

Aliya from the Russian Federation: An Analysis of Recent Data*

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The financial crash of August 17, 1998 caused a new and sizable wave of emigration from the Russian Federation to Israel. To gain a better understanding of this phenomenon we shall compare this recent movement with earlier migration.

Emigration from the Russian Federation to Israel will be examined by region of origin and in relation to the socioeconomic situation. Detailed monthly data on migration in the period before and after the financial crash will be discussed. Finally, we shall study the severe vital crisis of Russia's Jewry and its consequences for the prospects of emigration to Israel.

1. Aliya by Area

Aliya from the Russian Federation in 1999 returned to the high level of 1990, and was about 5% of the estimated "enlarged" Jewish population. In 2000, emigration from this country to Israel decreased again, but was still about one and a half times higher than it was in 1995 (amounting to approximately 3.4% of the estimated "enlarged" Jewish population at the beginning of 2000).

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Table 1
The “Core” Jewish Population^(a) in the Russian Federation, by Area, 1989-1999

Year	Total	Moscow	St. Petersburg	Provinces	Thereof: Birobidzhan
Thousands					
1989 ^(b)	570	176	107	287	8.9
1994 ^(c)	409	135	61	213	7.7
1999 ^(d)	310	108	42	160	3.0
Percent					
1989 ^(b)	100	31	19	50	1.6
1994 ^(c)	100	33	15	52	1.9
1999 ^(d)	100	35	13	52	1.0

(a) Including “Tats”.

(b) Estimate based on the 1989 Soviet census.

(c) Estimate based on the 1994 microcensus.

(d) Estimate based on the microcensus, and subsequent Russian governmental vital and migration statistics.

Sources: Mark Tolts, “Jews in the Russian Federation: A Decade of Demographic Decline,” *JEE* 3 (40) (1999), pp. 13, 18-19; idem, “Russian Jewish Migration in the Post-Soviet Era,” *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 3 (16) (2000), p. 185.

The recent aliya, like that of previous years, shows geographical differences that influence the extent of decline of the Jewish population. For the purposes of analysis, Russia’s Jewry can be divided into three large groups by area: the Jews of Moscow, St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), and the provinces.¹ According to the data of the 1989 census, 31% of the “core” Jews in Russia (including “Tats”) lived in Moscow, 19% in St. Petersburg, and half in the provinces (Table 1). According to the data of the 1994 microcensus, the distribution of Russia’s “core” Jews had changed: about one-third lived in

1. For comparative analysis of the socio-demographic profile of these three groups of the Jewish population in the Russian Federation at the start of the recent mass emigration (based on the 1989 Soviet census), see: Tolts, “The Interrelationship between Emigration and the Socio-Demographic Profile of Russian Jewry,” in Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro’i and Paul Ritterband, eds., *Russian Jews on Three Continents* (London, 1997), pp. 164-171. For detailed characteristics of Moscow’s and St. Petersburg’s Jews, see: Mordechai Altshuler, “Socio-Demographic Profile of Moscow Jews,” *Jews and Jewish Topics in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* 3 (16) (1991), pp. 24-40; Marina Kogan, “Jews of Leningrad According to the Census of 1989,” *Jews in Eastern Europe [JEE]* 3 (25) (1994), pp. 41-51.

Moscow, 15% in St. Petersburg and approximately 52% in the provinces. The numerical decline between the 1989 census and the 1994 microcensus was much greater in St. Petersburg (43%) than in Moscow (23%), or in the provinces (26%). During the following five years (between 1994 and 1999) the decline continued to be greater in St. Petersburg (31%) than in Moscow (20%), or in the provinces (25%). According to our estimate, at the beginning of 1999 about 35% of the “core” Jews in the Russian Federation lived in Moscow, approximately 13% in St. Petersburg, and 52% in the provinces.

Aliya data show that the share of emigrants to Israel from St. Petersburg peaked in 1990 (31.7%), and from Moscow in 1991 (31.6%). By 1994 their shares had declined to 11.0% from Moscow and to 9.7% from St. Petersburg; in 1998 they were as low as 5.0% for each city (Table 2). The geographical distribution of immigrants from Russia shows that the percentage from the provinces rose steadily till 1999. In 1990-1991, this proportion was about half; by 1994 it reached 79% and in 1998 it was as high as 90% – much higher than the share of these Jews among all Russian Jewry.

