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Formal and Informal Jewish Education: Lessons and Challenges in Israel and in the Diaspora

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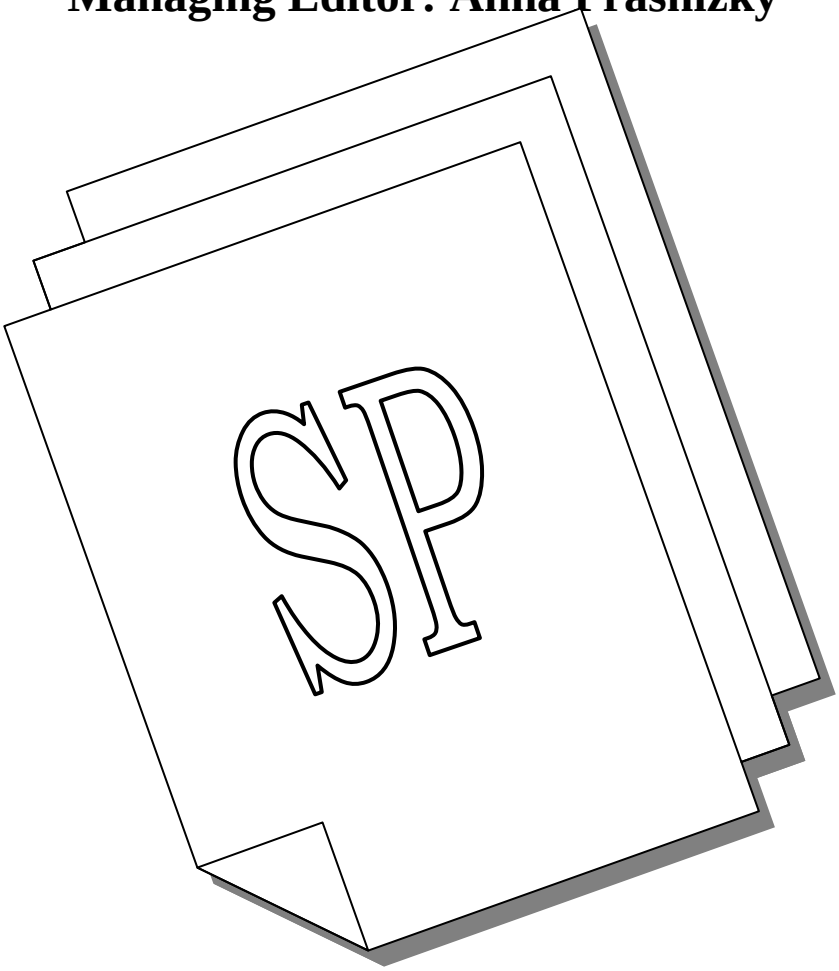

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Jewish Education and Its Outcomes: Knowledge and Interests among Jewish Summer Camp Participants in the former Soviet Union

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Abstract

The current research is based on two surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012 at nine youth camps organized for high school students' education and recreation by the Jewish Agency for Israel in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Among the campers who responded to our survey, over two-thirds have attended Jewish schools or clubs. However, the study has shown that most respondents had a very limited knowledge of general Jewish and especially Israeli history: only under a quarter (24.7%) came up with three post-biblical names of historical Jewish figures. Recalling three meaningful names in the history of the State of Israel proved to be even more challenging: nearly half of respondents could not recall a single name (47.6%) and only 22.8% stated three relevant names. Respondents also manifested poor familiarity with the history of Russian Jewry over the last two centuries, i.e. their own cultural heritage that apparently is not transferred from parents to children in their (usually ethnically-mixed) families.

Introduction

Experts and community leaders are often concerned about the future of post-Soviet Jewry – a national minority that is constantly diminishing due to emigration and demographic decline – advanced age composition and low birth rates (see, for example, Konstantinov, 2007). Every new census points to the shrinking numbers of the Jews living in post-Soviet states: according to the last Russian census of 2010, Jews merely occupy the 33rd place among the ethnic groups. While the 2002 census reported on nearly 230.000 Jews, in 2010 their number barely reached 157.000 (data retrieved from official websites of Russian government). In Ukraine, the latest census took place in 2001, showing that Jews held the 10th place among the ethnic groups (103.000 people), which means that the Jewish population decreased five times since the last Soviet census in 1989 (Ukrainian statistical office website). Obviously, the next census scheduled for 2013 will reflect the progressive downturn of the Ukrainian Jewish population. In Belarus, the latest census dates back to 2009, and about 13.ooo people there identified as Jews (although it was enough to rank the Jews as the 5th ethnic group behind Belarusians, Russians, Poles and Ukrainians). Thus, in all three of the post-Soviet Slavic states Jews turn out to be small and shrinking minorities, and

[1] I am most grateful to my colleagues Dr. Ze'ev Khanin, Dr. Elena Nosenko and Prof. Larissa Remennick for their thought-provoking suggestions during our discussions of this research project and useful comments on the earlier drafts of the article.

their social and cultural survival as a distinct ethnic group is getting more and more difficult.

