication with Jews who were unable or unwilling to leave Ukraine. As some Jewish families moved from Germany to other countries or returned to Ukraine, my research changed from in-person to online engagement and expanded to other parts of Europe (predominantly Spain and the UK) and to Israel. In total, this article draws on over 50 testimonies and semi-structured interviews recorded and transcribed from March 2022 to December 2023, as well as more recent observations made up to the

time of writing. These relatively structured meetings are supplemented by informal conversations with a wider group of interlocutors and my broader engagement in community affairs, Shabbat ceremonies and meals, holiday celebrations, and ordinary daily tasks.

While most of my interlocutors continued to speak Russian with one another, their written communication, public statements, and social media posts increasingly shifted to Ukrainian. Indeed, the war was reshaping Ukrainian language ideologies, making language choice a political act.¹² Before the war, my work in Odesa was conducted in Russian, the primary language of communication for most Odesans at that time. However, in the context of this war, I became acutely aware that my insider status as a native Russian speaker, which had once fostered connection, could be perceived as a point of difference.

As Edna Lomsky-Feder et al. argue, language used in an interview is more than a medium of communication – it is a site of identity negotiation, eliciting empathy, solidarity, and understanding, creating distance and highlighting differences.¹³ Although I left the Soviet Union as a nine-year-old child and have since lived abroad, I – like other Russian-speaking scholars – grappled with feelings of guilt over my linguistic connection to a language now seen as politically fraught. In her auto-ethnographic study as a Russian-speaking immigrant interpreter in Israel, Tanya Voinova describes how the war strongly affected multiple hybrid identities of immigrant-interpreters that resulted in a process of “cultural (self-re)translation” among many Russian-speaking researchers who expressed their solidarity with Ukraine.¹⁴

While I began learning Ukrainian, which facilitated my ability to work in both languages, most of my interlocutors preferred to speak in Russian. Occasionally, younger participants and foreign religious leaders opted to speak English. In some interviews, Russian, Ukrainian, and English were used interchangeably, reflecting a common multilingual practice among younger generations of Ukrainians. To protect the identity of the individuals interviewed, details of personal autobiographies and names have been changed, except for those of religious leaders who are public figures in the community.

Fissures in the Russian-speaking Jewish world

Comparing American Jews with unaffiliated Orthodox Christians in Ukraine, Catherine Wanner notes that the two very different groups both see religion as “fundamental to defining who they are as a person and to forming the people with whom they identify and feel allegiance.”¹⁵ In her discussion of the “just Orthodox,” Wanner observes that relationships forged through shared religious practices create relatedness by linking individuals to each other. These relationships, she argues, “color an atmosphere that shapes life-worlds, or the context in which perceptions, orientations, and political behaviors form.”¹⁶ In my ethnographic work, the war presents a more complicated and contorting context.

Prior to the conflict, Ukrainian Jewish and Russian Jewish communities were interconnected on personal, familial, and organizational levels.¹⁷ Many Russian Jews trace their lineage back generations to sites in contemporary Ukraine, and Jews in Ukraine have long been oriented towards Russian culture and language.¹⁸ It is not unusual for ex-Soviet Jewish families to be spread across numerous countries owing to migration. Across positions of Jewish leadership, Jews born in Russia have led communities in Ukraine;

similarly, Jews originally from Ukraine have worked in Russia.¹⁹ Moreover, many religious emissaries have kin sprawled across former Soviet states.

Outside of the religious communities, many education programs for ex-Soviet Jewry, such as Limmud FSU (Former Soviet Union), worked throughout the former Soviet states, operating predominantly in Russian. At the same time, most Jewish religious and secular texts were printed in Russian and distributed throughout the ex-Soviet states. Many international organizations, such as PJ Library, which disseminates books of Jewish content free of charge to Jewish families across the world, including in Russia and Ukraine, operated a predominantly Russian-language program prior to the war. Indeed, this was the case for most transnational organizations working with Russian-speaking Jewry across ex-Soviet states. Many Ukrainian organizations were connected to Russian online platforms. Project Keshet Ukraine, which aims to develop women's leadership in the Jewish world and beyond, as well as the Jewish Community Centre in Odesa, Migdal', and other organizations, previously used Russian domain (.ru) websites.

Now, while Jews in and from Ukraine might share a religious (or ethnic) orientation, they are split by the obligations and ethical responsibilities they feel in the wake of Russia's invasion. For some, ethno-religious loyalties remain paramount. For others, a new imperative of national belonging has taken hold. Likewise, many of the legal structures that had representatives in Russia and Ukraine have now been separated into distinct entities, with collaboration across the border no longer a feasible or desired option. A volunteer of one of the aforementioned Jewish international organizations told me that its Ukrainian-based team refused to refer to Ukrainian Jews as "Russian-speaking Jews" or "post-Soviet Jewry." Some of them still spoke Russian but did not necessarily want to be defined as "Russian-speaking Jews" in the calls of Jewish outreach. Gwendolyn Sasse emphasized in her 2023 book, *Russia's War against Ukraine*, that for Ukrainians, "post-Soviet" became problematic as a reductive term that foregrounded the legacy of the Soviet Union.²⁰ Claudia Eggart echoes this point in her article "The End of the Post-Soviet." As she explains, since the start of the war, "Many Ukrainians feel a need to distance themselves from the shared Soviet past, a tendency which is reinforced by the fact that Russia uses this past as a propaganda tool for a war that may not be named."²¹

Ukrainian Jews who had no contact with Russian nationals struggled with the idea that there were in fact Jews on both sides of the war. Many of the young Jews with whom I spoke had a hard time fathoming Jews as enemies. As Andrii Krawchuk has written of both Jews and Muslims on the front lines, "their home communities were left with the daunting task of maintaining some semblance of unity and of grappling with a hellish question: how was mortal combat possible between people of the same faith tradition?"²² In Kherson, one rabbi was widely reported to have let Russian soldiers pray in his synagogue when the city was under Russian occupation. Forty-year-old Igor said of the supposed scandal:

As a Jew, I understand how I should treat another Jew, but does a Jew who is fighting for the Russian army become my enemy? Can I still see him as a fellow Jew, or is he just the enemy? I know many Jews, even observant Jews, who serve in the Ukrainian forces, but until this story I never comprehended that Jews also serve in Russian forces. How tragic.

