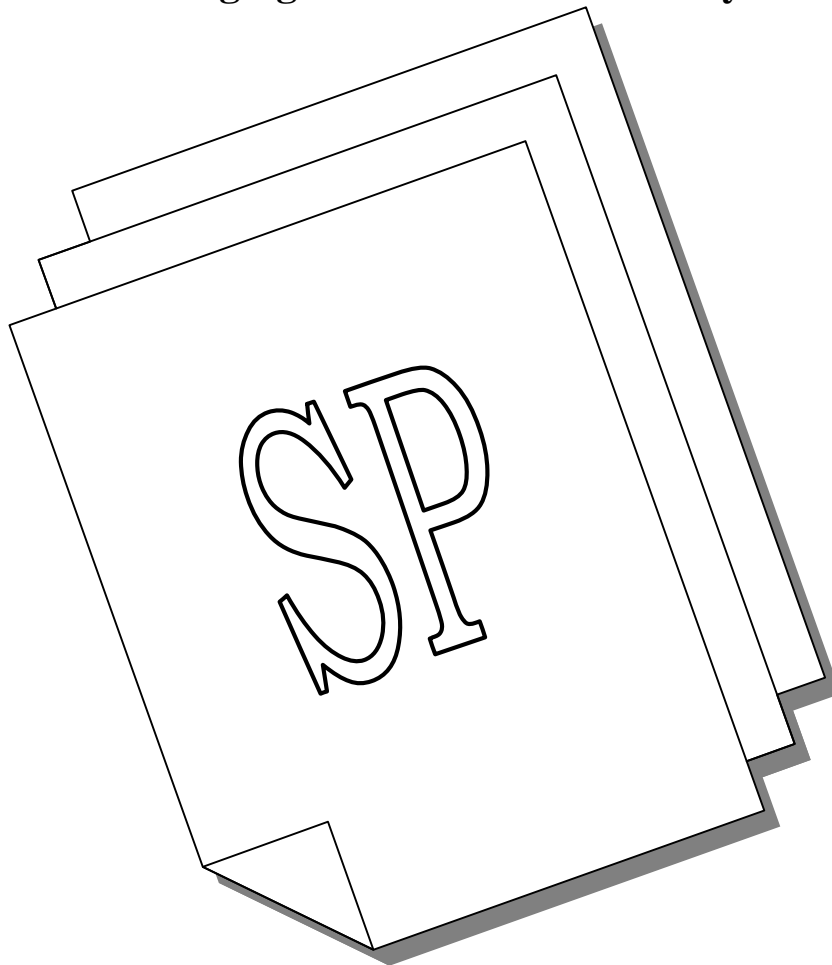


Sociological Papers

From State Socialism to State Judaism: 'Russian' Immigrants in Israel and their Attitudes towards Religion

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Christian Immigrants in the Holy Land

The qualitative study included interviews with five FSU immigrants (two men and three women) who identify as practicing Christians. Three of them (Ruslan, Sergei and Marina) are members of a multi-confessional Christian community (church) called Living Israel (*Zhivoi Israel* in Russian) in the vicinity of Beer-Sheba; one (Tanya) is an Adventist and one (Larissa) is not affiliated with a regular church. *Zhivoi Israel* is a curious case of a New-Age style Christian parish; the community includes around 100 members of diverse age and social status, including many nuclear families. They hold services on Saturdays in a large hangar turned into church/social club. Services include live music and a lot of singing and dancing, with the atmosphere resembling American Black churches. There is a youth church band, in which their pastor participates (and writes songs for); special services for the children are held in a separate room. Apparently, a service with non-liturgical music, singing and dancing is in stark contrast to traditional Russian Orthodox Church atmosphere, so this particular community is rather exotic and stands out among other religious parishes Russian immigrants join. Adepts of more traditional religiosity (like Larissa) avoid this church and call it ‘a circus.’ The church arranges for the members’ transportation on Shabbat when there is no public transport (many have no cars) and offers meals; it also serves as a site of holiday celebrations, weddings, memorial services, and other lifecycle events. The members form a closely-knit support community and help each other with various everyday matters – finding jobs, health care providers, child-minding, etc.

We start by introducing the brief profiles of our informants (using aliases). For all married informants mentioned below – both spouses were church members and children often participated too. All of them, except Marina, had become Christians back in their home cities and actively sought a local community to join upon migration.