This is why Jewish education plays such a central role in Jewish survival, being the key both to overcoming the consequences of cultural assimilation during the Soviet era and to keeping the spark of Jewish community life today. The decline in the Jewish emigration to Israel, North America and Germany in the recent years has boosted the importance of the Jewish education in the post-Soviet countries, alongside with other community activities.

The current research is based on two surveys. The first one was conducted at five youth camps organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) with support of American Jewish federations in the summer of 2011 in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova; the other one was carried out at four Jewish youth camps in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine in July 2012. I have visited seven out of nine camps included in the research – those in Minsk (2011 and 2012), in the village of Slavskoye in the Lvov region (2011 and 2012), in Kishinev (2011), in Saint-Petersburg (2012), and in Samara (2012). All the questionnaires in Kishinev, Lvov/Slavskoe and Minsk in 2011, as well as the questionnaires from all the four camps visited in 2012, were filled out in my presence. Questionnaires from Kiev and Khabarovsk were administered with the help of the Jewish Agency's representatives. The thorough study of the results from these camps proved that students answered the questions frankly, without any external pressure. A structured questionnaire for the participants was composed in 2004 under the direction of Dr. Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin and slightly revised before the current research. Altogether, we have collected 360 questionnaires in five different camps in 2011 and 370 questionnaires in four different camps in 2012.

The camps in Kiev, Kishinev, Khabarovsk and Lvov/Slavskoe, organized by the Jewish Agency in 2011, were intended for high school students' education and recreation (the average age of the participants being 15–16 years), while the camp in Minsk was aimed at university students (the average age was 19 years, and some participants were 23–25 years old). All the camps, except for the one in Lvov, were organized for students from neighboring regions and districts. The Lvov camp, sponsored by religious Zionists, hosted participants from different locations, including quite remote places, and half of its participants were from outside of Ukraine. On the contrary, the camp in Minsk visited by the researcher in 2012 (when the Jewish Agency with support of the UJA Federation of New York organized five summer camps near this city) was intended for the middle-school-aged children (11–14 years old), while all the others (in Kiev/Slavskoe, Sankt-Petersburg and Samara) catered for high-school students aged 13 to 18 (see Table 1). It should be noted that the camp in the village of Slavskoe was organized by the Kiev branch of the Jewish Agency; all the children were brought from Kiev by train.

Table 1. Participants' socio-demographic data

Camps	A total number of questionnaires	Average age	Gender			
			Boys		Girls	
			N	%	N	%
2011						
Kiev	102	15.76	39	41.5%	55	58.5%
Minsk	42	19.21	19	45.2%	23	54.8%
Kishinev	98	16.26	40	42.6%	54	57.4%
Lvov/Slavskoe	55	16.16	28	50.9%	27	49.1%
Khabarovsk	63	15.10	20	32.8%	41	67.2%
2012						
Minsk	85	12.30	43	51.8%	40	48.2%
Kiev/Slavskoe	107	15.44	49	46.2%	57	53.8%
Sankt-Petersburg	106	15.54	50	47.6%	55	52.4%
Samara	72	15.85	36	50.7%	35	49.3%
Total	730	15.53	324	45.6%	387	54.4%

Jewish education in the former Soviet Union (FSU)

"The existence of Jews who wish to remain Jews – even apart from belonging to the State of Israel – depends on Jewish education. It is the only force that can justify and nurture such existence", wrote Emmanuel Levinas (1976 [1963]: 265) fifty years ago. Over the last two decades, a considerable number of Jewish educational institutions emerged in Russia and in other post-Soviet states. They were supposed to provide Jewish children with educational services at all stages, starting with the kindergartens and primary schools up to the yeshivas and universities.