Within the sphere of religious congregations, transnational organizations such as Chabad Lubavitch, the most influential Hasidic Orthodox Jewish movement in Russia and Ukraine, have experienced deep rifts among their leaders, who have found themselves divided by their national loyalties and allegiances. As Maxim Shrayer notes, Chabad rabbis in both countries have found themselves on opposite sides of justice.²³ While Russian-based Chabad rabbis have, for the most part, remained silent or neutral in their stance on the war, praying for peace rather than justice, members of the same movement in Ukraine have been publicly professing their loyalty to Ukraine and judging the “silence” across the border in moral terms.²⁴ As Shrayer explains, in Ukraine, the Chabad leadership views the war as one in defence of holiness, regarded as a commandment to “join a just fight” and “go to battle for G-d.”²⁵ The wider responses of religious leaders also vary. Some see the role of rabbis as providing for their communities and not engaging in politics. Others demand a response and judge a lack of open critique of moral transgression as a betrayal.

The rise of a Ukrainian Jewish identity

Identity, religion, and war

War and displacement profoundly disrupt every life and often reshape the salience of the meaning of identities.²⁶ Alternatively, as Eggart puts it, war is “an identity-building, epoch-making moment in time.”²⁷ In Victor Turner’s formulation, crisis serves to transform and renew communities while revealing a desire for deeper communal bonds, fostering a heightened desire for social cohesion.²⁸ Gwendolyn Sasse and Alice Lackner have rightly urged us to recognize the multidirectional identity transformations brought on by war.²⁹ Their comparative study of the Donbas residents who remained in war-affected areas and those who fled to safer regions in Ukraine and across the border to Russia demonstrates the various ways in which mixing of Russian and Ukrainian cultural and linguistic elements takes place. Similarly, Sereda has observed that Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine are not two separate national groups; rather, they are mutually intertwined and mutually inclusive groups with blurred boundaries.³⁰ Elise Giuliano’s analysis of opinions on separatism in the Donbas further demonstrates this point, as she shows how the region is divided. Some ethnic Russians disagree with multiple claims related to separatism, while some ethnic Ukrainians support the separatist agenda.³¹ These works demonstrate the flaws of deterministic accounts of ethnic Ukrainian and ethnic Russian populations in the region, but they reveal little about the realities of ethnic minorities. Mariia Shynkarenko makes a similar point for Crimean Tatars and other ethnic minorities in Ukraine who have wrongly been perceived as separate, cohesive, and clear-cut groups that co-exist alongside each other.³²

Among the émigré communities, Larisa Fialkova and Maria Yelenevskaja have described how the onset of the 2014 war created a split in identity in the Russian-speaking world of ex-Soviet immigrants in Israel, who had not previously made a distinction between “Russians” and “Ukrainians.”³³ The full-scale invasion launched on February 24, 2022 brought on a radical transformation of identity. Svetlana Chachashvili-Bolotin notes that, in the online networks of Ukrainian-born female Israelis she studied, more than half claimed the war had strengthened their Ukrainian identity.³⁴

Religious identities in Ukraine's multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape have not developed in isolation; rather, they have always intersected with various factors that shape national, political, and regional orientations.³⁵ Watching the identity transformations of an ethnic minority like the Ukrainian Jews, I found the "therapeutic dimensions" of Jewish communal life emerge from a state of shared trauma.³⁶ At the same time, Ukrainianness was also heightened by the Russian assault. Many of the Jews I interviewed said the war made them feel Ukrainian, and they experienced a profound sense of solidarity with the Ukrainian people – a phenomenon they shared with other minority groups, like the Crimean Tatars.³⁷ In refugee settings in Europe, Jews from Ukraine saw themselves first and foremost as Ukrainians, which legally defined their status in the country, although in the context of Germany, some later applied for quota refugee status based on their Jewish lineage. In many of their stories of evacuation, Jews connected their struggles as Jews with their struggles as Ukrainians, some linking experiences of the Holocaust to the current genocide in Ukraine. A statewide project, "Exodus-2022," launched at the start of the war by the Council of the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, has been chronicling and preserving the personal testimonies of Jewish refugees about the days following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.³⁸ As Roman Shvartsman, chairman of the Odesa Association of Jews and a Holocaust survivor, stated at the Yalta European Strategy Special Gathering held on the third anniversary of Russia's 2022 invasion, "Hitler wanted to kill me because I am Jewish. Putin wants to kill me because I am Ukrainian."³⁹ As Jews strengthened ties to Ukrainian culture and forged a new Ukrainian-Jewish identity, they likewise altered what it meant to be Ukrainian. In light of Vladimir Putin's dubious war aim of "denazification," Ukraine's Jewish dimension could be instrumentalized against Russia's propaganda. For instance, Luliia, a 40-year-old leader at the Jewish community centre in Odesa, told me that journalists interviewing her and her colleagues at the city's Jewish Museum in the early days of the war would ask questions like, "Are Jews running away from Ukrainian Nazis or from the Russians?" Infuriated by the effectiveness of Russia's propaganda, she and her colleagues spent countless hours explaining to foreign media that there were no more Nazis in contemporary Ukraine than anywhere else in the world, and that Putin's Russia was the biggest threat to Jewish survival.