Larissa (42) is half-Jewish (on her father’s side), married to a Russian man and has two teenage daughters. She arrived in Israel in 2000 from a south Russian city of Rostov and continues to work as math teacher (her original occupation) in a Beer-Sheba school. She is closer to traditional Orthodox Christianity than others and hence did not join the nearby parish of *Zhivoi Israel* which she describes more like a “singing society” than a church. She tries to attend a mass at least once a month in one of Jerusalem’s Russian churches. Every year on the Easter holiday, Larissa and her family travel to the St. Mary Church in Galilee that she considers a truly holy place and herself - a member of this parish. Larissa is an articulate woman with independent (and often harsh) opinions on the matters of Judaism and Israeli realities. The almost full interview with her (in the Russian original) appears in the end of this article.

Marina (31) is Jewish and married to a Jewish man whom she met in the church. She came to Israel with the Youth Aliyah program after finishing high school in Belorussia in 1998, with the intention to continue to the university in Israel, but has failed to get admitted and for many years has labored in various unskilled jobs. Marina was introduced to the church *Zhivoi Israel* by a friend and has been a steady member for 4-5 years.

Tania (29) is Russian and single; she is a graduate student of English at Ben-Gurion University and has several part-time jobs to support herself, including one as a TA in

her academic department. She came to Israel in 2003 from Tashkent with her mother (who had discovered the Jewish origin of a long-lost paternal grandfather). Both women had joined the Seventh Day Adventist community (also of western missionary kind) back in Tashkent and upon settling in Beer-Sheba ‘transferred’ to the local Adventist society, which assisted them in all daily adjustment matters in Israel. Tania understands her move to Israel as a religious calling that she has conceded to, regardless of her own wishes.

Sergei (33) is Russian married to a half-Jewish woman with whom he came to Israel from Moldova in 2001. He used to be a heavy drinker who drifted between temporary jobs; at one time he owned a stand in the street market and got into trouble with local racketeers; Israel was a refuge for him and his family. In Israel, Sergei and his friend have opened a small medical business, offering treatment to orthopedic patients with Korean massage beds imported from Russia. He is active in *Zhivoi Israel* community.

Ruslan (36) is half-Jewish, married and a father of two. He came to Israel in 2001 from Kishinev after having started formal religious studies there and proceeded on this path in Israel, becoming a founder and pastor of *Zhivoi Israel* church. Ruslan is supported by members’ donations and serves in many different functions – religious, social and organizational. He had learned the informal, social style of church services from Charismatic Christian missionaries back in his Moldova in the early 1990s and implemented it in the church he organized later in Beer-Sheba.

Below we present some highlights from the interviews, performed after the services in the church premises or at home (with Larissa and Tania). The interviews lasted on the average 1.5 hours; they were tape-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Becoming a Christian

As it often happens, most informants had been driven into the Christian fold by other people, often in the moments of crisis, personal loss or a difficult transition. Thus, Ruslan and Marina befriended active Christians or missionaries and started visiting Church and reading the Bible on their encouragement. For example, Marina told:

I was not a believer before coming to Israel. When I lived in Belorussia, I generally had no spiritual interests; I was just an easy-going girl and spent most of my time hanging out with friends, partying... I didn't want to study or work hard. But there was no money, no security...so my parents decided that I would be better off in Israel and persuaded me to make Aliyah. I came to stay on the kibbutz and learn Hebrew, but I was very lonely and unhappy in these initial months. This is when I started thinking about G-d and looking for other believers around me – there were several Christian women who came to work on the kibbutz farm...I was in a bad moral state, increasingly sliding down, missing the classes and work shifts...this is when I met this older woman who became a real friend of mine and brought me to the church.

Pastor Ruslan told that his paternal grandfather had been a rabbi and often spoke to him about G-d when he was a little boy; he also introduced him to the Bible. Later, as an adolescent during the turbulent post-soviet years in his native Kishinev, Ruslan met a group of western Christian missionaries, who were singing and talking to young people inviting them to join the church. He liked them a lot and gladly joined the community, later choosing religious studies in a seminary as a vocation. Ruslan underscores that he detests the separation between various religions and churches and

that he always leaned towards ecumenical streams of believers who assert that G-d is one (Jesus Christ, naturally); confessional fights about which religion is right make no sense to him. He made a special effort to build a religious community open to all Christian believers, including Orthodox, Catholics, Baptist and any others, except Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses who, in his view, are more like closed sects. Ruslan also stressed that their church invests a lot in social and charity projects, maintaining a rehabilitation center for drug users and alcoholics (mostly Russian speakers), who had been rejected by all other Israeli treatment frameworks.