In 1998 the share of emigrants from Siberia and the Russian Far East as a whole reached 37.7%. According to a pre-flight survey of Russia’s emigrants to Israel in February-August of that year, a high percentage of them from this part of the Russian Federation (32%) planned to arrive in Israel in the framework of organized aliya programs (Aliya 2000, Ulpan Kibbutz, First Home in the Homeland, “Naale”, “Halom”, “Sela”, “Yahad” and others). In terms of prospective emigrants from the European part of Russia such programs attracted only about one third as many (10%).²

Among the Jewry of Russia’s provinces the Jewish Autonomous Oblast (Birobidzhan) comprised an especially large percentage of emigrants to Israel. According to the data of the 1994 microcensus, only 1.9% of the “core” Jews of the Russian Federation lived there. Nevertheless, in 1996-1998 this oblast sent the greatest number of emigrants to Israel of all the regions of the Russian Federation, bringing Birobidzhan’s share during these years to about 13-14%.

2. Elazar Leshem, et. al., *Pre-Flight Survey, February-August 1998* (Jerusalem, 1998), Table 6.

Table 2
Migration^(a) from the Russian Federation to Israel, by Area, 1990-2000, Percent

Year	Total	Moscow	St. Petersburg	Provinces	Thereof: Birobidzhan
1990	100	21.7	31.7	46.6	
1991	100	31.6	13.7	54.7	
1992	100	22.1	10.6	67.3	4.8 ^(b)
1993	100	14.1	9.5	76.4	7.3
1994	100	11.0	9.7	79.3	7.5
1995	100	9.0	8.8	82.2	11.8
1996	100	9.0	8.0	83.0	14.2
1997	100	6.6	5.9	87.5	13.0
1998	100	5.0	5.0	90.0	12.7
1999	100	7.8	7.9	84.3	9.3
2000	100	8.3	7.3	84.4	5.4

(a) Jews and their non-Jewish relatives, including some persons belonging to households with no “core” Jews.

(b) Second half of the year.

Sources: Israel Ministry of Immigrant Absorption data for 1990-1993; Goskomstat of Russia data for 1994-1998 (Birobidzhan for 1992-1998); and data on Jewish Agency (Sochnut)-assisted flights of immigrants to Israel for 1999-2000.

The financial crash of August 1998 caused some changes in the intensity of aliya from different areas of the Russian Federation. In 1999 Moscow city’s share of Russia’s total emigration to Israel increased to 7.8%, and that of St. Petersburg to 7.9%. However, in 1999 as in previous years, most of the Jewish emigrants from Moscow (72%) and St. Petersburg (59%) went to Western countries. In this year it was only the great majority of Russia’s provincial Jews (82%) who chose Israel as their destination; for the Jews of Birobidzhan this majority was even higher (94%). This oblast, where in 1999 only one percent of Russia’s Jews lived, provided more than 9% of the total aliya from Russia, while the percentage of emigrants from Siberia and the Russian Far East as a whole was about the same as it had been in 1998 – 37.9%.

According to Goskomstat data, in 1999 among Jews who emigrated from the Russian Federation to Western countries, those who originated from Russia’s provinces constituted the minority (42%), whereas Jews from the two capitals – Moscow (30%) and St. Petersburg (28%) – made up the majority.

The percentage of St. Petersburg's Jews in this migration was more than twice their percentage in Russia's "core" Jewish population (Table 1).

In 2000 the share of Moscow city (8.3%) and St. Petersburg (7.3%) in the total aliya from the Russian Federation was about as low as it had been in 1999 but the percentage from the provinces was as high as 84.4% of the geographical distribution from the Russian Federation (Table 2). However, Birobidzhan's share in 2000 seriously declined to 5.4%, which possibly indicates a drop in the number of people eligible for aliya as a result of the earlier extremely high emigration to Israel. The percentage of emigrants to Israel from Siberia and the Russian Far East as a whole decreased to 31.8%.

A comparison of Goskomstat data on the number of emigrants to Israel who were deregistered in a neighborhood passport office with the number of immigrants from the Russian Federation according to data from Jewish Agency (Sochnut)-assisted flights to Israel shows a new tendency in 1999-2000³ – many of them were not deregistered in neighborhood passport offices, and thus had not relinquished their official residence status in Russia. These emigrants possibly retain possession of their living quarters and perhaps rent them out. At the same time, there was great geographical differentiation in the spread of this phenomenon (Table 3).

Table 3
Percentage of Emigrants to Israel Who Deregistered in a Neighborhood Passport Office, Russian Federation, by Area,^(a) 1999-2000

Year	Total	Moscow	St. Petersburg	Provinces	Thereof: Birobidzhan
1999	68	32	52	73	99
2000	52	25	47	55	58

(a) Goskomstat of Russia data on the number of emigrants to Israel who were deregistered in a neighborhood passport office as a percentage of the number of immigrants according to data on Jewish Agency (Sochnut)-assisted flights to Israel.