In such a context, Jewish religious leaders and organizations have come to play a significant role within and beyond Jewish communities.⁴⁰ Many Jewish buildings have been turned into shelters, and Jewish organizations have become hubs of humanitarian aid for Jews and others. We must recall that Ukraine is home to Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox communities, specifically the Chabad Lubavitch movement, are the most plentiful. This is especially true for cities such as Dnipro and Odesa, where Chabad remains the only community fully operational during the war. Like the many Ukrainian Christian minorities built on post-Soviet alliances, the Jewish institutional network, especially the stronghold of Chabad Lubavitch, was traditionally closely aligned with Russia, which served as the centre of influence for ex-Soviet Jewry. For many of the Chabad emissaries who are foreign-born, Russian was the main language of programs and operations across ex-Soviet states.⁴¹ This fact helps explain why some leaders of Chabad and other Jewish organizations attempted to stay apolitical in 2014, as tensions escalated between Russia and Ukraine.

As the war continued, one heard prayers not only for peace but also for Ukrainian victory in a contest cast as “good” against “evil.”⁴² During weekly sermons and especially on Jewish holidays, religious leaders built parallels between Jewish stories of survival and triumph and their faith in the future of the Ukrainian nation. These “therapeutic channels of religious language” provided moral and mental support and a sense of connection between Jewish values and solidarity with the Ukrainian nation.⁴³ This phenomenon recalls the work of Shlomo Guzman-Carmeli and Nissan Rubin, who outline the therapeutic use of religious texts in a kabbalistic yeshiva and the power of religious institutions that function as places of healing and personal therapy.⁴⁴ During the sermons I observed on Purim in Berlin, in the early days of refugee resettlement, many religious leaders used and politicized the story of Jewish survival and triumphs over the Persian enemy to foster a sense of resilience among Ukrainian Jewry and hope for a victorious end to the war. For example, after the reading of the Book of Esther, Rabbi Mendel, addressing a group of Ukrainian Jewish refugees, described Putin as someone who embodied the evil character of Haman. Putin’s mission to destroy the Ukrainian people, he said, like Haman’s attempt to destroy the Jewish people, would not succeed.

Project Keshet Ukraine, a branch of an American Jewish organization dedicated to building Jewish community and empowering women leaders, produced one of the first Ukrainian-language *Haggadot* for Passover, entitled “For Our Freedom,” with vivid imagery of Ukrainian Jews under Russian attacks. Thus, the story of Jewish liberation from Egypt, reiterated during the Passover meal (the *seder*), was politicized and brought to life throughout Ukraine.⁴⁵ This version “tells the story of Passover through the eyes of Ukrainians fighting to live in a free, democratic, and safe society” and is “designed to help Ukrainian Jews honor their heritage,” as it “ties the holiday’s slavery-to-freedom narrative to Ukraine’s ongoing fight against the Russian invasion.”⁴⁶ Similarly, during the holiday of Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, many religious leaders and ordinary Jews discussed the parallels between the miracles of Hanukkah – the cruse of oil that burned for eight days instead of one and the victory of the few against the many – and faith in the Ukrainian nation.

When my interlocutors described these strengthened Ukrainian–Jewish relations, some pointed to their Jewish president and the fact that Jews held prominent jobs in the government and other influential spheres of Ukrainian society. But particularly among older generations, there was trepidation – they felt that although Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelens’kyi (Zelensky/Zelenskyy), was portrayed internationally as the world’s “Jewish hero,” having Jews in high positions of power meant that any errors would reflect negatively on the country’s entire Jewish population.⁴⁷ The youth, however, thought the visibility of Jewish heritage, culture, and religion spoke to the country’s level of diversity, tolerance, and acceptance, and many welcomed these developments.

When we discussed the various ways Jewish-Ukrainian elements connect in his everyday life, Dania, 18, who moved to Israel at the onset of the war but has since returned to Odesa, proudly told me that Ukraine now has several Jewish chaplains in the Ukrainian Defence Forces, adding a layer to the growing chaplaincy in Ukraine, which Wanner describes as a “litmus test for issues of tolerance in an increasingly pluralist society.”⁴⁸ During our interview, Dania sent me pictures of kosher food products available online from major grocery stores in Ukraine and photographs of books on Jewish topics translated into Ukrainian that are sold in his local bookshop and by street vendors in Odesa. He

also shared photographs of Zelens'kyi lighting the Hanukkah menorah with a group of Orthodox rabbis clad in black. But he was most excited to tell me about the recent performance of *Fiddler on the Roof* he had attended with his mother, performed in Russian with Ukrainian subtitles, which received a standing ovation from a predominantly non-Jewish audience, some of whom even came in kippahs.

"I was moved to see so many people support Jewish culture in the city," Dania told me. In another conversation, he mentioned that Jews have enlisted in the army in high numbers, including Ukrainian Jews who returned from Israel, the United States, and various European countries. "Jews see Ukraine as their home," he explained. Vika, a 41-year-old Odesan, told me that in her days as a member of the revisionist Zionist organization Beitar, Jews were taught that they should not be distracted by local political conflicts and affairs. According to her, the fact that Jews are indeed fighting for Ukraine today – and seeing their fight as a battle to defend their home – is one of the most notable shifts in political orientation within the Ukrainian Jewish population.