According to the data collected by Zvi Gitelman (2007) and the Avi Hai Foundation, in 2002 there were about 70 secondary Jewish schools in the FSU, including the Baltic States. The late sociologist Zakhar Rokhlin (2003) compiled a list of 83 secondary Jewish schools in the former USSR, including 73 in Russia and Ukraine and 10 in all the other post-Soviet countries in 2003. Unfortunately, the longitudinal research of Jewish schooling, initiated by Rokhlin, was discontinued after his sudden death. In fact, up to the present day there is not even a unified database of the Jewish schools in the post-Soviet countries, and no empirical research has been conducted as to these schools' curricula, achievements and challenges. The closure of *The New Jewish School* and *The Jewish Education* journals, published in Russian between 1996 and 2004, destroyed the hopes for the emergence of sociology of Jewish education as a research discipline in the post-Soviet states. Occasional collections of papers, such

as two volumes, edited by this author, Ze'ev Khanin and Velvl Chernin, cast some light on this issue buts cannot compensate for the paucity of basic data.

Zakhar Rokhlin (2003) correctly pointed out that the term "the Jewish educational system in the USSR successor states" was widely adopted by researchers, yet the very existence of this system was and still is questionable. First of all, this term implies that most Jewish schools are supported or at least supervised by some integral body, or that they are based on some common concepts, while neither is assumption is true. Second, the "educational system" should meet specific requirements and standards embracing all its institutions, while there is no such complex in the contemporary Jewish education. Third, any system demands more or less skillful coordination between its components, however, "the existence of such coordination among the subsystems of the Jewish education in the former USSR is more than questionable".

Alexander Lvov (2008: 87–88) reminds in one of his articles Hana Rotman's talk at the roundtable on the future of Jewish education that took place in St. Petersburg in the late 1990s. She argued that scholars and community leaders initially intended to build a consensus about the basic concept of Jewish education and then establish schools based on that concept. Yet, in fact the educational system has evolved on its own without any systematic approach, resulting in dozens of more or less independent schools with the concepts of their own. Therefore, it's time to comprehend the meaning of what has already been done, instead of debating time and again on how the concept of the Post-Soviet Jewish schooling should emerge.

Most Jewish schools in the FSU and the Baltic states are supported by a number of religious philanthropic foundations, and therefore their programs are oriented primarily towards the study of Judaism, often undermining an importance of secular disciplines such as the sciences and foreign languages. Another problem is that even in the countries (such as the Baltic States) that meet the basic definition of an open society (in Karl Popper's terms), the graduates of Jewish religious schools do not share the values of diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance (Lempert, 2001). It seems that Jewish religious schools foster a strong ethnic and religious identity in their graduates, but their educational background does not encourage (or even impedes) their successful social integration.

Secular schools face another problem: due to the fact that Jewish history and Hebrew are taught there in addition to mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, and all the other mandatory subjects, these disciplines do not grasp a central place in students' minds or souls. If Jewish history and Hebrew are no more than ordinary school disciplines, just like all the others (or even less important, being irrelevant for the higher education entry exams), why should the students like them more or pay closer attention to them? In most cases a decision to join a Jewish school is made by parents rather than by students themselves. For those growing up in Jewish religious families, the focus on the Jewish subjects at school looks quite naturally, but for the secular school students the gap between their own and their parents' motivations often forms a barrier to effective Jewish learning.

A survey conducted among the new students at a Jewish school in Kharkov in 1996 showed that only 32% of them were actually interested in studying Jewish history and traditions (Linnichenko and Shoikhet, 1998). The study of parents' motives for selecting a Jewish school for their children revealed that the most important one was a friendly psychological environment that rules out any risk of Anti-Semitism. In addition, most parents emphasized an importance of learning Hebrew (considering the

possibility of emigration to Israel), but almost no one expressed an interest in Maimonides' or Zhabotinsky's intellectual legacy. Students are aware of their parents' attitudes and do not perceive lessons in Jewish history as really important.

Apart from regular day schools, there are other Jewish educational frameworks that attract quite a lot of children, such as evening and Sunday schools and community youth clubs. According to the background data compiled for this research, a number of children attending supplementary schools and youth clubs in the large FSU cities is three times the number of those who attend Jewish day schools.

Selected Findings

The relevance of Jewish educational background

In our summer camps study, those who have not been involved in the formal or informal Jewish educational frameworks comprised 25.8% (2011 sample) and 37.5% (2012 sample), meaning that, on average, over two thirds of the surveyed children have attended some Jewish schools or clubs. The percentage of those who attended Jewish daytime schools was far lower: 29.1% and 18.9% respectively for 2011 and 2012 samples.

