The Israeli Diaspora in Ukraine: Structure, Dynamics, and Identity

By Vladimir (Zeev) Khanin

Introduction

One of the distinctive features of our times is the appearance of the so-called "new ethnic diasporas" resulting from mass state migrations—both direct and reverse—which especially intensified after the Second World War. Unlike previous generations of migrants, the members of these diasporas are not in a hurry to assimilate into the socio-cultural environment of the receiving societies. Instead, they continue to maintain—sometimes for several generations—a multifarious social and cultural identity and even political ties with their countries of origin.[1]

The Jewish world did not remain on the sidelines of this process. An important development in recent decades is the appearance of two new transnational Jewish diasporas: Israeli and Russian-Jewish. Both these groups undoubtedly became a noticeable factor of contemporary Jewish life and an important element in the multicultural mosaic within Jewish communities of the host countries and within host societies at large.

Although the Jewish emigration from Israel and the "Israeli diaspora" (a term introduced by Steven Gold[2]) has received considerable attention in the scholarly literature and the "global Russian-Jewish community" has become the subject of a series of fundamental works,[3] the common component of these diasporas—Russian-speaking Israelis—remains understudied.

The reference points here are both natives of the former USSR who came to the West as part of the emigration from Israel and participants of the "reverse migration" to the post-Soviet states. The academic literature contains a certain amount of information about Israelis in the countries of the West and very little about Israelis in the countries of the former USSR.[4] The Ukrainian segment of this diaspora was practically ignored by

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[1] Gabriel Sheffer, "The Emergence of New Ethno-National Diasporas," in *Sociology of Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. by Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Brij Maharaj (New Delhi: Pawat Publications, 2007), 1:43–62; Peter J. Kivisto and Thomas Faist, *Beyond a Border: The Causes and Consequences of Contemporary Immigration* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2010).

[2] Steven Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2002). 23. ."(@-: Rina Cohen, "Israeli Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, ed. by Melvin Ember et al. (New York: Springer, 2005), 1:136–143.

[3] Eliezer Ben-Rafael et al., *Building a Diaspora: Russian Jews in Israel, Germany and the USA* (Laiden–Boston: Brill, 2006); Larissa Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration, and Conflict* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin, "Russian-Jewish Ethnicity: Israel and Russia Compared," in *Contemporary Jewries: Convergence and Divergence*, ed. by E. Ben-Rafael, Y. Gorny and Y. Ro'I (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2003), 216–234.

[4]The detailed overview of these works can be found in Vladimir (Zeev) Khanin, "Vvedenie: izrail'tiane, "russkie," i russkie izrail'tiane: sovremennyi mir novykh transnatsional'nykh evreiskikh diaspora," in Vladimir Khanin (ed.), *Izrail'skie, russko-izrail'skie i evreiskie diaspory: obshchee i osobennoe* (Moskva:

scholars until recently. The only exception we are aware of is the research project on Israelis in Odessa carried out by the Ukrainian-British anthropologist Marina Sapritsky[5]. The research on which this article is based aimed to fill this important gap.

The project was implemented by the Lukshtein Center of Jewish Education in the Diaspora (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and the Judaica Institute of the National University of Kyiv- Mohyla Academy (Ukraine) with the support from the Ministry of Aliyah and Absorption and the Eurasian Jewish Congress. In the course of this study, researchers held two rounds of interviews in 2009 and 2011 with 167 and 147 respondents from among Israelis who reside in Ukraine more or less permanently.[6] We wanted in this process to compare the communities of Russian-speaking Israelis in Ukraine with similar control groups, primarily with Israelis working and living in Russia.[7]

General Characteristics of the Focus Group

According to data from the Ministry of Absorption of Israel, out of 1,023,000 Jews and their family members who arrived in Israel from the former USSR as of December 2013, 105,000 (or 10.2% representatives of the "aliyah of the 1990s") emigrated from the country during the same period. One should add to this number some forty to fifty thousand Israelis who reside in two or more countries. In other words, these are people whose "life focus"—the lack of formal status of emigrant from Israel notwithstanding—is located abroad—as a rule, in the former USSR, and, to a lesser degree, in Europe (Germany, Austria). Together with some twenty thousand representatives of the aliyah of the 1970s and their descendants who emigrated from Israel in the past thirty years, the total number of "Russian-speaking Israelis" living abroad may be approximately 160-180,000 people.[8]

The available information allows us to make a tentative conclusion that approximately half of them re-emigrated to the former USSR, and the rest headed to the countries of the West such as the United States, Canada, and, to a lesser extent, the countries of the European Union. Thus out of the 209 Israelis born in the Soviet Union who participated in the 2009-2010 global interview project by sociologists Uzi Revhun and Israel Poko, 45.19% resided in the former USSR and 54.9% in other countries.[9] If the results of this

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Spetsvypusk zhurnala *Diaspory*, 2014): 6-9.

[5] Marina Sapritsky, "Home in the Diaspora? Jewish Returnees and Trans-migrants in Ukraine" (paper presented at the International Conference "Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora," Harvard University, November 13–15, 2011).

[6] The respective polls were conducted by teams under Eleezer (Al'bert) Fel'dman and Aleksandr Stegnii, who was also the author of the field report. See Aleksandr Stegnii, *Izrail'tiane v Ukraine. Analiticheskii otchet po rezul'tatam oprosa respondentov 2009-2011 godov* (Kiev: Tsentr issledovaniya istorii i kul'tury vostochnoevropeiskogo evreistva, 2011).

[7] The data about Israelis in Russia are derived from: Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin, Velvl Chernin and Alek D. Epstein, Kehilot ha-israelim ba-brit ha-moetsot le-sheavar: Ha-diiukan hahevrati-tarbuti shel kivunei ha-hagira. Mekhkar haluts (Ramat-Gan: Merkaz Rappaport, March 2010).

