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JEWISH LIFE IN UKRAINE AT THE DAWN OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PART TWO

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Local Jewish Community Organizations

Local Jewish volunteer leadership in Ukraine is most likely to emerge in the federated community organizations established and nurtured by a small number of community rabbis, such as Rabbi Kaminezki in Dnipropetrovsk (Philanthropic Fund of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish Community) or Rabbi Bleich in Kyiv (Kyiv Municipal Jewish Community), who endorse multiple Jewish community institutions. (Rabbi Vishedski of Donetsk supports a similar effort.) Federated Jewish organizations in Ukraine resemble North American Jewish federations in that they are associations engaged in community planning, fundraising, and budgeting for Jewish welfare, educational, and identity-building needs. Among their most important differences from North American federations is that, to date, each is closely associated with one particular rabbi and his synagogue. As noted, Rabbi Kaminezki has thwarted the activation of other Jewish religious and educational organizations in Dnipropetrovsk. In Kyiv, Rabbi Bleich is more welcoming to other Jewish religious groups, at least in theory; in practice, other Kyiv Jewish religious institutions are so weak (e.g., the Progressive and Masorti movements) or so confrontational (e.g., the Chabad congregation associated with Rabbi Asman) that significant collaboration is impractical.

Typically, in common with North American Jewish federations, Jewish community organizations in Ukraine have departments dealing with local activity in Jewish education, culture, welfare, and other spheres of operation. In Dnipropetrovsk, the Philanthropic Fund also includes a

department concerned with regional Jewish activity -- Jewish life in Dnipropetrovsk province (*oblast*). Each department is headed by a paid professional staff member (who also may be the director of its lead agency) and is overseen by a committee of interested volunteer leaders and professional staff, most of whom are members of the board of the organization. Unlike North American federations, the community organization includes a committee on religious support that provides financial resources for the operating costs of the synagogue and other religious institutions associated with the sponsoring rabbi.

Members of the community organization board usually are drawn from two groups of local Jews, wealthy businessmen and individuals who hold responsible professional positions in the community, such as directors of beneficiary organizations or respected academicians and physicians. Depending on the community and individual means, the businessmen are expected to contribute between \$50 and \$600 each month to the organization. Professionals may be exempt from contributions or responsible for only minor donations. Contributions to Jewish communal endeavors by indigenous Jews across Ukraine probably total more than \$3 million annually in recent years, including designated gifts for such projects as renovation of a synagogue.

Rabbis seem motivated to encourage the establishment of community organizations in response to four perceived needs: (1) introduction of order and routine into a Jewish community with a growing number of Jewish community institutions and interest groups; (2) development of financial resources to support Jewish community institutions and endeavors; (3) development of local volunteer leadership; and (4) establishment of a central Jewish community organization to represent the community in dealings with the local municipality and with national and international Jewish organizations. Most such community organizations in Ukraine are no more than three or four years old, having been established only when the scope of communal activity reached the level where such a federated system seemed advisable.

A decision by a rabbi to promote a community umbrella organization obliges the rabbi to initiate a major and enduring effort in leadership recruitment and development. Volunteerism is not common in the post-Soviet states. The style of leadership to which post-Soviet businessmen are accustomed rarely is collegial in manner. Prosperous individuals in Ukraine often are unfamiliar with the concept of accountability. Recognizing such conditions, some rabbis decline to initiate community organizational ventures, citing time commitment and a reluctance to deal with local individuals who are unfamiliar with principles of basic governance. Rabbis in smaller Jewish population centers may conclude that the likely departure of most working-age and younger Jews in the

near future does not justify the major time commitment necessary for development of a community organization.

Jewish Welfare Needs

The age structure and history of Ukrainian Jewry is testament to the enormous need for welfare services for the disproportionately large sector of the Jewish population that is elderly. According to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, at least 180,000 Jews in Ukraine are in this category. A lifetime of poor nutrition, a collapsing health care system, meager pensions, overpriced basic medicines, inadequate housing, severely degraded ecological conditions, and the trauma of twentieth-century Jewish history in Ukraine have generated an impoverished and fragile elderly Jewish population whose needs seem infinite. Their welfare will be a major challenge to the worldwide Jewish community for decades.

Contemporary Jewish octogenarians in Ukraine have lived through revolution, civil war, Stalinism (collectivization and state-induced famine, forced closure of small businesses, political terror), distortion and suppression of Jewish life, Nazi occupation of the entire country accompanied by the slaughter of 1.85 million local Jews, accusations of economic crimes in the 1960s, the emigration of younger and more vital family members beginning in the late 1970s, state-sponsored antisemitism throughout the 70-year Soviet era, and post-Soviet economic upheaval. Most elderly Jews live alone, their families destroyed during World War II and the *Katastrofa* or separated by emigration. Many reside in poorly maintained urban apartment buildings, some without elevator service, or in village bungalows, often without indoor plumbing or central heating.