Religious organizations and leadership

Religion has played a multi-dimensional role in the war. Many experts have suggested that Russia's conflict with Ukraine has religious dimensions. Some go so far as to call Russia's invasion part of a holy war.⁴⁹ This argument largely hinges on the analysis of Christian communities and, specifically, the multi-faceted rift within the Orthodox Christian world.⁵⁰ This focus is understandable since, as Wanner explains, Eastern Christianity is the dominant faith and recognized as "culturally embedded" – and thus it shapes present-day identification. Taking a broader view, the historian Heather Coleman notes that "religion has served as a source of unity and division in Ukrainian society." She points out that religious actors of different faiths have been visible in Ukraine's fight for independence ever since the Euromaidan, with religion "weaponized by all sides of the conflict."⁵¹ Wanner acknowledges that religion is used as a form of soft power in something akin to a proxy war, while the political scientist Jennifer Mathers stresses that, although throughout history nations at war have claimed that God is on their side, the extent and scale of active support by some religious leaders that we have seen in the Russian–Ukrainian war has been exceptional.⁵² Mathers highlights the fact that leaders in Russia and Ukraine have looked to religious communities for support, and at the same time religious leaders themselves have offered explicit support to their respective nations.⁵³

While broadly accepting Mathers' point, I would add that although my interlocutors often expressed anger towards Jews who had stayed in Russia and kept silent about the war (accusing them of being amoral accomplices), local religious leaders long accustomed to seeing the community across national divides were much more understanding with regard to the plight of Russian Jews and the risks of speaking out against the war.⁵⁴ In Odesa, Chabad Rabinet Khaia Vol'f (Chaya Wolf) organized a prayer group in the first days of the war and asked the women in her group to think of Jews as one family in an attempt to promote empathy across national boundaries. During our conversations, she often expressed worry about her own family, friends, and colleagues in Russia who might publicly express anti-war opinions, and she speculated that those who remained silent

were genuinely scared of harming their communities. Khaia's own son lives and works in Russia, and as she explained to me, this is a common scenario for many Odesan families.

Luliia Gris (Julia Gris), the Reform Rabbi of Odesa, relocated her synagogue's Torah scroll, scriptures, and valuables to Kyiv for safekeeping as she herself relocated first to Poland and later to Germany, followed by some of her congregants. Others are scattered among Poland, Israel, and the UK, while some remain in Ukraine. When she delivers her sermons online, along with Kyiv's Reform Rabbi Oleksandr Dukhovnyi (Alexander Dukhovny), they alternate speaking in Russian and Ukrainian. In our interview she described these online encounters as "safe spaces" where Reform congregants within and outside Ukraine (a few even from Russia) can share their pain and feel part of a community.

In contrast, Chabad emissaries tend to explain the actions of religious leadership in terms of the history of the Hasidic movement, which, despite heavy repression, sustained an underground connection to Soviet Jewry throughout the history of the Soviet Union. In a recent interview, a Ukrainian-born, Moscow-based rabbi told me that, despite his anti-war position, he was unable to leave his congregants. Rabbis on both sides of the war often told me some form of the same message: "A rabbi can never leave his community." A rabbi's choice to stay with his community is seen in most contexts as a moral or religious obligation, but amid the political dynamics of war and territorial occupation, following the imperative does not come without consequences. Religious leaders, women and men alike, experience war as principals of their congregations, but their own personal experiences often weigh on their individual stances and frame their positions on Jews in Russia. Publicly, Chabad Orthodox rabbis have been split by politics, but on a more intimate and private level relations are more nuanced and complicated.

An example is the recent marriage of Rivka Lazar and Sholom Vol'f. She is the daughter of the Chief Rabbi of Russia, Berl Lazar, and he is the son of the Chief Rabbi of Odesa and Southern Ukraine, Avraam Vol'f (Abraham Wolf). Their wedding in Jerusalem in February 2025 garnered much attention across Jewish communities in Russia and Ukraine. Rabbis from both countries claimed the union as a hopeful sign of unity. Jewish Odesans, however, living under increasing bombings, were highly critical of Rabbi Vol'f's proximity to Russia's Chief Rabbi.

One native Odesan Jew, who asked for anonymity, shared in a candid conversation that, although he was invited to the wedding, he felt uncomfortable attending an event where "Russians" would be in the same room. "Although I am a Jew, I now first and foremost think of myself as a citizen of Ukraine." He worried not only about participating in an event with rabbis from the enemy state, but also about exposure to Russians who fund Russia's military operations and in general are close to Putin's regime. According to Sasha, a 19-year-old student from the Jewish University of Odesa, many members of the Jewish community felt uneasy. Some were openly upset about Vol'f's decision, seeing it as a betrayal.

Odesa's Jewish community: loss and resilience

Before the war, Odesa was home to about 30,000 Jews and two Orthodox congregations – one liberal and the other a newer, conservative community.⁵⁵ There were Jewish cultural programs, institutions of Jewish relief sponsored by global philanthropic organizations,

the Jewish Agency, and an extended network of Jewish schools and a university. When the war started, many of the foreigners working in these organizations left Odesa. Community leaders estimate that over 50 percentage of the Jewish population fled the city, although some have since returned.⁵⁶ Some rabbis took their congregations out of Ukraine entirely. Odesa's Litvak Orthodox rabbi, Shlomo Baksht, with his thousand-person community Tikva, relocated to Romania and what the organization called the "largest displaced-person camp" in Europe.⁵⁷ Still, Tikva continued to provide assistance to approximately 200 children and 1,250 elderly who had to remain in Odesa.⁵⁸ The leader of the conservative movement, Zeev Viezman, has been at the forefront of various humanitarian initiatives, especially saving animals in need. The Chabad Lubavitch congregation remains the only fully functioning religious community serving the remaining Jews in the city. This drastic remapping of Jewish organizations has left just one operating synagogue building (as was the case in Soviet times).