[8] These figures are from the Ministry of Aliyah and Absorption of Israel.

[9] Uzi Revhun, Israel Popko, Rekhokim krovim: ha-hagira, hizdahut yehudit ve-zika le-moledet bakerev israelim ba-huts la-arets. Duakh mekhkar (Jerusalem: Makhon la-yahadut zmaneinu al shem

poll reflect a broader pattern, then the number of "Russian Israelis" in the CIS may be in the vicinity of 45-47,000 people. Other expert estimates of the number of Israelis residing in post-Soviet states range considerably—from 14-18,000 to 70,000 in Russia alone.[10]

Similarly varied are the estimates of the number of Israelis in Ukraine. Dani Gekhtman, who at that time was the director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ("Joint") in Kyiv, claimed that in 2004 there were some nine thousand Israeli passport holders in Ukraine. Most of them resided in the capital.[11] According to data from "Ukrainian immigration authorities" cited by Josef Zissels, the president of Association of Jewish organizations and communities of Ukraine (VAAD), there were twenty thousand such people in 2011.[12] Given that emigration from Israel decelerated following the peak that occurred in 2003-2004,[13] it is difficult to believe that from 2004 to 2011 Israelis in Ukraine were joined by thousands of new immigrants from the Jewish state. One should instead interpret the doubling of the original number as a result of differences of definition and methodological instruments employed by the said experts.

It is noteworthy that in 2013 the then Ambassador of Israel to Ukraine Reuven Din-El' stated in an interview to a local newspaper that "every minute there are 45,000 Israelis in this country." But he also emphasized that these include not only permanent residents, but also business travellers, people who come on family visits, as well as tourists, whose number doubled following the cancellation of the visa regime. One has to surmise that tourists form the majority of Israelis in Ukraine.[14]

As in other similar cases, the absence of reliable statistical data about the number of Israelis on the territory of the country did not allow us to build a classic representative selection. Therefore the optimal method of selection for this focus group appears to be the "snowball method," which relies on the interpersonal communication of respondents. The results obtained in this manner suggest that 59% of respondents reside in Kyiv and 41% in the eight regional centers of Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Odessa, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Lviv.

In terms of gender, men predominate among the participants of our poll, while in terms of age, the majority fall into the 26-40 range. The different ratios of age cohorts 19-25 and 55+ can be explained by the fact that the first round of interviews targeted primarily emigrants residing in the large industrial centers of Ukraine. For the most part, these are

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Hartman, July 31, 2010).

[10] See the review of the discussion in Vladimir (Zeev) Khanin and Alek Epshtein, "Izrail'tiane v Rossii: sotsial'naia demografiia i identichnost'," *Diaspory* 2 (2010): 216-240.

[11] Sue Fishkoff, "Tales from the Pale. Russian Jews Returned from Israel Help Galvanize Jewish Community Life," Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), August 27, 2004, http://www.jta.org/2004/08/27/archive/ tales-from-the-pale-russian-jews-returned-from-israel-help-galvanize-jewish-community-life-2.

[12] My interview with J. Zissels, Jerusalem and Kyiv, February 2011.

[13] Mark Tolts, "Postsovetskaia evreiskaia diaspora: noveishie otsenki," *Demoscope Weekly* 497 (2012): 21, http://www.academia.edu/4659168/.

[14] Quoted from Serhii Nahornyi and Denys Nahornyi, "Shchokhvylyny v Ukraini perebuvayut' 45 tysiach izrail'tian," *Gazeta po-ukrains'ky*, 11 June 2013, http://gazeta.ua/articles/comments-newspaper/_ sohvilini-v-ukrayini-perebuvayut-45-tisyach-izrayiltyan/501442.

work and "education" migrants. During the second round, we interviewed primarily residents of the periphery. Among them there were many re-immigrants, who returned to their original places of residence. The clear gender imbalance (66% men, 34% women), compared both to the Jewish community in the CIS and the Russian-Jewish community in Israel, also reflects the actual structure of the Israeli immigration in the CIS. In our study of Israelis in Russia, the ratio of men was 57%, and 43% women. According to data from Revhun and Popko, the imbalance was even more pronounced: 77.6% and 22.4%. In our view, our data are a more accurate reflection of the reality.

While the median age of Jews in Russia and Ukraine is approximately 57-60 years, Israeli immigrants, as a rule, are younger. But whereas Israelis in Russia on average are much younger than the local Jewish population, the difference between those Jews of Ukraine who did not emigrate and "repatriates" from Israel is not significant. This has been demonstrated also by our sample, which, at least in this case, was rather representative.

As we can see, less than 10% of our respondents are younger than 25, approximately half are aged 26-40, one fifth are people of advanced middle age (41-55), and more than a quarter are older than 55. The data for the CIS and the Baltic states, obtained in the course of the above mentioned internet poll by Revhun and Popko, on this point are practically identical to our data for Russia,[15] which once again underscores differences between Israeli communities in Ukraine and Russian-Jewish emigration in Russia and elsewhere.

[15] Revhun and Popko, Rekhokim krovim, 14.

Table 1.
Age Structure of the Sample.

Age cohort	Russian sample, %	Ukrainian sample, %
Teenagers under the age of 18 (went to study or returned with parents)	7.7	0.7
Young people of student age (19-25)	13.6	8.8
People of "early middle age" (26-40)	50.9	42.2
People of "advanced middle age" (41-55)	20.1	19.7
People of pre- and retirement age (55 and older)	7.7	28.6
Total	100	100

As for the level of education, the overwhelming majority of participants in the study have university degrees, which in general corresponds to the educational profile of emigrants from Ukraine to Israel during 1990s.