The dire situation of many elderly Ukrainian Jews is alleviated by programs administered by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, known in the United States as JDC and in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states as "Dzhoint." JDC has a long and rich history in Ukraine, assisting Soviet Jews in the early post-revolutionary period through establishment of a network of childcare programs, medical stations, loan cooperatives, vocational schools, and an agricultural resettlement program known as Agro-Joint. Its efforts of this era ended when Soviet authorities expelled it from the country in 1938. JDC was invited to return to the Soviet Union some 50 years later, in 1988, during the *glasnost* period.

As a major overseas agency of the North American Jewish community,

JDC is charged by United States and Canadian Jewish federations with addressing the needs of Jews in distress wherever such international assistance is required. It currently is allocating the largest single portion of its budget, about \$17 million annually, to the post-Soviet states. It also supervises the distribution in the post-Soviet states of \$42 million annually from other organizations, \$24 million of which is provided by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), and \$9 million in grants from private foundations. About 75 percent of these funds is directed toward welfare programs, mainly for Jewish elderly. In all, the JDC budget for Ukraine alone is about \$28 million, including support from JDC itself, the Claims Conference, and several private foundations, as well as government grants administered by JDC. World Jewish Relief, a smaller British organization with a similar mission, also is active in the post-Soviet states, working with JDC and focusing its efforts on Ukraine.

Most JDC services for post-Soviet Jewish seniors are managed through local *heseds* (plural, *hasadim*), a term for welfare center derived from the Hebrew word for charity. Such centers range in size from entire buildings to small apartments or village bungalows, depending on the size of the community being served. Legally governed by a local board of directors, the membership of such boards usually is selected by the local JDC representative (an Israeli), often in coordination with the community rabbi. A variety of services are dispensed to local Jews in need, with priority given to those who are indigent, elderly or handicapped, and isolated. Many of the sixteen largest *hasadim* in Ukraine are regional centers, reaching out to provincial towns and former shtetls where only small numbers of Jews remain.

Food parcels are distributed at intervals, hot meals are served (in *hasadim*, synagogue halls, day schools, or local restaurants with which the *hesed* has contracts), and meals-on-wheels are dispatched to those who are homebound. *Heseds* sponsor Shabbat and holiday gatherings and other social events. Health-related services include medical clinics, distribution of selected pharmaceutical products, and rental of basic medical equipment, such as walkers and wheelchairs. Hairdressing is available through the *hesed*, and many *heseds* sponsor choirs, arts and crafts activities, and various interest clubs for seniors. Legal consultations may be provided. Larger *heseds* offer programs for vision- and hearing-impaired individuals. Various repair services (home, furniture, appliances, clothing and footwear, clocks and watches) are available, often performed by retired craftsmen. Laundry services are provided by some *heseds*.

Groups of eight or more elderly residing in a single neighborhood may gather in *hesed*-organized "warm homes," i.e., local apartments or

bungalows, one or more times weekly for hot meals and socializing. Holiday celebrations and health care may be organized through the warm home. "Patronage" services are extended to the homebound; these include shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, arrangement of transportation for medical appointments, etc. JDC also works with local Jewish day schools in organizing "junior *heseds*," programs in which pupils make weekly visits to homebound older Jews or to handicapped children. Special JDC support during winter months includes distribution of blankets and, in villages, supply of fuel for heating and gas balloons for gas-fired stoves. "*Hesed* mobiles," i.e., specially-equipped vans, bring services to isolated elderly in small towns.

Neither JDC nor any other large Jewish organization has defined the needs of Jewish children as a priority. Economic, social, and political turbulence in Ukraine has generated a large number of single-parent families in a society in which two incomes are necessary for family maintenance. Agreements by non-custodial parents to provide child support rarely are enforced, and custodial parents may be too beleaguered to provide proper care for their offspring. Youngsters may be found wandering the streets or living in derelict buildings or railroad stations as "street children." Others live with grandparents or other relatives who are unable to cope with the needs of active, growing children. In response, five rabbis have established homes for children from unstable family situations. Such residential programs currently exist in Kyiv (Rabbi Bleich), Dnipropetrovsk (Rabbi Kaminezki), Odesa (Rabbi Baksht), Korosten (Rabbi Berger), and Zhytomyr (Rabbi Wilhelm). JDC provides occasional donations, such as kitchen equipment, to some of these facilities, but does not offer any sustained funding for such programs. World Jewish Relief has been more forthcoming, providing assistance to the residences for Jewish children in Dnipropetrovsk and Odesa.

Services to Jewish special-needs youngsters in Dnipropetrovsk have been organized by private donors in Boston through a sister-city relationship between the two Jewish communities. World Jewish Relief also has assisted this group. Chava, a local grassroots organization in Kyiv that receives a modest subsidy from JDC, is attempting to serve several hundred impoverished single-parent Jewish families, some of which include handicapped children.