Sergei became religious back in Moldova when he lost all his assets, was in deep debt, and his life was daily threatened by local bandits. He believes that G-d has led him out of the woods in this crucial moment of his life and later inspired him to move to the Holy Land, which was possible thanks to his half-Jewish wife. He also credits the Lord for helping him to find the successful idea for a new business in Israel and eventually realize it.

Larissa reflected about why she became a Christian:

I became a believer gradually, over the course of years, and in Israel my faith became even stronger...In Russia it was easy to be an Orthodox believer, almost everyone is these days; it became almost a fashion...But in Israel it is a trial of my faith...I am very sorry that there is no Russian Orthodox parish in my city; most Christians I know here belong to various weird sects...Faith is as natural as breath to me – this is how I grew up, who I am...all the literature and music I love are full of Christian symbols.

She added later:

I am sure that Christianity is the only true religion because it underscores the spiritual side of human life, personal growth and creativity. It encourages helping others not as duty or for fear of punishment but naturally, by the call of the heart. I think that every human being is initially born Christian because s/he empathizes with every living thing and his heart goes out to any suffering. The essence of Christianity is spirit and goodness, but it is often misrepresented and used for bad purposes, or turned into a dogma by the Church. It's a shame, because the original Christian ideas are so wonderful...

Tania asserted a few times that G-d has led her mother and her to Israel, and if His will ever changes, she can easily find herself in any other place – particularly in Europe, where she may continue her education if proper scholarship comes by. Paradoxically, she seems to be an ambitious young woman who seeks academic achievement and is quite successful, given her modest background (she is first generation college graduate) – but she construes all that happens to her as a result of divine intervention rather than her own hard work. She spoke about her view of religion and faith:

I have a similar take on all religions: they are ideologies and organizations with their own structure and order. While G-d for me is a living idea, He is always with me and on my side; I don't even know why He loves me...G-d is not a dogma, but religion is and it makes life easier for some people. Not only in Judaism - in Christianity we also have many rites and rituals- which I am rather indifferent to, because people comply

with them out of routine, without thinking...Church rituals have a share of hypocrisy in them – as if by lightning a candle in the church you pay some due and this exempts you from trying harder and becoming a better person...In every church, there are people who are true believers and those who are simply formalists and have no real spirit of Christ.

Larissa mused half-jokingly about her split Russian-Jewish identity:

To be Jewish for me means to take it to the heart when Jews are unfairly criticized or hurt...to shed a tear when watching a Jewish wedding scene with a broken glass in a Hollywood movie...to believe that Jews are smarter and more successful than the rest.

My Jewish self loves gefilte-fish and a few familiar Yiddish songs; it also believes that Israel is a better country to live in (although I haven't lived elsewhere) [laughs]. My Russian self is all the rest: my language, my cultural ground, everything – of course, my Russian part is much larger, but these two identities coexist rather peacefully.

Interestingly, none of the informants who were ethnically Jewish (partly like Larissa or Ruslan or entirely like Marina) had few qualms about their choice of the Christian faith. All of them saw Christianity as a spiritual development, and an improvement, over Judaism, which had served its historical basis (now badly outdated, in their view). All of them believed that the Holy Trinity tenet embraces both Judaic and Christian theology with no essential conflict between them; if the conflict exists at all, it reflects political and ideological fights between churches and rabbis. All informants also made a clear distinction between faith as a personal spiritual phenomenon and official religions and authorities as external institutions that are less important and at times even hostile. The main advantage of organized religion, in their view, is that it creates a supportive community of believers that helps an individual to stay on the right path and not to despair, even in stressful circumstances such as those that immigration always entails. All informants, except Larissa, were church members and repeatedly stressed the important supportive role that pastors and other believers played in their lives in Israel.