The loss of Jewish educators and observant Jewry has led to a decline in Jewish education and practices. "There are fewer Jews and fewer Jewish products in the city," Klara, 52, told me. "Only one kosher restaurant remains open," she said, as we discussed the practical changes in the Jewish landscape of Odesa. This decline in the *Yiddishkeit* (Jewishness) of the city limits the exposure that more secular Jews have to religious Jews. As 68-year-old Polina said:

Before the war, there were many religious children in my grandchildren's classes. But now many are gone, or the children study online and classes are much smaller, so our kids are missing an element of religiosity. There are few encounters with religious students, who used to teach our kids just by performing their everyday *mitzvot* [religious commandments].

Polina's grandson, who had previously studied in the Chabad Jewish school, was forced to move to Dnipro to continue his education when his class practically ceased to exist.

As we discussed the changes caused by the war, Polina was sitting on a bed in the room she shares with her granddaughter in Berlin, clutching a paper cup with strong black tea. She had become observant in the early 1990s, when Jewish organized life was just forming in the city. She shook her head in disbelief that the Jewish communities built in Odesa have become fragmented.⁵⁹ Before the war, she said, "Odesa's Jews had everything they needed to live a Jewish life. Now look at us."

Svieta, an observant woman in her 40s whom I met at the Sukkot celebration in Berlin, made a similar observation: "Back in the 1990s there were many Jews, but no Jewish life. Now, when there is Jewish life, there are no Jews." What was initially described as an "evacuation," a temporary escape to safety, is now widely referred to by Polina and others as a "migration" or an "exodus." Polina compares this migration to the early 1990s, when masses of Jews departed Ukraine. But unlike the wave of post-Soviet migrants who left out of choice, today Jews are forced to flee in search of safety. As one woman in her late 30s explained, "This war pushed out all those who had long ago decided that Ukraine is home."

Jewish life may be altered in Odesa, but it is certainly not gone. Jews displaced from other parts of Ukraine have sought sanctuary there, and Jewish organizations have thus become active hubs of humanitarian aid and support. For example, the Jewish Community Centre, Migdal', which coordinated evacuation buses in the early days of the war, operates a trauma centre for Odesan families and helps integrate newly arrived

Jewish and non-Jewish refugees through various religious, cultural, and educational programs. The Chabad congregation has stayed open, becoming the religious centre for all the city's Jews, whatever their previous affiliation. The war and its upheavals have brought to the fore previously unaffiliated Jewry who started to frequent Jewish activities – some to receive aid and others seeking the moral, psychological, and spiritual support of a community.

Liena, 43, who works assisting refugees, said that, on one hand, "It is very sad to look at a building where many of your friends once lived and see only a few windows lit." At the same time, she notes, "Odesa's Jewish community has a new face. Many left; others arrived. Jews who were never part of any Jewish activity joined the community." For Dasha, 42, who works with Jewish youth at the Jewish Community Centre,

People are drawn to the Jewish community in a more pronounced way than before the war. Now they put more value on what the community does for them. We have so many new young people that we had to allocate a new space for them. I think people want to belong to communities of their own [*svoikh*], and this is where they feel safe.

Given this dynamic in Odesa, it is not surprising that Jewish communities across Ukraine have reported a visible spiritual turn since the start of the war, with "a newfound desire to connect with Judaism."⁶⁰ This development recalls Elazar Ben-Lulu's study of Russian-speaking ex-Soviet Reform congregants in Israel, for whom rabbinic leadership and the Jewish community provide spiritual solutions in times of crisis.⁶¹ In the two congregations he studied, the war has re-established and shaped Jewish identity and strengthened affiliation with the Reform community.⁶² A similar pattern of increased religiosity and growing numbers has been noted by scholars working with Christian communities in Ukraine. Tatiana Vagramenko has observed overflowing Baptist church halls and what one pastor called "a great religious awakening" following the 2022 Russian invasion.⁶³

In Jewish settings, holidays and weekly celebrations of Shabbat provide the interaction that many desperately need to acclimate to their new reality. As the war disrupts daily routines on multiple levels, the Jewish calendar presents a sense of continuity and tradition that counterbalances much uncertainty. On many occasions, Jews told me that the ordinary has become sacred. As Galina, 62, explained:

Shabbat is the best part of the week. You see people and speak to them. We discuss life and the latest developments. It's better than going to a psychologist. The fact that every week I can see my friends and mark this day as special gives me new energy.

Observance of daily commandments such as prayer has also served as an important "social event," which, in times of crisis, brings people together. Research on Ukrainian war refugees in Europe conducted in the first year of the war indicates that "relationships" represent the top coping strategy used by those who fled Ukraine, followed by religion, specifically "prayer."⁶⁴ Hrysha, 22, told me that he was feeling deeply depressed with no desire to do anything, but the daily prayer gatherings forced him to see and engage with others. This need for predictability and camaraderie, which religious communities provide, has emerged precisely at a time when what earlier could have been taken for granted as reliable connections with the world has been blasted apart. Thus, we see in

stark terms how loss, absence, and social connection are intertwined, and predictability becomes the sought-after balm.

As one of the Jewish leaders interviewed by Ben-Lulu says, “The Jewish community exists not only for worship between individuals and the Creator, but also to forge bonds between individuals and society.”⁶⁵ Thirty-year-old Svieta, an employee of the Jewish Museum who evacuated to Berlin in the first week of the war and has since returned, told me that she and her husband had been “cemented together” by the conditions of the war. “Having lived through so much in the past two years,” she said, “I feel like it’s been a whole life.” Many of my interviewees described not just a strengthening of existing relations but new and unexpected bonds generated with those around them, within the Jewish community and beyond. Nadia, 43 and single, who has remained in Odesa throughout the war, told me that she moved into a shared space with other Jewish families to feel part of a collective that, she said, helped her to endure the war. Svieta wove together the varying threads of connection this way: “People live as one organism now. They help each other. There are a lot of self-organization initiatives to help the Ukrainian military forces and the civilian population and their own smaller communities, neighbours, friends, even strangers.”