Jewish Education

Opportunities in Jewish education vary from city to city, but most urban areas with a rabbinic presence offer a Jewish preschool, day school, and

some form of adult education. The number of programs is roughly analogous to the size of the local Jewish population, although exceptions to this rule do occur. As noted, one of the five cities in Ukraine with a residential Jewish school is Korosten, whose Jewish population is about 800.

Approximately 22 Jewish day schools operate in Ukraine, including four in Kyiv, three in Odesa, and two each in Kharkiv and Zaporizhya. Fifteen are sponsored in part by Ohr Avner, the educational organization associated with the Chabad-linked Federation of Jewish Communities. The Karlin-Stolin hasidic movement supervises schools in Kyiv and Lviv, and the Masorti movement in Israel (through the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem) provides guidance to a day school in Chernivtsi. Ohr Somayach operates a school in Odesa, and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (OU, in New York) sponsors a school in Kharkiv. World ORT Union supervises secular Jewish day schools in Kyiv and Odesa and, in recognition of the authority of Rabbi Kaminezki in Dnipropetrovsk, installed its computer technology laboratories and curriculum in the Chabad school there in September 2000.

As in many western and central European countries, a combination of state and local education authorities accredits and finances the general studies programs of religious day schools. Through its Tsofia program, the Ministry of Education in Israel subsidizes Israeli teachers of Jewish subjects in most Ukrainian Jewish day schools. No Jewish day school in Ukraine charges tuition, although some require payment for school uniforms and for meals. Families unable to absorb these expenses receive subsidies from the schools. Many schools provide some medical services to all pupils as well as clothing and food to needy families.

Enrollment in Ukrainian Jewish day schools ranges from fewer than 75 pupils in smaller towns to over 600 in the single school in Dnipropetrovsk. Other large schools with more than 400 pupils are in Kyiv (Karlin-Stolin), Kharkiv (Chabad), and Odesa (both Ohr Somayach and ORT). The majority of Jewish day schools in Ukraine offer eight class periods weekly in Jewish subjects (usually four class hours of Hebrew language and four hours of a combination of classes in Jewish tradition, Jewish history, and Jewish culture). More rigorous Jewish curricula are found in the Orthodox Union and Ohr Somayach schools in Kharkiv and Odesa respectively, each supported by large numbers of qualified Judaic studies teachers from Israel. The Karlin-Stolin school in Kyiv also offers a more comprehensive Jewish studies curriculum, and Rabbi Kaminezki in Dnipropetrovsk offers parallel yeshiva and machon tracks for boys and girls, along with the more conventional eight-hour programs. Rabbi Moskowitz in Kharkiv provides a similar option for middle and high school boys in Kharkiv. In all such comprehensive programs, qualified

Judaic studies teachers must be brought into Ukraine from Israel or other countries.

Most Chabad schools and those associated with ORT and the Israeli Ministry of Education Tsofia program accept large minority enrollments of *halakhically* non-Jewish children from intermarried families. The Karlin-Stolin and Ohr Somayach schools register only, or predominantly, those children who are Jewish according to *halakhah* (Jewish law).

In compliance with Ukrainian law, local individuals must serve as principals of all Ukrainian schools, occasionally creating tension between local secular administrators and rabbis or religiously observant teachers. Perhaps the most notorious case exists in Zaporizhyya, where the principal of the secular Tsofia school is a local woman hostile to Judaism and Zionism. As a result, the Israeli government is providing financial support to an educational institution that approaches a Bundist orientation, perhaps the only such school in the successor states. Well-connected with officials in the city government, the principal has resisted all attempts by either the Tsofia program or Rabbi Nachum Ehrentroi, the chief rabbi of the city, to effect her replacement. In frustration, Rabbi Ehrentroi opened a Chabad school during the 2000-2001 academic year, although the relatively small Jewish population of Zaporizhyya may not be able to support a second day school.

All Jewish day schools in Ukraine, including those operating under hasidic auspices, offer strong general studies curricula. Ukrainian law requires a full complement of secular subjects, and all rabbis recognize that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian Jewish parents favor a strong university preparatory education for their children. In fact, rabbis acknowledge that the Jewish religious component of their schools rarely is an attraction for parents wishing to enroll their youngsters in a Jewish day school. More often, parents are searching for an alternative to the general public schools, which have deteriorated in post-Soviet Ukraine. The major appeal to Ukrainian Jewish parents of a Jewish day school education for their children is the strength of the general studies program, instruction in the English language, computer studies and other technology curricula, good teachers, small classes, discipline, a warm and supportive atmosphere, an absence of antisemitism, and free or heavily subsidized nutritious school meals and welfare programs. Those families who are considering aliyah to Israel also are attracted by Hebrew language instruction and other Israel-oriented programs that may prepare their children for absorption in Israel.