The Motivation for Return and Immigration to Ukraine

Prior to immigrating to Ukraine, respondents resided in Israel for varying periods of time. Whereas during our first inquiry the majority stated that they lived in Israel for more than ten years, in the second case only one quarter indicated such terms. The majority referred to shorter periods of less than five or five to ten years.

In order to determine the primary motivations for relocation from Israel to Ukraine, we proposed to the respondents fourteen variants of response. Below is the summary table of the motivations identified in the course of the study, compared with analogous polling of Israelis in Russia.

Table 2. Main motivations for the Return to Ukraine

Reasons for Leaving Israel	Russia, %	Ukraine, %
It was not bad in Israel, but here there are more professional and creative opportunities	36.9	26.0
Personal and family reasons	33.1	
Economic difficulties in Israel	18.8	16.2
It was difficult to understand the Israeli mentality and to integrate into the culture milieu	13.1	15.5
Returned because they consider Russia or Ukraine their homeland	8.8	
Problems with the climate	8.8	18.9
“The country is in a permanent state of war, it’s not for me”	5.6	8.1
Feeling of loneliness in Israel, with relatives in Russia/Ukraine	5.6	21.6
Did not want to feel like “second class citizens”	5.0	12.8
Israel is a religious and nationalistic state one should avoid	3.1	
The country is ruled by an anti-national leftist clique	1.3	
Medical Problems	0.6	

On the basis of these responses, we can conclude that there was no one single most important factor that prompted people to leave Israel for Ukraine. The data collected in Ukraine demonstrated that if one reviews all the various motives and expectations of emigration from Israel, the structure of the Israeli community in Ukraine can be broken down into six distinct groups, similar to those we singled out in the course of research on Israeli communities in Russia in 2008-2009.[16]

The first group is comprised of re-emigrants, originally from countries of the CIS, who lived a number of years and returned, in their view, to their country of birth, which they consider to be their homeland and their main place of residence. Most of these people relocated to Israel relatively late in life, lived there a relatively short period of time, and ceased their economic activities already in Israel. For these reasons the typical motives for the return of re-emigrants include an unsuccessful integration in the beginning, a resultant psychological crisis, and, as a consequence, the desire to negate the Israeli experience completely. Such people more often reside in provincial cities and towns, from where they had emigrated to Israel in the first place, than in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk. Thus among the respondents to Marina Sapritsky, who interviewed a group of "repatriates" from Israel to Odessa, there was a woman named Nina who did not think she was "going home" while emigrating to Israel. Quite the contrary, for her the emigration from Odessa was akin to "leaving home" and it was a difficult decision for her. Moreover, the eleven years that this woman spent in Israel were for her "a period of struggle for economic survival, complicated by other problems of immigrant life, including nostalgia and climate." In the end, she wanted to leave behind memories of Israel, claiming that she "returned to a new and alien, but still a native place."[17]

Re-emigrants also include people who declare their sincere (rather than a rationale for leaving) rejection of Israel as a Jewish state, its socio-economic system, and cultural environment. At the same time, the number of those who frame their decision to return to Ukraine as a "return to the mother country" does not exceed 10%. Compared with the pilot study of 2009, there is a marked decline in the number of those who considered themselves "second class" citizens in Israeli society, as well as of those who were perturbed by the incessant war.

Instead, the motives for leaving Israel that came to the foreground included broader opportunities to realize one's potential in Ukraine, the desire to start a business, and the desire to find a stimulating and a well-paid job. This set of motivations is characteristic of the second group of re-emigrants, whom we can call "work migrants." Thus some of our respondents explain their decision to leave Israel with reference to "profitable and professionally interesting offers." Examples of such offers include work at one of Ukraine's television channels, a business-consultant position, the opportunity to work as a film director, etc. Some participants of the poll indicated their return was connected with work in Jewish organizations in Ukraine. Here one should note that 55% of the respondents were happy with their salary in Israel, while 83% are happy with their pay in Ukraine. In other words, most respondents in this second category of our respondents

[16] See Khanin and Epshtein, "Izrail'tiane v Rossii," 216-240.
[17] Sapritsky, "Home in the Diaspora," 6.

chose to leave Israel not because they struggled to make ends meet, but because there were more opportunities to realize one's potential in Ukraine.

The third group—"professional emissaries"—includes functionaries and employees of Jewish organizations and members of their families. The most numerous among them are employees of religious organizations, some of whom have taken up Ukrainian citizenship. But there are also many representatives of the "Joint," "Sokhnut," functionaries of Israeli state and civic organizations (e.g. teachers), as well as commandeered employees of Israeli companies, some of whom prefer to think of themselves as emissaries rather than "persons who went to Russia to earn money." In the opinion of David Mamistvalov, who at the time of our conversation worked at the consulate in Kharkiv, "the commandeered representatives of Israeli firms do not consider themselves *yordim* (emigrants from Israel), but the system corrupts them—they immerse themselves into the environment, get accustomed to the place, and "drown" here."[18] This notwithstanding, most of the time these people—a large portion of whose lives are tied with Ukraine, Russia, and other countries in the region—do not plan to remain there for good and categorically refuse to consider Israel as anything but their motherland and permanent place of residence.

The fourth group, the so-called "roving migrants," are for the most part Israeli business people who work in the countries of the CIS but spend a lot of time in Israel, where their families also reside. Such residence patterns cannot be called immigration proper, because such people effectively reside in two countries. The motives that prompted them to adopt a nomadic lifestyle are most often—just like for the second group—economic, but this group maintains stronger ties with Israel.