Language and belonging

Although Jews in Ukraine have historically spoken many languages, as a result of Russification most came to privilege the Russian language and Russian culture.⁶⁶ This is changing. There has been no shortage of scholarly analysis of the politics of language as it has developed since 2014. Studies show that Ukrainian citizens no longer default to Russian, which they identify with an aggressor state.⁶⁷ And even those who continue to use Russian identify emphatically as Ukrainian.⁶⁸ In an earlier observation, Abel Polese and Anna Wylegała contended that it did not matter which language one used; what mattered was one’s attitude towards that language.⁶⁹ This position towards Russian and Ukrainian has changed since Russia’s full-scale invasion.⁷⁰ Most recent studies point to an increase in the use of Ukrainian in public and on social media.⁷¹ In my conversations with Ukrainian Jews, I found that only a minority experienced what Laada Bilaniuk describes as “linguistic conversions” to Ukrainian.⁷² Jews from Odesa and other southern cities are not, after all, a homogenous group. Some have worked to use Ukrainian as their primary language; others are confined by habit and degrees of comfort; some resist the lure of a new identity, arguing that language has nothing to do with the contemporary politics of the nation or the war. And some remain Russophones in contradistinction to the official linguistic demands of the Ukrainian state. Most negotiate these positions and possibilities of expression and identity according to the constraints and possibilities of the moment.

For example, in public view, Ukrainian Jews employ the Ukrainian language strategically to mark themselves as different from “Russians” or to pre-empt being regarded as “Russian.” This is particularly true for Ukrainian refugees in foreign cities. Many of the Ukrainian Jews with whom I speak tell me how the Russian language, which once bound ex-Soviet Jewish emigres, can no longer function as a marker of shared identity. In their study of Donbas residents who relocated to Russia, Sasse and Lackner also note that the Ukrainian language, even if spoken in parallel to Russian, became a key identity marker.⁷³ In Berlin, I met Illia, 39, and his friend Ian, both from Odesa, who fled to Germany during

the first days of the war. When we met at a small café near Illia's German class, the two young men shared their anxiety of being Russian speakers within the larger flow of Ukrainian refugees and among the established Russian-speaking Jewish community. Illia explained:

I suggested to my friends that, even though we speak Russian to each other, we should switch to Ukrainian when we're moving about the city. I just don't want others, possibly Russians, to think we are *svoi* [one of them], and I didn't want Ukrainians to think we are Russians.

Although Illia, who graduated from a Ukrainian-language university, has no issues switching to Ukrainian, Ian admitted he found it hard to stick to Ukrainian: "After an hour, I get tired. I find myself turning back to Russian. I'm from Odesa, after all, and I'm not used to speaking Ukrainian." As Illia and his friends seek to create a distance between themselves and Russians, they focus on perceptions of who is *svoi* – which Alexei Yurchak translates as "those who belong to our circle."⁷⁴ Thus, while they acknowledge that Russian remains the language of interpersonal affairs, they turn to Ukrainian to mark their publicly perceived identity better. I saw this same pattern play out with many refugees who strove to redefine their relationship to the Russian language and thus reorient themselves to Ukraine and the Ukrainian language. But in Germany, where the majority of the Jewish population consists of Jews from ex-Soviet states who are Russian-speaking, Russian is a useful language.⁷⁵ It serves as a connector between old and new immigrants, regardless of their country of origin and in spite of the war.

At the same time, though Ukrainian is strategically used to mark oneself as *not* Russian, Russian can be used defiantly. Its use by some is infused with the claim that the Russian language does not belong to Russia alone, and that one's use of Russian signifies Ukraine's freedom from Russian imposition.⁷⁶ Several Jews from the Chabad congregation in Odesa often repeated the words of their rabbi: "Don't surrender your Russian to Putin. It's yours, not his. Why be so fast to give him what's yours without even a fight?" Likewise, in one of the summer camps where I volunteered, the topic of language was raised by visiting American Jews, who were surprised to hear the Ukrainian Jews speaking Russian in the context of war. Vika, 31, explained to them:

We are free to speak any language we want. No one is taking our right to speak Russian; just like we're not forced to speak Ukrainian, we do it out of choice. I speak both languages with ease. Ultimately, it's our choice.

Emil', 38, an observant Jew and father of five, made a concerted choice to pivot to Ukrainian. He contacted me in the third year of the war to ask whether I would help him publish his book about familial relations. Emil' had been a Russian-speaking, secular Jew when we met 20 years earlier, and he continues to speak Russian, but he wanted this book, his first, to be in Ukrainian. When I probed and asked him why, he responded:

I want to be part of these processes of change, and I want to take an active role in the transformation we see in Ukraine today. This is my part. I am trying to grow as a Ukrainian speaker in the same way that I am always growing as a Jew.