Salary bonuses and good teaching conditions encourage competent general studies teachers to seek employment in Jewish day schools. However, a growing number of private secular or church-related schools

are offering even higher compensation, providing competition with day schools for the most highly qualified teachers of secular subjects.

About 20 Jewish preschools operate in Ukraine, most sponsored by community rabbis. The Joint Distribution Committee, which plays only a minor role in Jewish day schools, is active in the preparation of curricula and teaching materials, as well as the training of teachers, for Jewish preschools.

A new JDC early childhood education venture is the Mazal Tov program, which provides educational activities for very young children and their mothers. New mothers bring infants to *heseds*, where the children are cared for by elderly women enrolled in *hesed* programs for seniors. The young mothers attend concurrent classes on childcare, pediatric nutrition, Jewish holidays, and Jewish customs. As the children grow older, they enter educational programs at the *hesed* and then are referred to Jewish preschools in the community. The Mazal Tov program rents cribs, carriages, age-appropriate toys, and other childhood items to families, just as the *hesed* lends walkers, wheelchairs, and other aids to Jewish elderly.

Approximately 80 Jewish Sunday schools exist in Ukraine, the majority sponsored by the Ministry of Education in Israel. Most are secular in outlook and focus on basic Hebrew, Jewish and Israeli holidays, a secular interpretation of Jewish tradition, and Jewish and Israeli history. Many families planning aliyah enroll their children in such programs, perceiving them as preparatory learning experiences for new lives in Israel. The very focus on Israel and aliyah generates instability in enrollment and causes the closure of some schools every year; some re-open when a new group of families begins to think about departure and desires that their children be introduced to Israel through Sunday school classes.

A minority of Sunday schools are sponsored or cosponsored by other organizations, including Chabad, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Masorti Olami, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and local groups. Not surprisingly, schools operating under the auspices of a religious movement are more likely to have a stronger focus on Jewish tradition.

Various post-secondary school options are available in formal Jewish education. Several Orthodox rabbis sponsor small yeshivas in their cities. In most such programs, rabbinic ordination is conferred only after students spend several years in established yeshivot abroad. The Beit Chana Jewish Women's Pedagogical Institute was founded in Dnipropetrovsk by Rabbi Kaminezki in 1996. Enrolling more than 120 older adolescent girls and young women, it trains teachers in three- and

four-year courses for employment in post-Soviet Jewish pre-schools and day schools -- in general education, Jewish education, music, and special needs. Tuition and room and board are provided free of charge. The program is partially subsidized by the Israeli government and encourages aliyah of graduates after several years of teaching in the post-Soviet states.

International Solomon University, a Kyiv commercial institution established in 1992, includes a Judaic studies department enrolling 135 students in Kyiv and another 15 students at a new branch in Kharkiv. According to specialists in Moscow familiar with progress in Judaic studies throughout the post-Soviet states, the Judaic studies program in Kharkiv is stronger than that in Kyiv. Some graduates of the Kyiv program are employed by local Jewish organizations, including JDC.

The Institute of Judaica in Kyiv is a small research center headed by Dr. Leonid Finberg, an internationally recognized sociologist. The Institute pursues work in Jewish history, Jewish demography and sociology, academic and popular publishing on Jewish themes, and other areas. It is supported by grants from the Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, the Kyiv Municipal Jewish Community, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (New York), and the American Jewish Committee.

Aish Hatorah, an international Jewish outreach organization, began operations in Kyiv in the late 1990s and opened a large center in Kyiv's historic Podil district in 1999. It attracts nearly 1,000 learners, most on a monthly basis, but some are full time students and many others attend daily or weekly classes while working or pursuing a full study program in secular institutions. The Aish Hatorah facility sustained serious damage in a suspicious fire in early 2000.

The Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine, established in Kyiv in 1993, trains Jewish studies teachers for positions in day schools, using a two-year, part-time seminar format that attracts individuals who have college degrees in other fields. A small number of students may enter directly upon graduation from Jewish day schools. It also has prepared a curriculum and teacher workshops on the Holocaust for teachers in non-Jewish schools, and operates a web site on Jewish holidays and on teaching methodology for Jewish studies teachers in day schools and other educational settings. CJEU has been active in organizing Jewish Sunday schools, informal Jewish education programs, and a modest revival of klezmer music in Ukraine. It attempts to function as a central clearing house for Jewish education in Ukraine, although it appears that the numerous educational institutions associated with Chabad are

disinclined to work with it. The majority of CJEU funding is provided by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine. The Jewish Community Development Fund (American Jewish World Service) has supported several specific CJEU projects, including the web site and a klezmer festival and workshop in Crimea.

The Tkuma Scientific-Educational Center located in Dnipropetrovsk began operations as a Holocaust center in March 2000. Professionally staffed and equipped, Tkuma concentrates on research and publications, museum development, and teaching and methodology. To date, its teaching and methodology endeavors, including seminars for public school teachers, have focused on eastern Ukraine and have not conflicted with the work of CJEU in Kyiv. However, a similarly specific Holocaust institute is under development in a facility near Babi Yar in Kyiv. Tkuma is supported by JDC, which also will support the new Babi Yar center, and by the Philanthropic Fund of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish Community.