Sources: Goskomstat of Russia data; data of the Jewish Agency (Sochnut)-assisted flights of immigrants to Israel.

3. For a detailed evaluation of Russian and Israeli statistics for the previous period, 1989-1998, see Mark Tolts, "Statistical Analysis of Aliyah and Jewish Emigration from Russia," in Vladimir Iontsev, ed., *International Migration of Population: Russia and Contemporary World*, Vol. 10 (Moscow, 2002; in press).

In 1999 more than two-thirds of the emigrants to Israel from Moscow and about half from St. Petersburg were not deregistered in neighborhood passport offices, whereas this was true for only 27% of the total emigrants to Israel from the Russian provinces. However, in the same year in Birobidzhan almost all were deregistered. In 2000 three-fourths of the emigrants from Moscow to Israel and again approximately half from St. Petersburg were not deregistered in neighborhood passport offices and did not relinquish their official residence status in Russia. About half of all the emigrants to Israel from the Russian provinces were not deregistered, and this tendency spread to Birobidzhan as well. These emigrants are still registered in neighborhood passport office files, and may be counted in the forthcoming results of the 2002 Russian census.

2. Aliya and Quality of Life

It seems that one of the main reasons for the regional differences in the extent of aliya is quality of life. For a general measure of differentiation in the quality of life we shall use the Human Development Index (HDI). This composite measure, developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is based on statistics of longevity, educational attainment, and income per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP) in US dollars.⁴

The HDI for 1996 relates to the middle of the period 1994-1998, for which we can estimate the rate of emigration to Israel for 10 regions of the Russian Federation (Table 4).⁵ There was great differentiation in the level of aliya by region in this period: in 1994-1998 emigration to Israel as percent of “enlarged” Jewish population in 1994 was as high as about 60% from Birobi-

4. See, e.g.: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001* (New York and Oxford, 2001), p. 240. Since 1996 this indicator has been annually estimated by region in the Russian Federation.

5. In our analysis we used only data on regions where according to the estimated sampling error, chances are 95 out of 100 that the actual number of the “core” Jewish population (which is the base for estimating the “enlarged” Jewish population) of each of these regions was not more than $\pm 10\%$ from the medium estimate based on the 1994 Russian microcensus.

dzhan⁶ and only 2.3% from Moscow city. Based on these data, Spearman's measure of rank order correlation⁷ shows that association between quality of life and level of aliya is strongly negative: -0.79 .

Table 4
Aliya and Quality of Life, by Region of Residence in the Russian Federation, 1994-1998

Region ^(a)	Human Development Index (HDI), 1996	Human Development Index (HDI), 1997	Emigration to Israel as % of "enlarged" Jewish population in 1994
Moscow City	0.867	0.800	2.3
St. Petersburg City	0.852	0.758	4.5
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	0.849	0.754	6.6
Samara Oblast	0.840	0.764	5.9
Cheliabinsk Oblast	0.810	0.740	11.7
Sverdlovsk Oblast	0.794	0.730	9.8
Rostov Oblast	0.710	0.720	12.9
Moscow Oblast	0.706	0.736	4.9
Dagestan Republic	0.616	0.707	25 ^(b)
Birobidzhan	0.603	0.656	59.6

(a) Regions are listed in the order of Human Development Index (HDI) in 1996.

(b) Emigration of Jews to Israel as percent of "core" Jewish population in 1994.

Sources: Tolts, "Jews in the Russian Federation: A Decade of Demographic Decline," pp. 19, 21; UNDP, *Human Development Report. Russian Federation 1998* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 118-119; UNDP, *Human Development Report. Russian Federation 1999* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 101-101.

6. In 1996 Birobidzhan was at the third lowest level of the HDI among all the regions of the Russian Federation (after the Tuva and Ingush Republic, where were hardly any Jews). In that region life expectancy at birth for males in the urban population was only 55.4 years [Goskomstat of Russia, *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia, 1997* (Moscow, 1997), p. 110]. The Oblast also suffered from the highest level of unemployment in the Russian Federation; at the end of October 1997, this reached 25%, which was five times higher than in Moscow, and 2.5 times higher than in St. Petersburg [Goskomstat of Russia, *Rossiiskii statisticheskii ezhegodnik, 2001* (Russian Statistical Yearbook, 2001) (Moscow, 2001), pp. 135-140].
7. For an estimate of this indicator see, e.g.: Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Social Statistics*. Revised 2nd ed. (London, 1987), pp. 434-436.