According to the data collected in 2011, in all the camps (except the one in Khabarovsk) over 70% participants visited daytime or Sunday Jewish schools and youth clubs; in Lvov, Kiev and Kishinev camps they made over 80%. On the contrary, in Khabarovsk camp such youths made less than 55%, while more than 44% were never involved in the Jewish educational frameworks, either formal or informal (see Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' Jewish formal and informal educational background, 2011

		Camps					
		Lvov	Kiev	Kishinev	Khabarovsk	Minsk	Total
Jewish day school	N	20	36	31	12	5	104
	%	36.4%	35.3%	32.3%	19.0%	12.2%	29.1%
Jewish Sunday or evening school	N	7	18	3	13	5	46
	%	12.7%	17.6%	3.1%	20.6%	12.2%	12.9%
Jewish club	N	18	26	42	10	19	115
	%	32.7%	25.5%	43.8%	15.9%	46.3%	32.2%
Don't attend Jewish educational frameworks	N	10	22	20	28	12	92
	%	18.2%	21.6%	20.8%	44.4%	29.3%	25.8%
Total	N	55	102	96	63	41	357
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 45.448; DF=12;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .000 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$)*

An earlier evaluation study by the team led by Zeev Khanin and Marina Niznik (2008: 203) in 2004 (with the goals similar to ours) indicated that participation in the camps encouraged young people to join Jewish communal programs in their cities or to consider doing so in the future. In our research, about one third of camps' participants, who had not been previously active in Jewish youth clubs, decided to join them after their camp experience. This figure was most significant in the Minsk and Kiev camps (48.8% and 45.2%, respectively). However, camps' participants, who did not attend Jewish day or Sunday/evening schools, demonstrated little interest in attending such classes even after staying at one of the camps (5.8 and 6.6%, respectively).

Given that only 25 years ago the learning and teaching of Hebrew in the Soviet Union was prohibited, it is really impressive that more than two thirds (67.5%) of the camp participants already studied it in some way: in *ulpans* and youth clubs of the Jewish Agency, in *Hillel* clubs on college campuses or in the local community centers. Let me note the significant differences between participants from different camps: while over 75% of teenagers in Lvov/Slavskoe and Kishinev camps had studied Hebrew, in Minsk there less than 40% of such participants (see Table 3).

Table 3. Participants' experience in studying Hebrew, 2011

		Camps					
		Lvov	Kishinev	Kiev	Khabarovsk	Minsk	Total
Studied Hebrew	N	42	74	74	37	16	243
	%	76.4%	75.5%	72.5%	58.7%	38.1%	67.5%
Did not study Hebrew	N	13	24	28	26	26	117
	%	23.6%	24.5%	27.5%	41.3%	61.9%	32.5%
Total	N	55	98	102	63	42	360
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 24.784; DF=4;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .000 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$)*

Familiarity with Jewish and Israeli history

The study has shown that the educational capital of the participants in terms of Jewish and particularly Israeli history was quite modest. When asked to write the names of three most meaningful figures in Jewish history, 10% of the respondents could not recall any names and 16.4% recalled just one or two names. Nearly half of respondents (48.9%) mentioned exclusively names from the Bible and the Book of the Prophets: Moses, the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), the Matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah), King David, King Solomon (Shlomo); prophets Isaiah (Yeshayahu) and Elijah (Eliyahu), and some others. Only less than a quarter of the interviewees (24.7%) came up with three post-biblical names from the Jewish history (see Table 4). The most frequently mentioned secular figures were Albert Einstein, Mark Chagall, Sigmund Freud, Sholom Aleichem, Mark Zuckerberg,

as well as Rabbi Akiva, the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, and some others.

Table 4. The ability to recall three prominent figures in Jewish history, 2011

Persons mentioned:		Camps					Total
		Kiev	Minsk	Kishinev	Lvov	Khabarovsk	
Biblical figures only	N	32	22	48	27	47	176
	%	31.4%	52.4%	49.0%	49.1%	74.6%	48.9%
3 relevant names	N	34	8	25	16	6	89
	%	33.3%	19.0%	25.5%	29.1%	9.5%	24.7%
1–2 relevant names	N	27	7	11	8	6	59
	%	26.5%	16.7%	11.2%	14.5%	9.5%	16.4%
no relevant names	N	9	5	14	4	4	36
	%	8.8%	11.9%	14.3%	7.3%	6.3%	10.0%
Total	N	102	42	98	55	63	360
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 38.160; DF=12;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .000 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$)*