Several large archival collections -- in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, and other cities - - are believed to contain significant and largely unexplored Jewish historical materials. Insufficient funding deters exploration of these resources. A significant collection of Jewish manuscripts, books, and other printed material is housed in the Vernadsky Library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.

The primary form of informal Jewish education for youngsters in Ukraine is residential summer camping in sessions ranging from one to four weeks, depending on the sponsoring institutions. The largest camp operations are organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel and by Chabad. JAFI sponsors a dozen or more eight-day camp sessions each summer, mainly for adolescents, in various regions of Ukraine; it also offers several encampments for younger children with their parents and for university students. Additionally, the Jewish Agency provides some subsidy to youth camps operated by several other groups, including Chabad, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (at a site near its school in Kharkiv), Karlin-Stolin hasidim, Masorti Olami, and the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Chabad operates summer camps for youngsters between the ages of six and thirteen at six different sites in Ukraine; in most instances, sessions are three to four weeks long and are convened separately for girls and boys. JDC and several rabbis sponsor family camps, four- to ten-day periods that combine recreational activity with instruction in Jewish practice that later can be pursued at home. Convened at lodges and conference centers, winter camps of three to six days' duration are very popular with adolescents, students, and family groups. JAFI, JDC, Hillel, and a number

of rabbis are among the sponsors of such sessions. All camps are heavily subsidized, charging participants only a fraction of actual costs.

A major priority for the Joint Distribution Committee in its most recent post-Soviet operations has been the establishment of Jewish community centers. With an emphasis on Jewish cultural and informal educational activities, JDC endeavors to attract children, youth, and adults not currently engaged in other Jewish community programs. Whereas some centers in large cities occupy entire buildings, others are limited to a few rooms in modest apartments or to small cottages. Typically, Jewish community centers in Ukraine offer various art and culture programs for children, lectures and classes for adults, clubs for interest groups, Israeli folk dancing, holiday celebrations, and similar activities designed to enhance Jewish identity and encourage Jewish practice. Centers may house small theaters and encourage the formation of amateur drama groups, klezmer ensembles, community choirs, and similar activities. Some of the larger centers, such as those in Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv, also include computer technology centers.

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life has established Jewish student groups in major Ukrainian Jewish population centers, providing one of the very few extra-curricular activities for students attending Ukraine's impoverished post-secondary educational institutions. As in its American programs, Hillel provides socializing opportunities and a variety of Jewish educational, spiritual, and cultural programs. Activist Hillel members train as student leaders and also engage in various service projects, such as assisting at heseds and mentoring Jewish children. One of the better known projects occurs at Pesach, when teams of Hillel students journey to smaller Jewish population centers to conduct seders for otherwise isolated Jewish groups. Similar community visits are undertaken at Hannukah and, several times each year, on Shabbat.

Popular Jewish universities, i.e., adult Jewish education programs, are active in several cities, often employing recently retired local academics to teach courses about various periods of Jewish history and other subjects. JDC subsidizes some of these endeavors. Rabbis in some cities also offer classes in Jewish studies; for elderly Jews, such learning opportunities may be a component of a multi-faceted seniors program. A more standardized form of adult Jewish education is provided through the Israel Open University, which has translated into Russian several of its correspondence courses in Jewish history and other subjects.

Both the Jewish Agency for Israel and Israel Cultural Centers (in consular offices) organize Hebrew-language ulpan across Ukraine. Jewish identity programming, including three-day family seminars at conference

centers, is built into many JAFI ulpanes.

Russian-language Jewish newspapers are published in numerous Jewish population centers. Most are subsidized by funds from local rabbis, JDC, JAFI, Israel Cultural Centers, and/or other sources. Some rabbis are able to obtain local television time on a weekly or monthly basis for community news, interviews, holiday information, and other topics of interest to the Jewish population. No Jewish music or drama ensemble of high quality exists in Ukraine; however, performances of visiting Jewish artists are well received.

Although ownership of home computers by Ukrainian Jews is far less common than is the situation among American Jews, the existence of computer laboratories in most day schools, Israel Cultural Centers, and many JAFI facilities in large cities, as well as the development of computer workshops in Jewish community centers, suggests that this medium of communications is overdue for exploitation in post-Soviet Jewish education programs. Efforts to date in online Russian-language Jewish education by ORT and such academic institutions as the Lookstein Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Bar-Ilan University and the Israel Open University appear to have been poorly organized and severely underfunded.