However, there is a well known difficulty in separating Moscow oblast from Moscow city. Inhabitants of the Oblast share the benefits and services of the city, and thus, the HDI level of Moscow Oblast may be seriously underestimated. Obviously, the 1997 HDI for Moscow Oblast was better estimated when its rating (computed by a new method) rose sharply among Russia's 79 regions to 18th place from 52nd in 1996. And based on the HDI for 1997 we found Spearman's measure of correlation to be at an even stronger negative level: -0.88 . Thus, our results show a very strongly negative correlation between quality of life and level of emigration to Israel in 1994-1998.⁸

Table 5

Aliya and Quality of Life, by Area of Residence in the Russian Federation, 1999

Area	Percentage of area in total "core" Jewish population	Human Development Index (HDI)	Country with similar HDI	Aliya as % of total Jewish emigration from area ^(b)	Percentage of area in total aliya ^(c)
Moscow ^(a)	35	0.845	Czech Rep.	28	7.8
St. Petersburg ^(a)	13	0.788	Latvia	41	7.9
Provinces	52			82	84.3
Thereof:					
Birobidzhan	1	0.712	Jordan	94	9.3
Total	100	0.775	Malaysia	68	100

(a) Not including Oblast.

(b) According to Goskomstat of Russia data.

(c) According to data of the Jewish Agency (Sochnut)-assisted flights of immigrants to Israel.

Sources: Tolts, "Russian Jewish Migration in the Post-Soviet Era," p. 197; UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001* (New York and Oxford, 2001), pp. 141-142; idem, *Human Development Report. Russian Federation 2001* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 82-83; and Tables 1 and 2 of this article.

Also in 1999, after the 1998 financial crash, differentiations in the level of aliya were influenced by socioeconomic causes. The HDI of the Russian Federation was ranked 55th worldwide in 1999 (between Belize and Malaysia),

8. Spearman's rates of correlation discussed here are significant at a level of at least 0.01.

whereas Israel was ranked 22nd.⁹ However, Moscow and St. Petersburg Jews are closer to the more developed stratum of the world, whereas Russian provincial Jewry lives in less developed parts of the country, and of the world system as a whole. For 1999, the HDI in Moscow city was similar to that of the Czech Republic (33rd among countries of the world), and in St. Petersburg it was similar to that of Latvia (50th place), whereas in Birobidzhan the HDI was as low as in Jordan (88th place; see Table 5).

Clearly, for many of Russia's provincial Jews (especially those of Birobidzhan), emigration to Israel is, at least in part, a realization of the desire for a consistent upward movement within the world system. It has been found that the push factor is decisive for aliya,¹⁰ and the recent wave from the Russian Federation confirms previous observations on this subject made on the basis of data of other countries.¹¹

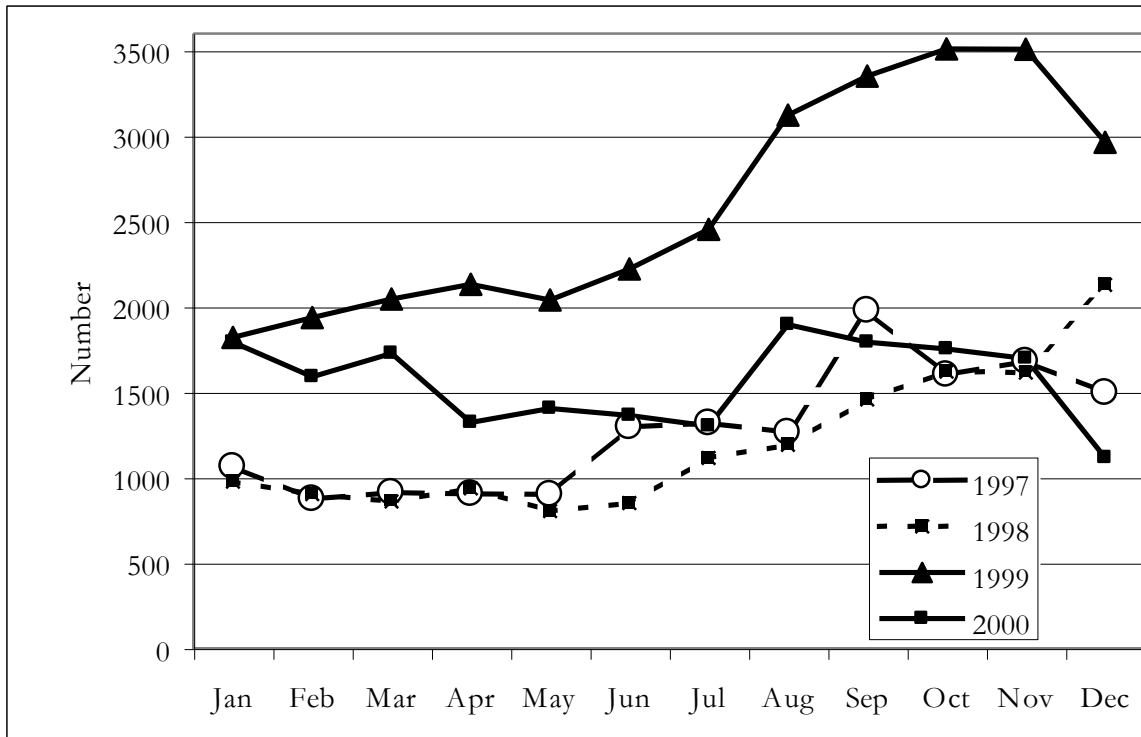
3. Monthly Aliya Before and After the 1998 Financial Crash