Yakov Faitel'son, who heads the representation of the Jewish Agency in Kyiv, claims that practically none of the Israelis renounced their Israeli citizenship and that they continue to divide their time between Israel and the CIS. Within this group Faitel'son includes also the "growing number of those wealthy Jews in Russia and Ukraine who prefer to buy property in Israel, "just in case." In this sense, the category of the roving migrants includes also the so-called "darkonniki" (from the Hebrew word "darkon"—passport) who reside permanently neither in Israel nor in the countries of the CIS. These people sought Israeli citizenship for one reason—to obtain an international passport, which makes visa-free travel possible to many countries of the world, including all the countries of Western Europe. "Despite the seeming emptiness of such Israeliness," notes the former representative of "Sokhnut" in Moscow and later executive vice-president of the Russian-Jewish Congress Vevl Chernin, one can't help but notice that Israeli passport holders are much more active in local communal affairs and in acquiring property in Israel than those without Israeli passports."[19]

The fifth group consists of those who emigrated from Israel due to personal or family circumstances, such as having to take care of elderly parents in Russia or Ukraine or because of marriages with Ukrainian citizens who did not want to relocate to Israel.

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[18] Personal interview, Kharkiv, 16 October 2012.
[19] Personal interview, Ramat-Han, Israel, November 2012.

According to the poll which we conducted in Ukraine, many of our Israeli respondents named as reasons such motives as the "desire to spend their old age in the company of relatives," a "return to a son's family," or a "father's passing away and mother's loneliness."

Our respondents also noted that they had relatives in Ukraine, while in Israel, by contrast, they felt lonely. A significant portion of this group is comprised of young people. Among the young immigrants there are many of those who (either on their own or the parents' initiative) decided to complete secondary or higher education in Russia due to language or other difficulties, which they encountered while preparing for the difficult final exams (bagrut). Such decisions are usually motivated with reference to a more comfortable cultural and linguistic environment or to the difficulty of entering more prestigious universities and departments in Israel such as medicine.

Other reasons include climate and the resultant physical condition of the respondents. In comparison with Russia, the share of those who find Israel's climate disagreeable is higher in Ukraine. This has to do with a higher share of Israelis of advanced age. In other words, these are the people who do not so much look for professional and business opportunities, but rather want to return home.

Finally, the "due to personal circumstances" group of emigrants includes non-Russian speaking Israelis who emigrate to Russia or Ukraine in the "search of love and adventures." According to David Mamistvalov, there are fifteen to twenty "Israeli tourists" of this kind at any one time in Eastern Ukraine, which he supervises. The motives of some of these "sabry" (natives of Israel) are probably similar to the motives of the analogous group of Israelis who end up staying in Russia for a long time. One of our respondents, the Israeli-born A. Yordeni—who has lived and worked in the CIS for several years—characterized such people in the following manner:

"There is another group—Israelis in love. Their attitude towards Russia goes through several phases. The [first] phase is uncertain fear and interest that things are different in Russia. They experience a thrill when they find out that Russia has police, authorities, courts, and everything that has to be. The third phase is the onset of doubt, when they recognize that state authorities are more than state authorities, judges are not judges in the Western understanding of the term, and the police is not quite police. The final phase is when they learn with relief that they got out, if they did get out."

The sixth group are those whom we have called "economic refugees." These people departed from Israel not because some brilliant opportunities were awaiting them, but because of the difficulty of making ends meet in Israel. One example is the story told by the journalist Inna Stossel. Eugene and Tatyana were a family couple of Russian-speaking repatriates who grew up and received an education in Israel. According to Eugene, the difficult decision to move to Kyiv from Israel, where he resided from age sixteen, graduated from school and Haifa University, and served in the Tsahal (Israel Defense Forces), was taken because the young family could not longer live in their parents' apartment and life prospects looked uncertain.

"We could not afford to rent or buy an apartment. The company where I worked was about to close. My wife Tanya, an artist-designer by profession, could not secure employment, tried to open a store selling bijouterie, but the business failed. There was nobody we could rely on. My parents, as you know, struggle to make ends meet. Tanya's parents live in Russia. But in Kyiv my father's brother has a construction business. He promises to help us with jobs. Moreover, we have an apartment there, which we could not sell prior to our emigration in the 1990s. Our own apartment, it's important for us. The rest, hopefully, will get sorted out."[20]

As we can see, economic and personal motives for immigration from Israel to Ukraine are often intertwined. Very instructive, albeit not representative in this regard, is the example cited by the director of one of the Jewish schools in Eastern Ukraine who several years ago gave a job to a re-immigrant, a single mother of a child with special needs who did not manage to solve economic challenges in Israel.[21] Another example is the elderly couple from a large industrial center in Eastern Ukraine, who after more than ten years as pensioners in Israel ran into difficulties and decided to return to their country and city of origin. These people however preferred to explain their relocation with reference not to economic but to personal considerations—the necessity to help, and eventually live under the care of their daughter, the local Jewish trade union professional in charge of many successful commercial and social projects.

To conclude, close to one third of Israeli passport holders whom we interviewed in Ukraine left Israel due to personal and family considerations. Some 36% did so to improve their economic situation. Other motivations (ideological, psychological, climate, or health) rank lower.

The Economic and Professional Situation of Israeli Migrants in Ukraine

If one reads the content of numerous publications in the Russian and Israeli press on Israelis who run large businesses in the countries of the CIS, one can get an impression that most Israelis here, if not necessarily oligarchs, than at least clearly belong to the business community. This stereotypical image, however, does not accurately reflect the reality. In practice, representatives of the business, political, journalistic, and professional elite comprise no more than 7-10% of Israelis working in Russia and Ukraine. The second group, which consists of representatives of the middle class—business people, middle managers, doctors, engineers, officially invited scholars and consultants paid at a special rate, and, by local standards, fairly well-off specialists—is a bit larger.[22] Here one could also include the leadership of local and international Jewish organizations and communities.