Community Property

Impeding the initiation and maintenance of many potential programs for Ukrainian Jewry is the paucity of available Jewish community premises at a reasonable cost. According to the Committee on Preservation of the Jewish Heritage, an affiliate of the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, more than 2,000 Jewish community buildings (synagogues, schools, hospitals, orphanages, theaters, etc.) that were confiscated from the Jewish community during the Soviet period remain standing in Ukraine. Few of these have been returned to the Jewish community, and most that have been recovered require extensive and costly renovation. Compensation for use of these buildings by other groups has not been forthcoming. Jewish organizations are forced to purchase or rent facilities that few can afford.

Although the Ukrainian national government has, on occasion, made supportive statements, it has not been consistent or persuasive in demanding the return of confiscated Jewish community property to contemporary Jewish community organizations. Except in the case of choral synagogues in a few cities that local governments prefer be restored (at the expense of the Jewish community) for purposes of

enhancing the city's prestige, municipalities also have failed to endorse claims by local Jewish organizations to historic Jewish property. Whereas the continuing decline in the Jewish population may reduce the need for premises in the future, the current need is acute and an impediment to the development of many programs with great promise for strengthening local Jewish populations.

Emigration

Between 30,000 and 35,000 Jews emigrate from Ukraine annually, with 20,000 to 25,000 going to Israel in recent years and others departing for Germany, the United States, and other countries. The number of Ukrainian Jews moving to Israel exceeds that from Russia, both in absolute numbers and in relation to the local Jewish population. Surveys by the Jewish Agency for Israel show that economic conditions, concern for the future of children in the family, and family reunification are the most important factors in generating aliyah to Israel. Even well-educated people find it difficult to live in economic dignity in contemporary Ukraine; among recent emigres are significant numbers of engineers, scientists, and others with advanced degrees. Exceptionally generous welfare benefits are the primary attraction of Germany to Ukrainian and other post-Soviet Jews, 80 percent of whom remain among the long-term unemployed in that country.

As in other post-Soviet states, the number of non-Jewish emigrants joining Jews in emigrating from Ukraine is large, reflecting both the high rate of intermarriage and some degree of fraud in claiming immigrant status in Israel. Israeli diplomats in consular offices in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, or Odesa interview every adult who applies for a visa, attempting to confirm the legitimacy of requests under the Israeli Law of Return. Fraudulent claims about Jewish ancestry are widespread in the post-Soviet states as non-Jewish individuals seek better economic opportunities in other countries. Falsified documents are easy to obtain, a situation necessitating laborious examination of government and other records by Israeli authorities. After numerous difficulties in the earlier years of the current emigration wave, Israeli officials believe that new verification methods assure that far fewer ineligible individuals are successful in gaining immigration rights than was the case several years ago. Perhaps 50 to 60 percent of all immigrants from Ukraine are Jews according to *halakhah*. The remaining immigrants are eligible under the Law of Return, i.e., they have at least one Jewish grandparent or are married to a Jew.

The highest priority of the Jewish Agency for Israel is the encouragement

of aliyah, i.e., immigration to Israel. A second priority, the promotion of Jewish and Zionist identification, reinforces the first. JAFI operates extensive programs in Ukraine (and other post-Soviet states) toward fulfillment of these goals and also sponsors programs in Israel aimed at absorbing new immigrants into Israeli society.

The Jewish Agency maintains large missions directed by Israelis in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa. Smaller offices, also headed by Israelis, are in Lviv, Donetsk, and Simferopol. Local coordinators, almost all of whom have completed training courses in Ukraine and/or Israel, direct more than 75 offices in smaller Jewish population centers; many of these modest bureaus are located in the apartments of the coordinators. Flight stations, i.e., departure points for emigration to Israel, are maintained in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa.

About 16,000 adults enroll annually in JAFI Hebrew-language ulpan that are held in cities and towns across Ukraine. Recognizing that few Jewish adults in the post-Soviet states are familiar with their Jewish heritage, Jewish identity programming was added to the language curriculum in 2000. The Jewish identity syllabus includes Jewish history, tradition, religion, and Zionism, and is taught in two components: 40 lessons during the conventional five-month ulpan (two hours of Hebrew and one hour of tradition each week) and a 40-hour seminar (Friday to Sunday) that enables participants to participate in Sabbath rituals. The seminar is conducted for ulpan students and their families in a resort or other setting conducive to informal education.

In addition to ulpan, JAFI operates classes in computer technology geared to employment needs in Israel, various clubs for interest groups, and other activities designed to encourage and facilitate aliyah. An interview process aids potential immigrants in evaluating absorption, employment, and residential options in Israel. Some departing Jews receive assistance from relatives already in Israel in resolving these issues.

JAFI also offers numerous activities for children, adolescents, and students. Various clubs meet for leisure-time activities, including computer lessons. About 3,500 Jewish youth, mainly adolescents, attend JAFI camps in Ukraine each summer, and a smaller number participate in winter camps. Camps and seminars are also organized for university students.