Notably, none of the respondents interviewed in 2011 mentioned names of Russian, Ukrainian or Moldavian Jews of the last two centuries, though many of them are included in numerous encyclopedias and are featured in the books, films and TV programs published during post-Soviet years. Unfortunately, no one remembered any Yiddish writer or actor, such as Isaac Leib Peretz, Mendele Mocher Sforim, Solomon Mikhoels or Peretz Markish. There was also no mention of prominent Russian/Soviet Jewish writers, poets, musicians and other intellectuals, such as Isaak Babel, Vasily Grossman, Ilya Ehrenburg, Boris Pasternak, Osip Mandelstam, Samuil Marshak, Arkady Raikin, David Oistrakh, Leonid Kogan, David Samoylov or Joseph Brodsky. This rich legacy, a source of pride for most Soviet Jews during the 1970, 1980s and early 1990s, is totally unknown to the Jewish teenagers nowadays. Apparently, Jewish cultural and social topics were not discussed in these families that were usually ethnically mixed and identified with the surrounding Russian/Slavic culture. The respondents' Jewish identity did not emerge in the families, through the routine cultural transfer from one generation to the next, but rather via a "cultural intervention" by foreign Jewish professionals and rabbis from Israel and the US, reflecting in most cases religious agendas and educational priorities and leaving secular/cultural Jewish legacies untapped.

Sadly, the unique history of Russian Jewry over the last two centuries seems to be abandoned by the descendants of those who created it. The Israeli Jewish tradition,

instead of complementing the local one, eclipses it completely, downplaying the multiculturalism and versatility that were essential features of the Jewish history through the ages. Thus local (Russian) Jewish knowledge is a clear lacuna of the post-Soviet Jewish educational scene. By the same token, the only modern Western Jewish name brought up by the respondents was film director Steven Spielberg. There was virtually no mention of women (except for Golda Meir), feminist and gay rights activists (Betty Friedan, Harvey Milk or Susan Sontag, to name a few) or Jews of non-Ashkenazi origin.

The 2012 survey has reinforced our finding that most youths participating in Jewish camps have had very limited prior exposure to Jewish and especially Israeli history. When asked to name three famous people in the Jewish history (in their opinion), 15% of the respondents could not say anything. The participants of the camp in Samara showed the worst result: 28% of them could not answer this question at all, which is understandable given the highest percentage of the teenagers uninvolved in the Jewish educational institutions at this camp – 56% compared to 26-40% at the other camps. Eighteen percent recalled only one or two names, almost half of the respondents (42%) remembered exclusively biblical names such as Abraham, Moses, Noah, Esther etc., as well as Jesus, and merely a quarter of the respondents (93 youths, 25%) could remember three non-biblical names in the history of the Jewish people.

Table 5. The ability to recall three prominent figures in Jewish history, 2012

Names mentioned:		Location of the camp				Total
		Minsk	Kiev – Slavskoye	Saint-Petersburg	Samara	
Biblical figures only	N	47	46	36	26	155
	%	55.3%	43.0%	34.0%	36.1%	41.9%
Three relevant names	N	19	25	40	9	93
	%	22.4%	23.4%	37.7%	12.5%	25.1%
1-2 relevant names	N	12	20	17	17	66
	%	14.1%	18.7%	16.0%	23.6%	17.8%
No relevant names	N	7	16	13	20	56
	%	8.2%	15.0%	12.3%	27.8%	15.1%
Total	N	85	107	106	72	370
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 30.603; DF=9;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .001 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$, significant)*

Socio-demographic variance in Jewish knowledge

The comparison between Jewish knowledge of boys and girls shows that gender does not play a significant role. Out of 730 participants who filled out questionnaires at nine camps in 2011 and 2012, 324 were male and 387 female; 19 youths did not

indicate their gender. Among the boys, 23.1% (75 youths) could state three non-biblical names from the Jewish history, while among the girls such respondents made 26.6% (103 people). Similar shares of the boys and girls (11.7% and 12.9%) could not recall even a single name.

However, some other factors could partly explain the differences in expressed Jewish knowledge. The most important one was children's involvement in the Jewish educational institutions: those who attended Jewish day schools were slightly better informed than those who were only involved in the informal activities, and the latter were better prepared than those who were completely uninvolved in any Jewish frameworks (see Table 6).

Table 6. The recall of three famous people in Jewish history by involvement in Jewish educational frameworks

		Students who attend:			Students who are not affiliated with any Jewish educational frameworks	Total
Names mentioned:		Jewish day schools	Jewish evening or Sunday schools	Jewish community centers and youth clubs		
Biblical names only	N	84	49	103	93	329
	%	49.7%	46.2%	46.8%	40.4%	45.4%
Three relevant names	N	57	25	60	39	181
	%	33.7%	23.6%	27.3%	17.0%	25.0%
1-2 relevant names	N	20	21	34	49	124
	%	11.8%	19.8%	15.5%	21.3%	17.1%
No relevant names	N	8	11	23	49	91
	%	4.7%	10.4%	10.5%	21.3%	12.6%
Total	N	169	106	220	230	725
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 43.068; DF=9;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .000 *** ($\alpha \leq 0.001$, significant)*