General adjustment in Israel

All our informants arrived in Israel at a young age and had a reasonably good chance for social adjustment and economic mobility. Their level of ambition and preparedness for hard work has been decisive in setting these informants' trajectories. Thus, both Tania and Marina had plans to get university education: Tania is indeed studying for a graduate degree, and also works as a TA, while Marina has only managed to complete a course in preschool education, but does not work in a kindergarten, cleaning offices instead. Sergei started his life in Israel by toiling at a factory assembly line, got very frustrated and then “*G-d helped him to find the right way to make a living*”: via a church acquaintance he embarked on a new business offering therapy to orthopedic patients by means of Korean massage beds imported from Russia. Economically, their business is barely surviving, since they charge low fees (allegedly, being driven by the helping ethos, not profit); but Sergei is very proud of their achievement and his personal contribution to community wellbeing. Larissa, the only one with a white-collar occupation in this group, continues her work as a school teacher in Beer-Sheba, with a moderate salary. Given lower living costs in the Israeli South, all informants could make a living with a relatively low income they

have; some have even purchased apartments and second-hand cars. The common denominator was that all of them were satisfied with what they had achieved in Israel, which they saw as a definite improvement over their pre-migration lives in the FSU. Larissa summarized her life in Israel in this way:

I have nothing to complain about. The initial years were hard, but now I got used to the country and its people and can say that I am largely happy... I work in my original occupation, which is a great luck. The students are good to me. My salary is decent enough, my husband works too, so we can meet most of our daily needs. We haven't traveled abroad yet [except back to Russia to see the husband's parents] but we'll be able to some day. The important thing is peace and quiet in this troubled country, as well as health, G-d willing... The children are doing well here; I am glad that they are living in the Holy land. This is not about being closer to G-d, as some people say – this is nonsense; you can pray to G-d anywhere, the place doesn't matter if you pray sincerely. Simply it feels good for all of us to live in the homeland of Jesus.

On the other hand, pastor Ruslan shared his feelings about Israel as a hard place to be:

This is a very difficult country to live in – for everyone, but especially for Christians, because our religion is not supported here. If I wasn't a believer – I wouldn't be able to survive in Israel. Israeli Jews are not a likable crowd, they are pushy and rude to the point of violence... and their bureaucracy, their government are full of flaws, of corruption, even sex scandals...it's a shame, especially for the so-called Chosen People... But nevertheless, as a Christian – I have to accept and bless everyone, even the ones who inflict pain on me [Ruslan has been repeatedly attacked for his Christian proselytizing].

The difficulties of economic and social adjustment that our informants experienced as immigrants in Israel were fairly typical of most Olim, yet they often suffered from an additional stress due to their religion. Like Ruslan, all informants mentioned the theme of social prejudice and/or discrimination against them as Christians (more on this below). Yet, each and every one of the informants emphasized that they were largely happy with what they have and did not plan to return back to FSU or emigrate elsewhere (with the exception of Tania who might pursue further education in Europe).

Attitudes towards Judaism

All informants expressed formal respect for Judaism as the 'law of the land' they now live in, but found it hard to establish any personal connection with its communities and practices. Marina is an interesting case, since she is Jewish and had been raised in Belorussia mainly by her Jewish grandmother. Marina recalled that she witnessed Jewish traditions at home from an early age: her grandmother kept a kosher kitchen, cooked Jewish dishes and even baked her own matzoth for Pesah. Yet, young Marina had not perceived these deeds as religious duties, but rather as ethnic or folk culinary traditions and did not take them seriously. Only in Israel Marina learned about Jewish dietary laws and modified her own cooking and kitchen practices separating dairy and meat products, although not strictly and not for religious reasons ("it is simply not tasty and repulsive, like eating steak with chocolates"). She made sure to stress, for example, that she and her husband refrain from eating pork not to comply with the

Judaic ban, but because pork is often fatty and they are both overweight. She still understands Judaism as a code of everyday behavioral rules rather than a religion in its own right. Marina said:

I respect Judaism, as it is the basis of Christianity. The fact is that Christianity is a more modern kind of religion: it has developed and changed along with society, while Judaism remained ossified as it was three thousand years ago. Judaism has multiple rules and bans but no actual faith... Many religious Israelis believe that it's OK to be a mean person for most of the year, then to fast on Yom Kippur – and have all your misdeeds pardoned. Another trait that I dislike in Judaism is its strict division between insiders and outsiders by the principle of Jewish blood. The outsiders (goyim) - like Russians or the Arabs - can be mistreated, as if they are half-human and don't count. By contrast, a Christian treats every stranger as his or her brother or sister.