The JAFI absorption structure in Israel includes programs designed for specific groups. Na'aleh, operated in cooperation with the Israeli government, is a high school program in which adolescents complete the last three years of pre-college education in an approved Israeli secondary

school. Upon graduation, they either return to Ukraine (or another post-Soviet state) or remain in Israel, entering the Israel Defense Forces or a service program and then Israeli post-secondary education. More than 90 percent of Na'aleh participants have elected to remain in Israel as new immigrants, usually followed within a few years by their parents and other family members. Selah is a year-long study program that prepares recent high school graduates for entry into Israeli universities. Chalom prepares high school graduates for admission into Israeli vocational, technical, and paraprofessional training programs. Additional absorption plans are geared toward young adults who have completed an ulpan in Ukraine or who have formed groups in Ukraine that emigrate and study together in Israel. Still other absorption programs are designed for young families or for individuals in specific professions.

The high rate of Jewish emigration has offended the Ukrainian government, which appears to regard the departure of so many well-educated citizens as embarrassing and as threatening to its future interests. Its response has been both petty and substantive. It requested that JAFI headquarters in Kyiv conceal emigration figures on charts in its office; JAFI complied by installing blinds over the charts, opening them for staff meetings. Jewish Agency employees in Ukraine have been subject to occasional harassment, and JAFI installations, such as summer camps, have been targets of nuisance inspections by government sanitation and other regulatory agencies that often appear indifferent to possible code violations in institutions of other organizations. The Ukrainian government has twice declined to renew five-year agreements with JAFI permitting adolescents to participate in the Na'aleh program, relenting in the mid-1990s and later in 2000 only after significant delays that impaired Na'aleh operations. Pressure from both the Israeli and United States governments, as well as from several international Jewish groups, was required to effect the necessary accords. Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of these incidents, which generally do not occur in other post-Soviet states, few observers anticipate an attempt by the Ukrainian government to terminate or significantly curtail Jewish emigration; Ukraine is too eager to become integrated into the European community of nations to risk condemnation for obstructing emigration of its residents.

Another Israeli organization that plays a critical role in emigration of Jews from the post-Soviet states is Nativ (formerly known as Lishkat Hakesher), known in English as the Liaison Bureau. Established in 1952 in the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel to develop and manage Israeli government policy toward the large Jewish population in the Soviet Union, Nativ remains active today. It controls the issuance of Israeli visas through four Israeli consular offices in Ukraine, bureaus that are contained within Israel Cultural Centers. These Centers also operate

ulpan, sponsor various Israeli-oriented clubs, and oversee Israeli Ministry of Education programs in the post-Soviet states. In some activities, the Centers duplicate the work of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Future Prospects

The Jewish population of Ukraine is in catastrophic demographic decline, a process that will exhaust its emigration pool within a decade or so, leaving the country with a severely depleted and disproportionately old and infirm Jewish population of perhaps 50,000 to 75,000 individuals. Five groups will be among those who remain. First, the overwhelming majority will be elderly and ailing Jews who are too frail physically or emotionally to adjust to life in a new country. Second, a significant number of assimilated individuals with some Jewish ancestry will remain, indifferent or hostile to any relationship with the Jewish people. Third, a small group of professionals and intellectuals who identify as Jews may find it difficult to separate from the Slavic culture in which they have been educated and socialized. Fourth, a cohort of professional and paraprofessional Jewish community personnel will operate various programs and services for those Jews who remain. Finally, a very small number of wealthy Jews will foresee continuing opportunities for personal prosperity in Ukraine, although it is likely that some of these individuals will divide their time between Ukraine and more comfortable countries abroad.

Among the most problematic of remaining Jewish populations are those who continue to reside in smaller towns and villages, many of them a great distance from larger centers. Not only do most such remnant Jewish populations lack the critical mass for development of a Jewish community infrastructure capable of addressing basic welfare needs, but the general environment in which they live is hostile to the sustenance of human dignity. Delivery of human services in such circumstances is difficult and costly. Oddly, some foreign Jews and international Jewish organizations persist in encouraging "community-building" in these areas, although local conditions suggest strongly that "community," even if bolstered by foreign assistance, cannot survive. Romance and nostalgia for the simple shtetl life of the imagination apparently continue to generate such dubious efforts.

It is likely that most of the international Jewish organizations currently working in Ukraine will persist in their endeavors for the next ten to fifteen years, although some, such as the Jewish Agency, will reduce the level of their operations as the emigration pool declines. In the immediate future, new programs will appear and existing ventures may expand as

additional philanthropic foundations are attracted to the area and sister-city relationships between North American Jewish federations or congregations and post-Soviet Jewish communities continue to develop. However, discussion of a Jewish renaissance in Ukraine, even in the short term, appears to be misguided. Observers concur that only a minority of contemporary Ukrainian Jews, estimated at no more than 25 percent in the large urban areas where the Jewish population is concentrated and perhaps 40 percent in smaller and remote locations, are active in Jewish life. Further, the majority of those who participate in some form of Jewish activity appear to do so primarily in search of material assistance, such as support for needs of Jewish elderly, rather than for reasons of fulfilling spiritual needs or building Jewish identity. The minority of younger individuals who participate in formal or informal Jewish education programs often do so as a prelude to aliyah; few are likely to become builders of a future Jewish community in Ukraine.