Emil' is part of a larger movement of Jews and local Jewish organizations who want to translate key texts of Judaism into Ukrainian.⁷⁷ Amid the growing distance from the Russian language, an increasing number of sacred religious texts and prayers have been translated into Ukrainian, including the Book of Esther, the Book of Psalms, and the Ten Commandments. In January 2025, Rabbi Iryna Gritsevkaia from the Masorti movement in Ukraine published the first Ukrainian translation of a children's prayer book.⁷⁸ At the time of writing, Ukrainian translations of a *siddur* (prayer book) and the Torah are in the making.⁷⁹ In my interview with the director of Project Keshet Ukraine, Vlada Nedak described the full-scale invasion as a pivotal moment when more and more Jewish women started to demand prayers and liturgy in Ukrainian. Given that most of the foreign-born rabbis and emissaries of major communities in Ukraine are not proficient in Ukrainian but can use Russian, this growth in Ukrainian expression is a significant shift.⁸⁰ But, as Vika reminded her American audience at the summer camp, in the current situation it is more the value of freedom, rather than a specific language usage, that drives people's construction of self and how they situate themselves within their overlapping communities – in this case, as Jews, as Ukrainians, and as Russian and Ukrainian speakers.

Conclusion

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has indeed created fissures throughout the Russian-speaking Jewish world, including within and across émigré communities. But it has also fostered new solidarities, developed resilience, and impacted evolving identities. In some cases, congregations that once spanned the former Soviet Union have been divided by differing perceptions and experiences of the war and attachments to contrasting strains of collective memory. However, the war has also united communities of Ukrainian Jewry with the wider Ukrainian population in their common fight for independence and freedom. We have seen Ukrainian Jews and the Ukrainian government bound in the defence of the country and, together, publicly acknowledging the important role Jews play in Ukraine's civil society. The war has also sparked international interest in Ukrainian Jewish heritage and a desire to safeguard the country's important Jewish history. UNESCO's 2025 initiative to preserve Jewish heritage in all regions of Ukraine will not only focus on protecting historical documents and training professionals in preservation techniques, but will also "support artistic and research endeavors that highlight the contribution of Jewish heritage to Ukrainian culture."⁸¹

Understanding the complex history of Ukrainian–Jewish relations, Ukrainian Jews distinguish Ukraine-then and Ukraine-now in public discourse about historical anti-Semitism in their country. In the context of the current war, they have come to see that Putin's Russia, rather than Zelens'kyi's Ukraine, is a threat to Jewish lives and the future of Jewish communities. In this way, Judaism and Jewish communities in Ukraine have been transformed by Russia's war on Ukraine, but they have also transformed the image of the country. They work to cast it as a pluralistic and tolerant society with a rich and diverse religious landscape. This is a key component of their sense of what it means to be Ukrainian. At the same time, many have deepened their connection to Jewish life, bridging their Jewishness with their Ukrainianness. The perspectives of Jews from Odesa who have remained and those who have fled to other parts of Europe give us glimpses into the reality of Ukrainian ethno-religious minorities, deepening our understanding of the various ways identity is affected by

the devastation of war and forced migration and how religious communities provide networks of care. Further research is necessary to understand wider Jewish responses to the war among the remaining, displaced, and refugee communities and to identify parallels and differences between Jewish experiences and the experiences of other minority groups.

As the intensified war enters its fourth year, uncertainty defines the future of Ukrainian Jewry and other Ukrainian minority populations, both at home and dispersed. For those scattered abroad, whether they will return and how they will find their place among those who have endured the war first-hand will present a challenge for the entire Ukrainian society. But the resilience and the creative and inspiring responses we see among Ukrainian Jewish communities offer us hope. Despite the immense loss of the Jewish population, Ukraine's remaining Jewish communities stand together, looking to Ukraine as their home and building a Ukrainian-Jewish narrative divorced from the old Russian centre of gravity.

Notes

1. For Jewish relationships to different sides of wars see Appelbaum, *Loyal Sons*; Frankel, *Dark Times*; Grady, *Deadly Legacy*; Penslar, *Jews and the Military*; and Vital, *People Apart*.
2. See Arel, "How Ukraine Has Become"; Kulyk, "Language and Identity"; Onuch and Hale, "Capturing Ethnicity"; and Pop-Eleches and Robertson, "Identity and Political Preferences."
3. Arel, "How Ukraine Has Become." See also Onuch, Hale, and Sasse, "Studying Identity in Ukraine"; Onuch and Hale, "Capturing Ethnicity"; Kulyk, "Shedding Russianness"; and Pop-Eleches and Robertson, "Identity and Political Preferences."
4. Those addressing minorities in the war include Muratova and Zasanska, *Minorities at War*; Krawchuk, "Impact of Russia's Intervention"; Sarafian and Caban, "Navigating Solidarity"; Shynkarenko, "Loyalty and Patriotism"; and Sviezhentsev and Kisly, "De-occupation or (De)colonization?"
5. See Sasse and Lackner, "War and Identity"; Uehling, *Everyday War*; Sereda, "Transformation of Identities"; Kulyk, "Shedding Russianness"; Kulyk, "Identity in Transformation"; Kulyk, "National Identity in Time"; Bilaniuk, "Ideologies of Language"; Bilaniuk, "Linguistic Conversion in Ukraine"; Averbuch, "Russophone Literature of Ukraine"; and Krawchuk, "Impact of Russia's Intervention."
6. Sapritsky-Nahum, "Fragmented Lives"; Wanner, "Foreword."
7. Muratova and Zasanska, *Minorities at War*; Krawchuk, "Impact of Russia's Intervention."
8. Bagno-Moldavsky, "Media, Politics."
9. Marchenko, "Public Discourses Connected."
10. Sereda, "Transformation of Identities."
11. Cerwonka and Malkki, *Improvising Theory*.
12. Kulyk, "Identity in Transformation"; Averbuch, "Russophone Literature of Ukraine."
13. Lomsky-Feder et al., "Ledaber be'sefatem zarot, beit."
14. Voinova, "Who Are You Standing?"
15. Wanner, *Everyday Religiosity*, 14.
16. Ibid.
17. Feferman, "Crisis in Ukraine," 227.
18. Davidzon, *Jewish-Ukrainian Relations*, 28.
19. Among others, Odesa's Reform rabbi, Iuliia Gris (Julia Gris), was born in Russia, as was the Kyiv-based rabbi Moshe Asman. Similarly, Ukrainian-born rabbis hold high positions in Russia.
20. Sasse, *Russia's War against Ukraine*, xii.
21. Eggart, "End of the Post-Soviet."
22. Krawchuk, "Impact of Russia's Intervention," 310.
23. Shrayner, "Rabbis on Opposite Sides."