[20] Quoted from Inna Stessel', "Liubliu otchiznu ia, no strannoui liubov'iu," Kontinent Media Group 22 (2 June 2008), http://www.kontinent.org/article_rus_4849f8370271c.html.
[21] Personal interview, October 2012.
[22] Aleksandr Shpunt, "Neskol'ko otraslei rossiiskoi ekonomiki derzhat'sia na trude ekspatov," Tsentr politicheskogo analiza, 15 July 2013 (http://tass-analytics.com/opinions/384)

But among the Israelis in the CIS there are also many with a lower social and professional status and a correspondingly lower salary. Among them are teachers, "rank and file" engineers and technicians, qualified workers, those employed in the service sector, journalists and less than prominent cultural workers, office clerks, and small business owners. Finally, a noticeable share of immigrants are groups with the lowest level of income—unqualified workers, students, and pensioners.

It is impossible to determine the exact share of these categories of Israeli immigrants in Ukraine and other countries of the CIS, since the majority of them are not registered as "returnees" neither at Israeli consulates nor at local immigration organs. Moreover, their very number is a subject of debate. The table below describes the socio-professional structure of our poll respondents in Russia and Ukraine, which in our opinion and in the opinion of experts we interviewed accurately reflects the general picture.

Socio-professional groups	Russia, %	Ukraine, %
Businesspeople	10.1	19.4
Senior specialists, managers, civil servants	17.2	10.2
Engineers, technicians	4.1	9.7
Medical professionals	3.6	4.2
Teachers, researchers	7.1	4.2
Cultural workers and arts professionals	10.7	5.6
Workers, salespeople, and service professionals	6.9	8.3
Emissaries of Israeli and international Jewish organizations	4.1	2.8
Workers of local Jewish community organizations	11.2	6.3
Students	16.0	6.9
Pensioners and others	10.2	20.8

As we can see, there are more business people among "Ukrainian Israelis" than among their Russian counterparts (clearly at the expense of middle and small entrepreneurs). There are also more pensioners who returned to the cities from which they once departed for Israel. Of the Israelis we interviewed in Ukraine, almost half (44%) could not provide

a clear answer. The people who have difficulty outlining their plans of professional socialization in Ukraine tend to be near the retirement age—55 and above with higher education degrees. More than one third of the interviewees intend to start their own business, while one fifth has plans of securing salaried positions.

In Russia, which has received few "returnees" to the native cities, but instead Israelis who made a second immigration to leading industrial, business, and cultural centers, one observes a higher share (in comparison with Ukraine) of qualified specialists and managers and students (especially those entering prestigious universities). There are also more professionals employed by the larger than in Ukraine Jewish community organizations and, of course, cultural and arts workers.

In light of the data one should not find surprising differences between Israelis in Russia and Ukraine. In the first case, the share of those who are completely satisfied or generally satisfied with their present material conditions was 1.5-2 times higher than the share of those who were completely or generally satisfied with their material conditions in Israel. By contrast, in Ukraine the share of repatriates who report satisfaction in comparison with own conditions in Israel practically did not change.

Table 4. **Satisfaction with Material Conditions in Israel and upon Return to Russia and Ukraine**

The level of satisfaction in Israel	**Russia, %**	**Ukraine, %**
Completely satisfied	16.9	22.4
Generally satisfied	38.1	46.9
Not satisfied	32.5	23.8
After emigration		
Completely satisfied	31.3	22.5
Generally satisfied	51.9	49.3
Not satisfied	15.6	30.1

National and Religious Identity

In addition, emigration moods were affected by the national composition of the family. Almost half of the respondents prior to emigration to Israel had only Jewish family members, while 40% had one Jewish parent. The structure of the reverse migration of Israelis to Ukraine was similar. According to our poll, more than half of the respondents had only Jewish family members, while close to one third had one Jewish parent.

One should note that according to the report of the Central Statistical Bureau, the share of people of mixed and non-Jewish heritage among the repatriates from Israel is almost double the share of emigrating Galakha Jews,[23] although the absolute number is relatively small. In our Russian selection of Israelis the share of non-Jews was not as significant—only 37%, which, however, is still approximately one fourth higher than the share of people of mixed and non-Jewish heritage within the Russian-Jewish community in Israel. But the research in Ukraine demonstrated that the share of people of mixed or non-Jewish descent among the re-immigrants comprises 27%, i.e. roughly corresponds to their share in the Russian-speaking community in Israel at the turn of the century. At first sight, this can be easily explained by the fact that the share of re-immigrants who return to their native places in Ukraine (our studies reveal that most Israelis who live in Ukraine, just like their parents, were born here) is higher than among Israelis in Russia. Israelis in Russia, on the other hand, are for the most part not re-immigrants, but de facto immigrants who settled in the large industrial and cultural centers of the Russian Federation. This also explains why the Israeli community in Russia is on average much younger than in Ukraine. It is however also clear that such significant "regional" differences in the ethnic structure of the emigration of Russian Israelis demand additional verification.

The majority of our respondents in Ukraine noted that they feel as Jews above all, and to the least extent as Russians. As for religious identity, only 26% described themselves as religious. At the same time, regardless of the level of religiosity, the majority (57%) consider Judaism to be "their" religion. One should note that such an ethnic and religious identification structure is also characteristic for the community of immigrants from the CIS in Israel.

Israeli Communities and their Participation in the Activities of Jewish Organizations in Ukraine.

The self-organization of Israeli communities in Ukraine as in other places resembles in many ways the situation in different parts of the "Israeli diaspora." A particularly important role lies with the presence of developed communal networks, which for Israelis in the CIS, just like elsewhere, serve as a means of self-exclusion from the surrounding social milieus.

Experts note two levels of association and "communal behavior" of Israeli communities in the countries of the CIS. Basic to these groups are the intersecting personal contacts and horizontal ties that form the links of more expansive social networks—both real and virtual (internet communities etc). In the view of our experts, local informal associations of *yordim* usually develop around common work, military service, and other shared experiences in Israel.