Some service providers, such as JDC, will remain for the indefinite future as their assistance will be required by a declining Jewish population unable to support itself. Although the number of indigenous Jews occupying professional positions in both welfare and Jewish identity-building endeavors is likely to increase as current education and training programs produce qualified specialists, it is likely that foreign Jews will continue to predominate in policy-setting positions. Foreigners also will continue to direct various educational programs for the small populations of younger Jews who remain.

Judaism as a belief system or as a routine of Jewish observance is unlikely to gain widespread favor among a population so alienated from Jewish tradition for so many decades. Nonetheless, some Ukrainian Jews appear to enjoy participation in holiday events and in selected Jewish customs on a periodic basis. Foreign rabbis will continue to serve in the larger remaining Jewish population centers as their various skills and programs are necessary in a culture starved for leadership and Jewish content adapted to Ukrainian reality. The prestige and authority accorded to rabbis enables them to exercise profound influence among a population unsure of itself. However, given the unfortunate record of their sponsors and colleagues in causing division and injury to the Jewish community of Russia, some observers now contemplate even the most gifted members of the dominant Chabad rabbinate in Ukraine with skepticism and concern. Few are confident that Chabad, under the influence of its current major benefactors, can avoid political entanglements of the type that have so tarnished its accomplishments in Russia.

Although vast claims to the scope of its operations in Ukraine are made by some individuals associated with the World Union for Progressive

Judaism, its program is superficial, deeply flawed, and seriously underfinanced. Only the presence of skilled and adequately funded Progressive rabbis will permit Progressive Judaism to thrive and find resonance among Ukrainian Jews. Similarly, the failure of Masorti Judaism to post even one rabbi in Ukraine suggests that it too will have little influence among Ukrainian Jews.

Some improvement in relations between the major international Jewish organizations working in Ukraine has been realized in recent years. Nonetheless, the level of cooperation and collaboration between them often seems dependent upon the good will and wisdom of individual Israelis serving as local agents, rather than on articulated policies established by the organizations themselves. JDC draws criticism for its perceived arrogance in relating to other institutions, a situation that will persist and perhaps intensify as indigenous groups assert themselves and as North American and European Jewish communities pursue sister-city relationships with Ukrainian Jewish communities. Whereas a 1999 change of professional leadership in Nativ appears to have smoothed some of the brusqueness long associated with that organization, several of its programs duplicate those of the Jewish Agency and some of its policies regarding Jewish education might be better determined by organizations more experienced in working with diaspora populations, such as the Jewish Agency. In its unrelenting pursuit of emigration of Ukrainian Jews to Israel, the Jewish Agency irritates those organizations that prefer to encourage the development of Jewish community in Ukraine. Here, however, JAFI raises a fundamental question that others sometimes seem unwilling to contemplate, i.e., whether it is prudent and just to strive to maintain indigenous Jewish populations in an unfavorable environment. The question is particularly relevant to younger Jews who are likely to respond well to absorption efforts in more vigorous societies that also are more favorable to the sustenance of Jewish life.

Even as aliyah continues to attract young families with children, Jewish service agencies will be asked to commit more resources to Jewish children in Ukraine. As noted, several rabbis in Ukraine have developed residential programs for children in distress, and almost all community rabbis operate children's welfare programs within day schools, providing hot meals, clothing to those in need, and some level of medical care. Nearly all such efforts operate under severe financial constraints, and many children in distress remain without Jewish community support. Whether the needs of Jewish children in Ukraine become a priority within the Jewish world remains to be seen.

Although many Ukrainian Jews require little incentive to join family members already in Israel, the absorption process in Israel requires

expansion and strengthening if Israel is to attract the tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews considering resettlement abroad. The inability of various youth and young adult absorption programs -- Naaleh, Selah, Chalom, and others -- to accommodate all interested potential immigrants from Ukraine is well documented. Housing, employment, and other educational opportunities for immigrants are additional areas that require attention. Recognizing that many immigrants of the 1990s have become part of a subculture more concerned with maintaining a Russian lifestyle than with joining the larger Israeli nation and society, authorities in Israel would do well to develop additional programs for new immigrants that address questions of Jewish and Israeli identity. Recent collaborative efforts between the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Ministry of Absorption, each of which is responsible for different segments of the absorption process, provide hope that some improvement may be forthcoming in this important area. However, it is likely that cooperation alone will be insufficient to address problems in absorption. Here, as in many other areas affecting Ukrainian Jews, additional funding is required.

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Note: All place names use Ukrainian orthography, with the Russian name in parentheses in certain cases.

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