After the financial crash of August 17, 1998 the Russian socioeconomic situation deteriorated: by December, the average real wage was down 40% from December 1997.¹² During most of the 1990s, despite the myriad problems of the transitional period, antisemitism in Russia showed no increase,¹³ but after

9. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001*, pp.141-142. According to the most recent estimates for 2000, the Russian Federation was ranked 60th between Malaysia and Dominica, whereas Israel retained its place as 22nd among the countries of the world [UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002* (New York and Oxford, 2002), pp. 149-150].
10. Sergio DellaPergola, "The Global Context of Migration to Israel," in Elazar Leshem, and Judith T. Shuval, eds., *Immigration to Israel: Sociological Perspectives* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1998), pp. 51-92; Sergio DellaPergola, *World Jewry Beyond 2000: The Demographic Prospects* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 30-37.
11. See, e.g.: Sergio DellaPergola, "Israel and World Jewish Population: A Core-Periphery Perspective," in Calvin Goldscheider, ed., *Population and Social Change in Israel* (Boulder, Colorado, 1992), pp. 39-63.
12. EIU, *Russia: Country Profile, 1999-2000* (London, 1999), p. 26.
13. See, e.g.: Lev Gudkov, "Antisemitizm v postsovetskoi Rossii" (Antisemitism in Post-Soviet Russia), in Galina Vitkovskaya and Aleksei

the financial crash, the leftist opposition openly accused Jews of responsibility for many of Russia's problems, especially financial ones.¹⁴ As in 1990-1991 the new crisis caused a dramatic increase in emigration to Israel.

Figure 1. Aliya from the Russian Federation, by Month, 1997-2000



According to these data, from January to April 1998, the monthly figures of aliya were about the same as they had been in 1997, but between May and September 1998, the figures were lower than in the respective months of 1997 despite the customary seasonal increase from about 1,200 in August to 1,450 in

Malashenko, eds., *Neterpimost' v Rossii: starye i novye fobii* (Intolerance in Russia: Old and New Phobias) (Moscow, 1999), pp. 44-98.

14. Robert Brym, "Russkii antisemitizm" (Russian Antisemitism), *Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia* 3 (41) (1999), pp. 43-47. In April-August 1999, in a pre-flight survey of emigrants from Russia, "increased anti-Semitism in place of residence" was given as a reason for emigration 2.25 times more than in a similar survey before the financial crash (in February-August 1998) – 18 and 8%, respectively; in the European part of the country anti-Semitism was mentioned more (19%) than in Siberia and the Russian Far East (11%); see: Elazar Leshem, et al., *Pre-Flight Survey – Russia, April-August 1999* (Jerusalem, 1999), Table 2.

September 1998. By October the rate was again about the same as in October of the previous year (1,600); November's aliya (1,600) was lower than in the respective month of 1997. December 1998 was the first month in which the number of immigrants from Russia increased significantly; it exceeded 2,100 and was higher by 42% than it had been in the previous December (Figure 1).

Aliya figures increased, preceded by a rise in the number of immigrant visas granted by Israeli consulates in the Russian Federation. In general, the period from August to mid-October 1998 was a period of panic in Russian society.¹⁵ However, in August and September the numbers of these visas were lower than in the respective months of the previous year. Thus, in the period of general panic there was no immediate emigration response to the situation. The number of these visas began to increase in October 1998 (by 16%) as compared with October 1997, and in November the number jumped dramatically by a factor of 2.2 compared with the figure of the previous year.

Political instability¹⁶ was another major cause of this increased wave of emigration. In the two months preceding the December 1999 elections to the State Duma the absolute number of immigrants reached its peak: in October and November, 3,500 people immigrated monthly to Israel.