24. See Rabbi Asman's emotional video begging Russian Jews and the general Russian public to speak up and stand up against the war. Chief Rabbi of Ukraine / Holovnyi Rabyñ Ukraïny, "Moe obrashchenie ko vsem liudiam dobroï volii!!!" Facebook post, 1 March 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=707535697047212>.
25. Shroyer, "Russia's Silent Rabbis."
26. Sasse and Lackner, "War and Identity."
27. Eggart, "End of the Post-Soviet."
28. Turner, *Ritual Process*.
29. Sasse and Lackner, "War and Identity," 141.
30. Sereda, "Transformation of Identities."
31. Giuliano, "Who Supported Separatism?"
32. Shynkarenko, "Loyalty and Patriotism," 408.
33. Fialkova and Yelenevskaia, "Crisis in Ukraine."
34. Chachashvili-Bolotin, "Russian Invasion of Ukraine."
35. Wanner, "Foreword."
36. Lerner, "Saving the Post-Soviet Soul."
37. Shynkarenko, "Loyalty and Patriotism."
38. Exodus-2022, "About the Project."
39. Shvartsman, "Hitler Wanted to Kill."
40. Vagramenko, "Faith and War"; Buyskykh, "This Is Our War."
41. Marchenko, "Public Discourses Connected," 100.
42. Stambler, "Invasion of Ukraine."
43. Ben-Lulu, "May Our Hearts Rise."
44. Guzman-Carmeli and Rubin, "Tikkun (Divine Repair)."
45. Project Keshet, "Project Keshet Ukraine Launches."
46. Project Keshet Ukraine, *For Our Freedom*.
47. Beckerman, "How Zelensky Gave."
48. Wanner, *Everyday Religiosity*, 153.
49. Surzhko-Harned, "Holy Wars."
50. See Bordeianu, "Autocephaly of the Orthodox"; Krawchuk, "Orthodox Church of Ukraine"; Bremer, Brüning, Kizenko, *Orthodoxy in Two Manifestations*; Denysenko, *Church's Unholy War*; and Wanner, *Everyday Religiosity*.
51. Coleman, "New Research on Religion," 485.
52. Mathers, "Ukraine War."
53. Ibid.
54. See Shroyer, "Shepherd?"
55. Although Jews make up less than 1% of the country's population, there were many thriving Jewish communities prior to the war, primarily in Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Odesa. These communities remain the largest hubs of Jewish life in war-torn Ukraine and other cities, such as Chernivtsi, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zhytomyr, and Rivne, which all grew significantly owing to the influx of Jewish refugees from the southeast of the country.
56. According to a recent report on European Jewish migration, Ukraine is in danger of experiencing a Jewish exodus if Jews continue to leave at the rates they left the country at the onset of the war. Staetsky, "Jewish Migration Today."
57. Tikva UK, "Forgotten War."
58. Ibid.
59. These concerns are not specific to Odesa's Jewry. Similar fears are harboured by other ethnic minorities, including the Nadzov Greeks of Mariupol and Donets, whose communities – like the communities of many other groups – have been destroyed by Russian forces. See Pyvovarov and Mamonova, "In the Past."
60. Scheiner, "Two Years of War."
61. Ben-Lulu, "May Our Hearts Rise."
62. Ibid., 257.
63. Vagramenko, "Faith and War," 122.

64. Oviedo et al., "Coping and Resilience Strategies."
65. Ben-Lulu, "May Our Hearts Rise," 263.
66. Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*; Gitelman, *Jewish Identities*.
67. Bilaniuk, "Ideologies of Language"; Bilaniuk, "Linguistic Conversion in Ukraine."
68. Kulyk, "Shedding Russianness."
69. Polese and Wylegała, "Odessa and Lvov."
70. Regarding the Russian language, see Hrushetskyi, "Dynamics of Attitudes." Regarding the Ukrainian language, see Kulyk, "Language Shift in Time."
71. Regarding speaking Ukrainian in public, see Kulyk, "Ukrainians Now." For social media, see Racek et al., "Russian War in Ukraine."
72. Bilaniuk, "Linguistic Conversion in Ukraine."
73. Sasse and Lackner, "War and Identity," 149.
74. Sapritsky-Nahum, "Russian-Speaking but Not"; Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 103.
75. Cronin, *Russian-Speaking Jews*.
76. Alex Averbuch has noted the same phenomenon among some Russophone writers of Ukraine. Averbuch, "Russophone Literature of Ukraine," 154–59.
77. Project Keshet Ukraine, *For Our Freedom*.
78. Bartov, "There's a New Push."
79. Januta, "In Bomb Shelters."
80. Khaia, the Chabad rebbetzin, explained to me that the habits of Russian-speaking communities such as Odesa make it hard to switch from Russian prayer to Ukrainian, even when a selection of prayer texts has been translated. So, although she supported the idea of translating Jewish texts to Ukrainian, she also wondered whether it would make more sense to teach her congregants Hebrew instead.
81. UNESCO, "UNESCO Launches Initiative."

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