According to the data presented in Table 6, just one third (33.7%) of the 169 surveyed Jewish day school students managed to remember three relevant non-biblical names in the Jewish history. For those who attend Jewish evening or Sunday schools and clubs, it was just over a quarter (26.1%), and among those whose Jewish education is limited to the camps lasting from 7 to 12 days a year, it was only 17.0%. By contrast, less than 5% of the Jewish daytime school students could not remember any relevant names; for the participants of the Jewish informal educational groups it was 10.5%, while among those uninvolved in the Jewish educational frameworks the figure went up to 21.3%.

Understandably, those who attend Jewish schools and youth clubs should have learned something there, and by the same logic Jewish day school students should be more educated in Jewish history than those who attend Jewish evening schools or clubs from time to time. Yet, sadly, even among the Jewish daytime school students two thirds could not recall three important figures in the post-biblical Jewish history; almost half of them (84 out of 169) only named the Patriarchs, Matriarchs, prophets, and the ancient kings of Israel. This clearly indicates that post-Soviet Jewish schools do not provide students with a complex pluralistic picture of the Jewish history, and their lessons are often limited to the study of canonic texts of Judaism. Since I am unable to examine the programs of various schools in the post-Soviet states, I cannot insist that they do not teach anything else. However, based on the children's answers, it seems clear that even if most of them acquire some knowledge about Jewishness, its content is almost exclusively limited to the biblical times.

The size and an administrative status of the children's city of residence may also influence their knowledge: those who lived in their countries' capitals were a little better informed in Jewish topics than those who lived in other cities and were significantly better educated than those who came from villages (see Table 7). Out of 221 surveyed residents of Moscow, Kiev, Minsk and Kishinev, a little more than 30% managed to remember three relevant non-biblical names from the Jewish history, for 492 youths who came from other cities it was 22–23%, and out of 11 children who came from villages only one respondent managed to complete the task. On the contrary, just 9% of capitals' residents could not remember any names at all, compared to 14% for those from other cities and 45% for those from villages. Clearly, capitals host more Jewish educational and cultural activities, they are home to various Jewish organizations, including those serving youth, and it is easier to access Jewish knowledge living there. However, I'd like to stress that even among the residents of Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Moldovan capitals only less than one third managed to remember three non-biblical names from the history of the Jewish people.

Table 7. The Recall of three prominent figures in Jewish history by place of residence

Names mentioned:		Respondents' place of residence				Total
		Capitals of various CIS states	Administrative centers of various districts and autonomies	Small towns	Villages	
Biblical names only	N	99	150	79	2	330
	%	44.8%	44.6%	50.6%	18.2%	45.6%
Three relevant names	N	67	75	36	1	179
	%	30.3%	22.3%	23.1%	9.1%	24.7%
1-2 relevant names	N	35	65	20	3	123
	%	15.8%	19.3%	12.8%	27.3%	17.0%

No relevant names	N	20	46	21	5	92
	%	9.0%	13.7%	13.5%	45.5%	12.7%
Total	N	221	336	156	11	724
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 23.108; DF=9;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .006 ** (α≤ 0.01, significant)*

Previous camp experience also plays a certain role, although it is not that decisive. Out of 471 respondents who had already been to such camps, 10% (47 people) could not remember any relevant names, while among 257 newcomers they made 17.5% (45 people). Among the experienced camp participants, 27.6% (130 youths) recalled such names, while among the newcomers they made only 20.2% (52 youths). Those differences are statistically significant (α≤ 0.05), which means that even short-term summer camps manage to enrich their participants' knowledge. However, importantly enough, there is still a strong correlation between the frequency of such trips and the involvement in other Jewish educational frameworks. For instance, 46% of those, who came to the camps for the first time, do not attend any Jewish schools or clubs; among more experienced participants such children only make 24%. The analysis of several variables by means of stepwise linear regression shows that, controlling for the participants' involvement in the Jewish formal and informal education during the school year, the camp stay as such does not make a statistically significant impact on the children's ability to recall three important names in the Jewish history and neither does the place of residence.