[23] The data of the report presented by representative of the Central Statistical Bureau of the Commission of Knesset on Aliyah and Absorption are cited in Miri Khasson, "Yordim mi-haarets: Pi-5 yoter olim me-vatikim," Ynet, October 25, 2006, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3319369,00.html.

In 2012 David Mamistvalov presented an interesting picture of the development of such groups. According to his data, some 200 families of Israeli immigrants in Kharkiv (some 500-700 people) fall into several categories, not dissimilar to the ones identified by us for the countries of the CIS. Each of these categories displays its own mechanism of self-organization. The first group consists of 25-30 “emissaries” of various Israeli commercial organizations and members of their families. For the most part, these people were born in the USSR and departed for Israel at a young age (they spent some five to ten years in Israel). Members of this group lead a secluded existence, meet each other infrequently and, outside their own group, deal primarily with commercial representatives of American, Canadian, and European companies rather than with “local Jews.”
The second group consists of members of 120-130 families belonging to two categories, which Mamistvalov decided to blend into one: “re-patriates to Kharkiv due to personal and economic circumstances.” Many of them had received an education in the USSR or CIS countries (and for this reason are very popular with employers). They work as teachers, bookkeepers, office clerks, or own small businesses. For most of them motives for relocation were either a child “whom they could not support,” or parents in ill health who had to be taken care of here or to be moved from Israel, or divorce complete with the loss of property in Israel, etc.

According to Mamistvalov, most people within this group are “normative Jews” who try to establish contacts with local Jewish organizations, synagogues, representations of the Jewish Agency, the Israeli cultural center, and local Jewish organizations. They also donate money and see themselves as an active part of the Kharkiv Jewish community, where they form an “in-built Israeli component.” Aligned with this group are also former participants of the NAALE [youth emigration program] and SELA [training program for entry into Israeli colleges and universities] programs, who for a variety of reasons decided not to stay in Israel. Let us call them “potential Israelis.” These are local young Jews, graduates of Israeli education programs (“Taglit,” “MASA,” seminars for young leaders, etc.), who clearly identify with Israel, study Hebrew, and take an active part in the pro-Israeli events.

The third group encompasses several dozen 25-40 year old Israelis—married, single, and divorced—some of whom happen to have been born in Israel in the families of Russian “Sephardim.” For the most part these people operate small businesses (cafes, falafel places, shops, and stores), which gives them (by local standards) a decent income of four to eight thousand USD per month. Members of this group, who are by any definition work immigrants, are fluent in Hebrew and speak broken Russian in their everyday life. They socialize almost exclusively within their own group and on some occasions with former participants of the Israeli youth education programs NAALE and SELA. They tend to meet either in offices or at private residences, where they hold Saturday evening parties, prepare Israeli food, and watch Israeli films. Another means of strengthening their own group identity and affecting self-exclusion from the surrounding Jewish and non-Jewish environments comes in the form of frequenting stores and cafes owned by culturally kindred emigrants from Lebanon, Iran, and other Islamic states. This sets them apart from the second group, who boycott such places out of principle. The members of

this group maintain minimal contact with official community structures, except for attending synagogue on Saturdays and holidays.

Finally, the fourth group consists of twenty to thirty Israelis—work and "roving" migrants from among the wealthy business owners who run operations in construction, the real estate business, and industrial production, as well as leading specialists and top managers of large companies who are tightly connected through a system of personal and professional relationships. These Israelis, who prefer to send their children to local Jewish schools and kindergartens, are also actively involved (including as sponsors) in the operations of local Jewish organizations. In addition, they maintain formal and informal relationships with the city elites and different Jewish and non-Jewish circles due to their business and professional interests.

These examples suggest that the characteristics of groups that form within different categories of *yordim* and create the basic infrastructure of the "Israeli community" in the countries of the CIS feature two crucially important parameters. On one hand, these are different variants of intra-group relations; on the other hand, different models of interaction with different levels of the external environment, including Israelis who reside in the same city or region, the local Jewish community (both as a statistical category and as an organized institution), and the local population as a whole.

Practically all interviewed re-emigrants among the Israeli *yordim* in Ukraine told us that they tend to communicate primarily with local people. This is natural in light of the fact that these people are believed to have a weak sense of Jewish and Israeli identity and want to have nothing in common with Jews and Israelis (having grown disillusioned with Israel, they believe they did not emigrate [to Ukraine], but "returned home."). A characteristic example is an elderly woman from Odessa named Nina, who returned to her native city after eleven years in Israel (her story is presented by Marina Sapritsky in her essay about re-emigrants from Israel in Odessa). With the exception of sporadic visits to the "Gmilus Khesed" club of Jewish pensioners, Nina reportedly took no part in the Jewish life of the city and did not identify herself with the Jewish community in any way available to the Jews of Odessa today.[24]

As for the remaining five categories of Israeli immigrants, whose identity is dominated by Jewish and Israeli components (rather than Ukrainian and Russian), the majority of them stated that they communicate with local people. This, naturally, does not exclude Jews or Israelis resident in Russia. For their part, "emissaries" tend to communicate primarily with local Jews, which is also understandable given the fact that this is part of their job description. But involvement with local Jews, the affairs of local Jewish communities and the related personal, professional, and cultural networks can also be observed within other categories of *yordim*.

Our poll data allows us to draw conclusions about the degree of their involvement in the activities of Jewish communities and organizations in Ukraine and about the level of support of pro-Israeli events here. For most respondents such participation can be

[24] Sapritsky, "Home in the Diaspora?" 6.

characterized as “latent activism”: 29% of respondents do not participate in community activities (though some of these are ready to “weigh offers”), 35% regularly take part in community events, and the same number does it from time to time.