According to a representative poll of the All-Russia Center for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM), at the same time, by October 1999 a majority of people in Russia had adapted to the recent changes.¹⁷ From December 1999 the average monthly real wage started to recover¹⁸; by the beginning of 2000 a solution to the problem of political transition from Yeltsin had appeared when Putin became the new president. The increase of antisemitism in late 1998-first

15. VTsIOM, *Obshchestvennoe mnenie - 1999* (Public Opinion - 1999) (Moscow, 2000), p. 22.

16. During a year and a half there were five successive heads of government in the Russian Federation.

17. VTsIOM, *Obshchestvennoe mnenie - 2000* (Public Opinion - 2000) (Moscow, 2000), p. 13.

18. See: EIU, *Russia: Country Report, December 2001* (London, 2001), p. 34.

half of 1999 was a short-lived phenomenon and by 2000, according to the VTsIOM poll, antisemitic sentiments had again decreased in Russia.¹⁹

In 2000 the socioeconomic situation improved, but even at the end of the year the average real wage was still lower than before the crisis.²⁰ In January-May 2000 there were many more emigrants to Israel than in the respective periods of 1997 and 1998, indicating the importance of inertia in the migration process. In June-July and October-November 2000 the numbers of emigrants approximately returned to the levels in the respective months of 1997. In December 2000, the number of migrants to Israel declined by one fourth to about 1,100 as compared with the December of pre-crisis 1997. This points to a new decrease in the migration movement from Russia to Israel, which continued throughout 2001. These data confirm the influence of socioeconomic and political factors on aliya, as shown above.

4. The Vital Crisis and its Consequences for the Prospects of Aliya

The vital crisis of Russian Jewry intensified rapidly since the start of the recent mass emigration. During the decade from 1988 to 1998, the total number of births to endogamous Jewish couples fell by 86%. During this same period the number of children born to Jewish mothers fell by 76%. In 1998 in the Russian Federation the total recorded number of births to Jewish mothers was 875, with only 224 of these children having Jewish fathers (Table 6). For that year the total number of births to at least one Jewish parent can be estimated at about 2,200, if we assume the number of children born to non-Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers to be twice that born to Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers. The balance of births to Jewish mothers and Jewish deaths is decidedly negative, and in 1998 it was -8,228. Clearly, Russian Jewry is a demographically dying population.

In 1999 in the Russian Federation a new form of birth certificate was introduced wherein the parents' ethnicity is registered as an option of the person

19. VTsIOM, *Obshchestvennoe mnenie - 2000*, p. 90.

20. See: EIU, *Russia: Country Profile, 2001* (London, 2001), p. 57.

reporting the birth. The new birth certificate includes the following instruction: “[This] item is to be filled out according to the wishes (*po zhelaniuu*) of the person making the statement.”²¹ Consequently, in 1999 the registered number of births to Jewish mothers decreased sizably (by 29%) despite the fact that the fertility of the total population of Russia at that time saw no dramatic change.²² Previously, from 1995 to 1998, the registered number of births to Jewish mothers decreased moderately (by 19%) over the whole period. In the year 2000 births continued to be registered on the new forms, and again there was a very moderate decrease of births to Jewish mothers. Thus, the sizable reduction of 1999 can probably be attributed to the new form of birth certificate. It seems, therefore, that many Jewish mothers did not register their own ethnicity in their children’s birth certificate.

Table 6
Births to Jewish Mothers and Jewish Deaths in the Russian Federation,
1988-2000

Year	Births to Jewish mothers	Thereof, with:		Jewish deaths
		Jewish fathers ^(a)	Non-Jewish fathers	
1988	3,710	1,562	2,148	13,826
1995	1,086	336	750	10,900
1996	930	289	641	9,953
1997	905	272	633	9,546
1998	875	224	651	9,103
1999	624 ^(b)	161	463	8,622
2000	613 ^(b)	169	444	8,218

(a) Estimated residually, by subtracting the number of births to Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers from the total number of births to Jewish mothers.

(b) Ethnic nationality of the mother was registered as the option of the person who reported the birth (see text).

Source: Russian governmental vital statistics.

21. *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii* 28 (June 13, 1998), pp. 6296-6297.

22. See, e.g.: Goskomstat of Russia, *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia, 1999* (Moscow, 1999), passim; A.G. Vishnevsky, ed., *Naselenie Rossii, 2000* (Population of Russia, 2000) (Moscow, 2001), pp. 39-40.