Table 8. Factors influencing the recall of three historic Jewish figures, 2011–2012

Multiple Regression	R	R Square	*Independent variables (Beta and significance)*		
Dependent variable			Involvement into Jewish educational frameworks	Place of residence	Previous participation in Jewish summer camps
Ability to name three famous Jewish historic Figures	0.182	0.033	0.178 Sig (**)	0.002 Non-sign	0.039 Non-sign

** Significant, α<0.01.

Recalling three meaningful names in the history of the State of Israel turned out to be an even more difficult task for camp participants: nearly half of them did not come up with a single name (47.6%), almost 30% remembered one or two, and only 22.8% could recall three relevant names. The gap between the camps was enormous: while in

Minsk and Lvov those who did not recall any names comprised about a third of the total, in Khabarovsk this rate reached 70% (see Table 9).

Table 9. The ability to recall three prominent figures in Israeli history, 2011

Persons mentioned:		Camps					Total
		Kiev	Minsk	Kishinev	Lvov	Khabarovsk	
3 relevant names	N	32	14	24	11	1	82
	%	31.7%	33.3%	24.5%	20.0%	1.6%	22.8%
1–2 relevant names	N	21	14	29	24	18	106
	%	20.8%	33.3%	29.6%	43.6%	28.6%	29.5%
no relevant names	N	48	14	45	20	44	171
	%	47.5%	33.3%	45.9%	36.4%	69.8%	47.6%
Total	N	101	42	98	55	63	359
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 34.649; DF=8;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .000 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$)*

Among the names mentioned by the participants were founding fathers of the political Zionism Theodor Herzl and Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, rarely – the founding father of the religious Zionism rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (no one named the founder of 'cultural Zionism' Ahad Ha'am), and also presidents, prime-ministers and famous military leaders of the State of Israel: David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizmann, Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Itzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, Shimon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu. Apart from those, there were only three names (each mentioned one or two times): the Nobel Prize laureate writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the pop diva Dana International, and the first Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, who died along with the rest of the crew during the collapse of the shuttle "Columbia" in February 2003. Apparently, virtually all the famous Israelis recalled by our young respondents were politicians, while numerous outstanding scientific and cultural figures in Israel's history were completely unknown to the post-Soviet youth.

The research conducted in 2012 also demonstrated that most teenagers face serious difficulties while trying to name three famous people in the history of the State of Israel: almost half of the respondents (43.8%) could not name even one, more than a third (34.3%) came up with only one or two, and only 22% could complete the task. The difference between the respondents in different camps was quite significant: while at the camp in Minsk with the youngest participants 30% of the children could not name anybody, this percentage was almost double at the camp in Samara.

Table 10. Recalling three famous people in the history of the State of Israel, 2012

Names mentioned		Location of the camp				Total
		Minsk	Kiev – Slavskoye	Saint-Petersburg	Samara	
Three relevant names	N	22	22	28	9	81
	%	25.9%	20.6%	26.4%	12.5%	21.9%
1-2 relevant names	N	38	39	29	21	127
	%	44.7%	36.4%	27.4%	29.2%	34.3%
No relevant names	N	25	46	49	42	162
	%	29.4%	43.0%	46.2%	58.3%	43.8%
Total	N	85	107	106	72	370
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 17.114; DF=6;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .009 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$, significant)*

As part of the research conducted in 2008 by Zeev Khanin, myself and Vyacheslav Likhachev among Jewish school students who participated in *Masa shorashim* ["The journey to the roots"] project, children filled out a questionnaire. The results showed that one quarter of the respondents left blank the item "If you were asked to write a brief entry about the Holocaust for an encyclopedia, what would you write about?", and 58% (!) did not know what the "Pale of Settlement" was (a revised version of this research report was published; see Epstein, Khanin and Likhachev, 2010). Therefore, it seems that study at Jewish schools, participation in Jewish clubs or camps do not guarantee any lasting knowledge about the history of the Jewish people.

The predominance of religious agenda in Jewish education

Most post-soviet Jewish schools (both daytime and evening ones) are organized and managed by people who believe that the traditions of Judaism remain the cornerstone of Jewishness. For example, the first Jewish daytime school in Saint-Petersburg (school no. 224) was founded by rabbi Mikhail Koritz, who had returned to his native city (from where he had previously left for Israel several years earlier) to work as an envoy of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Between 1991 and 1997 the school functioned on the premises of the Grand Choral Synagogue. In addition to general disciplines, the pupils study Hebrew, history and traditions of the Jewish people; all the Jewish subjects are supervised by rabbi David Shneiderman and his wife Ariela who came from Israel. The school is supported by the "Ohr Avner" Foundation, established in 1992 by the businessman, investor and philanthropist Lev Levayev, as is stated in its charter, "under the blessing and recommendation of the Lubavitcher Rebbe". Lev

Levayev is himself a practicing Orthodox Jew and a follower of the Chabad Hassidic movement, and the Foundation was established in memory of his father rabbi Avner.