Table 5. Level of Social Activity of Respondents

Level of Participation in the Activities of the Jewish community	%
Regularly	35.4
From time to time	35.4
Do not participate	28.6
There is no Jewish community	0.7
Pro-Israel Events	
Regularly	14.6
From time to time	17.4
Do not participate, but if approached, probably won’t refuse	51.4
Not interested	16.7

Practically all respondents have access to a synagogue in their Ukrainian city. But only 20% go to the synagogue every Saturday, while an additional 18% go to the synagogue on holidays. More than a half go to the synagogue only rarely or do not go at all.

On the whole, it is possible to identify a set of parameters that determine the circle of communication and the level of public activity of respondents, including the subjects of interaction with local Jews and involvement in the activities of Jewish communities and organizations. There exist other factors for such participation, both tied with the motives for relocation and not.

Our analysis suggests that in choosing to be part of the Jewish communal environment, Israelis resident in Russia or Ukraine go by one or more “instrumental” (pragmatic) and/or “autonomous” (immaterial) socio- and egocentric considerations. This spectrum is fairly broad and includes an interest in the adequate expression of ethnic, religious, and cultural sentiments, the means for securing and maintaining social status, ways to realize leadership ambitions, the search for customers and investors for their own commercial projects, and other considerations.

Another parameter is socio-geographic: the presence of *yordim* that serve as a framework for cultural and economic activity in a city with a sizeable Jewish community. Understandably, the return of a person to their native city in the periphery or new

emigration to the capital brings us back at times to the question about the motives of the emigration—as well as evokes another important parameter: the degree of mastery of Hebrew.

According to our data, people are most proficient in Russian. The pilot study of 2009 revealed that they were equally competent in Ukrainian and Hebrew. The poll revealed that the level of Ukrainian language competency is higher than Hebrew. In either case, it is Russian and Hebrew that serve as the main languages of communication with Israeli society. Knowing Ukrainian, on the other hand, helps to effectively use the media space and interpersonal communication in Ukraine and in this manner facilitates integration into Ukrainian society.

Other factors of communal belonging have to do with social-demographic, above all, age parameters. Thus, according to Marina Sapritsky, elderly "returnees" in Odessa try to return to their old life in the most inconspicuous manner possible and, as a rule, avoid any red tape relating to the confirmation of their national identity (except for when they have to do the paperwork for social welfare subsidies and pensions). The majority of young "returnees" try not to forget Hebrew and take part in Jewish holidays. They often find jobs with Jewish organizations. Others within this age cohort however prefer to remain on the periphery of Jewish communal life.

The behavior of middle-aged people is determined to a considerable degree by the character of their work and their family circumstances. Those who are particularly preoccupied with a career leverage Jewish organizations as a network with a view to securing clients. Others do not find them useful and do not bother to allocate time for Jewish community involvement. Also, for families whose children went to Jewish schools, Jewish activism sometimes became a norm, prompting parents to take an active part in community affairs, whereas others—due to the lack of time or interest—preferred to remain on the sidelines. Moreover, in some cases, such divergences, determined as they are by age difference and life plans, can be observed within one family.[25]

A similar situation can be observed also in the provincial Ukrainian cities. But we do not have enough data to assert that gender, age, and other differences serve as a universal factor of the relationship between *yordim* and the local Jewish population with its communal institutions in the same fashion as do motives for relocation from Israel to the countries of the CIS.

The participants of the poll exhibit a range of opinions about the optimal organization of Israeli children in the countries of the CIS, including Ukraine. The data from two polls suggest that on average 40% of parents are of the opinion that children should be sent to schools that provide a good all-around education, while the national character of the school and the language of instruction remain of secondary importance. Compared with the first poll, there are now fewer people willing to educate their children in Hebrew within the framework of Israeli education programs (24% vs. 18%).

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[25] Ibidem, 8-11.

The choice of mode of organization of children's education depends in part on the level of religiosity of the respondents, in our case the frequency of attendance of synagogue. Those who attend the synagogue every Saturday tend to support formal Jewish education or schooling in Hebrew as part of Israeli education programs. The quality of education irrespective of the national character of school and the language of instruction takes precedence for the less religious people (those who attend the synagogue only rarely).

In summary, the life of most Israelis in Ukraine, Russia, and other countries of the CIS unfold on three social planes. Economic and professional activities take place within the framework of local societies and only to a small degree within the framework of the Jewish community. The Jewish ethnic and religious identification of *yordim,* on the other hand, is realized as a rule through the institutions of the organized Jewish movement. Significant segments of personal and group cultural space function within the framework of the Israeli community and remain inseparable from the external Jewish and non-Jewish milieus, albeit with some constraints.

In other words, the "communal separation" of Israelis in Ukraine is not rigid, and in contrast to North America these communities are institutionalized to a considerable degree within the structures of the larger Jewish community, where *yordim* (and especially darkonniki) often play a leading role. As for the associations of Israelis in Ukraine, they—with few exceptions such as the associations of Israeli students in Kyiv and Odessa described by Marina Stavitskaya[26]—tend to be informal or semi-formal and as a rule do not exceed several dozen people.

Emigration Moods

In light of such data, is there a way to determine the degree of readiness of Israeli passport holders to return to Israel? The answer to this question in our view is connected with three main sets of circumstances: the level of integration of immigrants into Ukrainian society; the presence of social "anchors" (family, good work, property, and Ukrainian citizenship); and factors of attraction in Israel itself, which are also very important.

The socialization into Ukrainian society was positively influenced by interpersonal communication of the majority of respondents with local residents, irrespective of their origin and national identity. The majority of respondents also noted that they reside in Ukraine permanently and so do their families.