Despite the dramatic decrease in 1999 in the registered number of births to Jewish mothers, the share born to Jewish fathers remained stable (26%), and was about the same in 2000 (28%). We may conclude that in contemporary Russia there is now a sizable segment among formerly “officially recognized” Jews (those listed as Jews in Soviet passports) who prefer not to declare their Jewish ethnicity, independently of what kind of marriage (endogamous or endogenous) they were in. This factor has to be considered in any evaluation of the forthcoming results of the 2002 Russian census.

Table 7
Percentage of Jews among Migrants to Israel from the Russian Federation and the Entire FSU, 1990-2000

Year	Russian Federation		Entire FSU
	Goskomstat of Russia data ^(a)	Israel CBS data ^(b)	Israel CBS data ^(b)
1990			96
1991			91
1992	64 ^(c)		84
1993	60		82
1994	58		77
1995	53	72	72
1996	49	66	67
1997	36	59	59
1998	31	53	53
1999	31	49	49
2000	27	45	45

(a) Of the emigrants whose ethnicity was known.

(b) Of the immigrants whose ethnicity/religion was known by the beginning of 2002.

(c) Second half of the year.

Sources: Goskomstat data; Israel CBS data.

Another indirect indicator of Russia’s Jewish vital crisis is the recently pronounced decrease in the share of Jews (by any definition) among the migrants. According to official Russian data, the proportion of Jews among all those who emigrated to Israel fell from 64% in the second half of 1992 to 53% in 1995, 31% in 1998-1999 and 27% in 2000 (Table 7).

According to the same source, there was great differentiation in this percentage by geographical area: in 1999 the share of Jews was higher by about one and a half times among registered emigrants to Israel from Moscow (44%) and St. Petersburg (45%) than from the Russian provinces (29%); among those who emigrated from Birobidzhan it was at about the same low level (31%).

In the Soviet Union, ethnicity (*natsional'nost'*) was listed in internal passports of all persons aged 16 and over as the ethnic nationality of both parents; only a child whose parents belonged to different ethnicities could choose one or the other. In 1997 the authorities of the Russian Federation proposed a new type of internal passport in which ethnicity would not be indicated. When this change was introduced, the Goskomstat of Russia recommended that ethnicity be specified in personal forms of the statistical registration of migration “as reported by the citizen himself (*so slov*).”²³

For children without passports (since 1997, the Russian Federation has granted passports from age 14), ethnicity is defined on the basis of the parents' ethnicity; children without passports are listed in the personal forms of the statistical registration of migration of one of their parents. “If the parents of the minor belong to different ethnic groups, then the ethnic identity [of the child] is registered as that of one of the parents, preference being given to the mother's ethnicity.”²⁴

Israeli statistics are based on the Ministry of Interior's Population Register file, whose definition of “who is a Jew” is according to the halakhic (Jewish religious) approach: a Jew is a person born to a Jewish mother (female lineage is decisive and the number of generations backwards is not determined), or a person who converted to Judaism.²⁵ As in the Israeli Law of Return, only conversion to another religion can disrupt Jewish lineage.

23. Goskomstat of Russia, *Rekomendatsii po zapolneniiu pervichnykh dokumentov statisticheskogo ucheta migrantov* (Recommendations for Filling Out Primary Documents of the Statistical Registration of Migrants) (Moscow, 1997), p. 5.

24. Ibid.

25. See, e.g.: DellaPergola, “The Global Context of Migration to Israel,” pp. 85-87; Tolts, “Jews in the Russian Federation: A Decade of Demographic Decline,” pp. 6-7.

In the official Israeli data the share of Jews among all immigrants from the FSU countries to Israel appears much higher: 96% in 1990, 72% in 1995, 53% in 1998 and 45% in 2000. In 1995-2000 this proportion was almost the same as among the immigrants from the Russian Federation. However, the composition of immigrants to Israel on the basis of the Law of Return may be better understood if we group Jews with their spouses, though of other ethnicity (including widows and widowers), and children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. In 2000, according to the Israeli criteria, Jews and their specified nearest relatives constituted about four-fifths of all immigrants from the FSU countries; the others were spouses of children with Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, and grandchildren of Jews and their spouses.²⁶

The decrease in the annual numbers of births during the 1990s seriously curtailed the aliya potential among young cohorts. Comparison shows that at the start of the mass immigration to Israel in 1990 the number of immigrants aged 0-4 was 3 times lower than the number of births to endogamous Jewish couples during the previous 5 years in Russia (Table 8). By 1998 the number of immigrants in this age group was only a quarter of what it had been, but the decline in the number of births to endogamous Jewish couples over the preceding 5-year period was so pronounced that it was now only twice as much as even this small number. In 1999 the number of immigrants aged 0-4 temporarily increased, though it remained much lower than it had been in 1990. Comparison with the number of births to endogamous Jewish couples during the previous 5 years in Russia clearly shows that the number of these children was smaller even than the number of children aged 0-4 who actually came on aliya.