Another Jewish school in Saint-Petersburg, "Beit Sefer Menachem", was also established with support of the "Ohr Avner" Foundation in 1995. This school is supervised by the rabbi Menahem-Mendl Pevzner and his wife Sara, both of them are the Chabad movement envoys. The only Jewish secondary school in Yekaterinburg and the Ural region was also opened thanks to the "Ohr Avner" Foundation support, just like the only Jewish secondary school in Novosibirsk. The "Ohr Avner" Foundation supports schools in various regions of the former USSR, from Zhitomir and Odessa to Nizhny Novgorod and Riga (the latter one is called "Ohr Menachem", was opened in 1995 and is supervised by the rabbi Mordechai Glazman and his wife Rivka, both envoys of the Chabad movement). The evening school "Simkha" in Kiev was also created by Chabad, just like the Kharkov-based lyceum "Shaalavim". In Moscow, Chief Rabbi Berl Lazar founded the "Mesivta" school, and the rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and his wife Dara opened the school no. 1621 "Etz Haim" ["The Tree of Life"].

Naturally, in these schools students are told about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, about Moses and king David, rather than about Osip Mandelstam, Amedeo Modigliani, Yehuda Pen, Yosef Haim Brenner or Amos Oz; even the Warsaw Ghetto uprising comes up very rarely. As for Sunday schools, their curriculum is also driven by religious agenda. Here is what 15-year-old Sasha had to say about his studies there: "For me the Sunday school is first of all the place where I meet friends, it is where I have fun and do interesting things. Thanks to the school I learned a lot about the religion and culture of the Jewish people. Now I know what the Torah is, how the first Jews emerged and how their history has evolved ever since. I know how to celebrate Jewish holidays and what they mean, I am aware of what Jewish traditional values are".

Secular/cultural Jewish schools are very few in the post-Soviet countries: the Dubnov school in Riga, (since 1989, the Lipman school in Moscow (since 1991), the New Jewish School in Saint-Petersburg (since 2003), but they are just a handful on the landscape dominated by religious schools. By way of paradox, Jewish formal education in the post-Soviet states is much more closely linked to Orthodox Judaism than the education system in Israel, where only about 20% of the children attend ultraorthodox religious schools.

It seems that the reason for the children's poor knowledge about modern Jewish and Israeli history is that these subjects are of low (if any) priority in the religious school curricula and not because these youths do not want to know more. When young campers were asked "Would you like to learn more about the Jewish people and Israel?" most revealed high motivation to explore these historic, social and cultural issues that were indeed in the center of the camps' pedagogic agenda. Over 85% of the participants chose the answer "Yes, I would", while only 12.7% marked the answer "Maybe yes, but I don't have time", and 2.2% chose "No, I would not". I do not believe that the respondents' underlying intention was just to appease survey organizers and camp staff; no other question out of more than a hundred showed such a clear majority trend in response. The inter-camp differences were significant: in Minsk more than 95% turned out to be interested in those issues, while at the cams in the Russian federation (in Saint-Petersburg and Samara) only 80% showed their interest in broadening their knowledge about the Jewish people and Israel.

Table 11. Interest in broader knowledge about Jewish people and Israel, 2012

			Location of the camp				Total
			Minsk	Kiev – Slavskoye	Saint-Petersburg	Samara	
Would you like to learn more about the Jewish people and Israel	Yes, I would	N	81	94	81	58	314
		%	95.3%	87.9%	77.1%	80.6%	85.1%
	Maybe, but I don't have time	N	3	13	20	11	47
		%	3.5%	12.1%	19.0%	15.3%	12.7%
	No, I wouldn't	N	1	0	4	3	8
		%	1.2%	.0%	3.8%	4.2%	2.2%
Total		N	85	107	105	72	369
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square: Value – 16.761; DF=6;

*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) – .010 ** ($\alpha \leq 0.01$, significant)*

Such a high interest in the historic and cultural Jewish content displayed by the young people who mostly came from interethnic families (i.e. typically had one Jewish parent or grandparent) shows that assimilation trends are not inevitable. The curiosity about Jewishness and Israel, if properly satisfied (and assuming it would not wear off in the future), could contribute to the formation of a dual Russian (Ukrainian/Moldovan/etc.) and Jewish ethnic and cultural identity. Therefore, the main goal of international organizations is to create relevant channels and mechanisms that would help disseminate Jewish knowledge (especially on secular and cultural topics) in the emerging generation of Jewish and partly-Jewish youth. Admittedly, this not an easy task, but there could hardly be any other way to preserve and empower the future generation of the Russian-speaking Jewry in the former Soviet countries.

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