By way of comparison, Israeli emigrants in Russia can be divided into two groups of roughly equal size. 47% have close relatives in Israel, while 53% have families in Russia. In this sense, the "rootedness" of Israeli immigrants in Ukraine is considerably higher than in Russia.

Table 6. Independent definition of the place of permanent residence.

[26] Ibidem, 6, footnote 9.

	Israel, %	CIS, %	“Both places”, %	Difficult to answer, %	Total, %
In which country do you reside?					
Russian selection	1.9	70.4	21.4	6.3	100
Ukrainian selection[27]	4.8	63.9	21.3		100
In which country does your family reside?					
Russian selection	14.6	53.2	32.3		100
Ukrainian selection	8.8	67.4	23.6		100

Another objective criterion is the possession of local citizenship or lack thereof. The comparative analyses of the polls conducted in Russia and Ukraine reveal that 69% and 75% of respondents respectively have citizenship or permanent residence status. In contrast to Israelis in the countries of the “West,” who view citizenship or permanent residence status as a means of making possible a permanent stay, Russian and Ukrainian passports are usually regarded as no more than an instrument for solving practical problems, such as securing employment, opening a business, “optimizing” taxation, etc. At the same time it is noteworthy that an equal number of Israelis see Ukraine and Israel as their “own” countries to the same degree (in the Russian selection 40% viewed as “own” country Israel; 35% Russia, and 25% both countries).

The research indicates that personal and emotional ties are more important factors behind the decisions of Israelis to return to Israel, while professional and employment opportunities are of secondary importance (It is a common assumption that the latter serve as additional factors that help to realize emotional and personal motivations). Our analysis demonstrated that this dependency is rather reversed when it comes to Israelis who live and work in Russia and Ukraine.

So will they go back? Once again let us compare the situation in Russia and Ukraine. Approximately one fifth of our respondents in both countries are certain they will at some

[27] The data from the Ukrainian selection exclude those respondents who had difficulty making a choice.

point return to Israel. But whereas in Russia 14% of our respondents stated they would never return to Israel, the number of Israelis who do not intend to leave Ukraine is 38%. The largest group of Israeli emigrants in Russia comprises those who do not exclude the possibility of return at some point in the future or see Israel as an option under *force majeure* circumstances. The share of such people in Russia is double that in Ukraine (more than 70% vs. 38%). All of this serves to confirm that the share of Israelis who returned to their native cities is considerably higher in the Ukrainian case, whereas the Israeli community in Russia is dominated by labor migrants.

What motives can prompt people to return to Israel? The participants of the poll were offered nine variants and asked to provide no more than three answers. Their rating can be seen in the table below.

Table 7. Main Reasons for the Possible Return to Israel.

Main reasons	Russia, N	Russia, %/rating	Ukraine, N	Ukraine, %/rating
I see no reason to return	61	36.5 (1)	45	32.8(1-2)
When I see professional opportunities and prospects	57	34.1 (2)	45	32.8 (1-2)
I will return in any case	38	22.5 (3)	27	19.3 (3)
If I feel Israel really needs me	14	8.4 (4)	25	18.2 (4)
If I receive corresponding material assistance and benefits	12	7.2 (5)	18	13.1 (5)
If I notice a considerable improvement of the economic situation	9	5.4 (6)	17	12.4 (6)
I will return, if the government is in the hands of people whom I can trust	7	4.2 (7)		
I will return if the security situation in	4	2.4 (8)		

Israel improves				
My condition for return is the end of discrimination of repatriates by the locals	2	1.2 (9)		

As we can see, both Ukrainian and Russian respondents display a similar rating of possible reasons to return to Israel. This is a testament to the fact that—differences between these subgroups of Israeli immigrants in the countries of the CIS notwithstanding—they are part of the same community.

In both cases, the largest categories are those who see no reason to return to Israel. For those who contemplate such a possibility the main motives are tied with increased opportunities for professional realization. It was precisely this motive that had prompted many to emigrate from Israel to Ukraine in the first place (see Table 1).

The data presented in the table suggest that if these people see professional opportunities to realize their potential in Israel, they will seriously consider the possibility of returning. There are no significant factors of discouragement, except for the perception of a "low glass ceiling." There are also lowered motivations for return connected with the possibility of improving one's economic situation and receiving material assistance in Israel. Particular attention should be paid to the minimal number of respondents who say they would be willing to return if there was no discrimination from indigenous Israelis. Contrary to widespread stereotypes, the departure of Russian-speaking Israelis is not the consequence of Arab terrorism or the pressure from religious authorities. These factors, in reality, play a minor role.

Our research also shows that financial support by the state of Israel to the "repatriates" not only is not so much the motive for emigration, but an additional factor that can sway those who are hesitant to make a final decision. Within this context, one has to acknowledge that as far as the "potential for return" is concerned, Israeli immigrants in the countries of the CIS are not a homogeneous group. Those most likely to return to Israel are high school and university students whose departure was not their own decision. Another highly mobile group likely to consider return to Israel are business people and specialists who travelled to Ukraine for work. Their migration plans are influenced by the economic conditions of their place of business. An economic crisis in the countries of the CIS is likely to prompt them to return to Israel.

At the same time one can identify groups that are unquestionably lost for Israel. These, for the most part, are re-emigrants, people with a negative experience of life in Israel or those who never intended to stay in the country. As for those who plan to return to Israel one day, each specific category of *yordim* displays their own narrow criteria for return. Students have one set of criteria, and families who had returned have their own, since

they could be of the opinion that children have to study in Israel. Still more different are the motives of parents who return to Israel when their son or daughter decided to complete service in the Israeli army. For professionals—doctors, nurses, teachers, and others who after many years of living abroad became estranged from their professional activities in Israel—the possibilities of professional re-integration are of primary significance.

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