In 1999 the number of immigrants at ages 0-4 was 2.7 times lower than the number of births to Jewish mothers during the previous 5 years in Russia. Thus, this group of Jewish births was also insufficient to maintain aliya at its 1999 level. Only births to at least one Jewish parent (including births to Jewish

26. Nativ, "Hitpalgut olei brit-hamo'atsot l'sheavar lefi sugei zaka'ut hok hashvut, 1989-2001" (Breakdown of FSU Immigrants according to Law of Return Entitlement, 1989-2001), in Ludmila Dymerskaya-Tsigelman, ed., *Yehudei brit-hamo'atsot l'sheavar b'yisrael u'bitfutsot* 5 (20-21) (Jerusalem, 2002), p. 98.

fathers with non-Jewish mothers) offer better prospects for aliya. Comparison of these births with the number of immigrant children in 1999 yields a ratio of 6.6. Given the contemporary Russian Jewish demographic situation, children who are not Jewish according to halakhah have to be included if Israel is to continue receiving immigration at young ages for more than a short period.

Table 8
Comparison of Aliya at Ages 0-4 and Number of Jewish Births during the Previous Five Years, Russian Federation, 1990, 1998 and 1999

Year of aliya	Aliya at age 0-4	Births during previous 5 years:		
		To endogamous Jewish couples ^(a)	To Jewish mothers ^(a)	To at least one Jewish parent ^(b)
1990				
Number in thousands	3.2	9.5	20.1	41.3
Ratio of births to aliya	X	3.0	6.3	12.9
1998				
Number in thousands	0.8	1.6	5.15	12.3
Ratio of births to aliya	X	2.0	6.4	15.4
1999				
Number in thousands	1.8	1.5	4.9	11.8
Ratio of births to aliya	X	0.8	2.7	6.6

(a) According to Goskomstat data.

(b) Assuming the (unknown) number of children born to non-Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers to be twice that (known) born to Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers.

Sources: Israel CBS data; Goskomstat data.

In reality, the prospects for aliya are less promising than might be expected from the ratio between the number of immigrants to Israel at ages 0-4 and the number of births during the previous 5 years. Only some of the children born in Russia remain there; most of the others emigrate and, of course, a few die. Comparison of the number of immigrants at ages 0-4 with the estimat-

ed number of children of these ages born to Jewish mothers who remained in Russia at the beginning of 1998 gives us a ratio of less than five. At the 1999 level of immigration to Israel, the ratio was as low as about 2.1, whereas for 1990 it had been 5.8.

Of course, our comparison does not specifically cover children born to mothers whose own mothers were Jewish, but whose fathers were not. (We do not know the number of these births.) Furthermore this comparison only includes figures of migration to Israel and not to other destinations. Thus, we have a good basis for forecasting the prospects of aliya.

Concluding Remarks

The geographical distribution of emigration to Israel from Russia shows that the great majority of immigrants originated from the provinces. The push factor was found to be decisive for aliya, and the recent differentiation by region of origin in the Russian Federation shows that the correlation between quality of life and level of emigration to Israel is strongly negative. At the same time, detailed monthly data on migration in the period before and after the financial crash of August 1998 demonstrate the decisive role of socioeconomic dynamics and changes in the political situation in Russia in determining the level of aliya.

The analysis has shown that the demographic crisis of Russian Jewry has been – and still is – dramatically intensifying since the start of the mass emigration. Accordingly, in aliya from the Russian Federation, as well as from the FSU in general, the share of the halakhically non-Jewish segment of the immigrants grew steadily, and by 1999 it exceeded one-half. Given the vital crisis of contemporary Russian Jewry, only the inclusion of this segment, which is eligible to immigrate to Israel according to the Israeli Law of Return, will allow aliya to continue and to include young children.

Analysis of the recent dynamics of birth statistics revealed that in present-day Russia a sizable segment among the former “officially recognized” Jews (Jewish according to Soviet passports) now prefer not to declare their ethnicity

even if they are not part of a mixed marriage. At the same time, many emigrants from Russia to Israel in 1999 and 2000 were not deregistered in neighborhood passport offices, and did not relinquish their official residence status there. All of these factors have to be considered in any evaluation of the forthcoming results of the 2002 Russian census and their significance for the demography of the Jews.