Larissa (half-Jewish but raised as Russian) said, along similar lines:

I rather dislike Judaism as religion and especially detest the Ultra-Orthodox Jews. They are mostly arrogant good-for-nothings, with all their black suits, head covers and long skirts – what makes them think they are more deserving than anyone else? People not like themselves are all so-called goyim; I wonder who gave them the right to sort people into categories – who is worthy and who is sub-standard? I am sure they live in a folly – G-d doesn't care about all the rules they observe so strictly and demand from others to observe.... They have to faith, just the rules of conduct. By and large they are mediocre, uneducated folks, but all keep an air of self-importance as if they are saviors of the world...

In line with her view of Jewish traditions as meaningless, Larissa and her family usually refrain from any special actions on Jewish holidays, although they celebrate Israeli Independence Day and also have respect for the national memorial days. Larissa and other informants called Christmas and New Year their favorite holiday season; all of them also celebrate Easter and some merge it with the Jewish Passover. Contrary to Larissa, other informants did mark in some form the High Jewish holidays; many were also respectful of Shabbat and were aware of the Jewish dietary rules. They expressed their ambivalence as to these practices, torn between complying with the local customs they wished to respect and their Christian conscience. Thus, Tania, who is Russian and Adventist Christian, but also relates to the alleged Jewish ties in her 'bloodline', said:

Living in Israel as a religious state did not change my view of Judaism – I have always respected Jews as Chosen People who bear a special responsibility to lead and enlighten others. I accept Judaic rules of life as a given, without complaint. I know that some people are annoyed by the lack of transport and closed stores on Shabbat – but I am not bothered by this, on the contrary – I enjoy the quiet, the lack of commercial fuss...I do not do any work on Shabbat, this is my only day of rest...but we don't light candles...nor do we do any other Jewish holidays, they are not really ours...I sometimes feel uneasy about it – when everyone around us celebrates and we are indifferent...but we can't help it. Yet, I do observe some Jewish customs out of respect – like not eating pork..., eating matzoth on Passover... I also say a special prayer on Yom Kippur.

Larissa said in a similar spirit: *“Although we don’t keep kosher at home, but still the Israeli atmosphere affects us in many ways. Like you cannot bring a ham sandwich for your lunch at work, and also won’t eat a beef stew and yogurt in one meal... I do buy non-kosher produce in Russian groceries, but we are all more considerate about where and how to consume it”*.

Like Larissa, Ruslan had very negative attitudes towards Judaism. He said:

This is an obsolete and dead teaching... Just listen to these Talmudic scholars and Cabbalists – how do they treat Biblical texts? They mix letters with numbers, establish some numeric regularities, search for hidden messages... They turn these sacred texts into a riddle, a difficult puzzle to solve – who can understand them? A true religion should be clear and transparent for all and reassert itself by the good deeds.

In the spirit of Christianity, all our informants considered ethnic origin and blood line unimportant. None of them perceived mixed marriage as a threat to Jewish continuity (that has no special value for them) and some, like Ruslan, believed that it is actually positive, as it *“increases diversity and improves human breed.”* Marina emphasized that she married a Jewish man not for his Jewishness, but because he is a kin spirit and a fellow Christian. All of them asserted that Judaic preoccupation with ‘blood and ethnic purity’ is morbid and borders on racism or even fascism (Larissa). She also opined that the only relevant criteria in marriage are human qualities of the partner, his/her level of education, mutual understanding and shared values. Reflecting on the matters of conversion to Judaism, Larissa said:

Soon upon arrival in Israel, I considered giyur, for the sake of my daughters. But when I found out what kind of commitment Orthodox giyur implies, I gave up and decided that my girls will have to solve this matter for themselves when they grow older. Now my elder daughter has already told me that she won’t do it, and I fully understand her. Judaism is an ancient religion, but with all due respect – its practical expressions are so odious: all these mikveh, shulhan aruch and other absurdities... And then Judaism is overly preoccupied with the matters of blood and ancestry, this is too materialistic. Like, if you had been born of the right kind of mother – well done, but if not – it’s your own fault, should have chosen a better mom, so you are out of the fold. What kind of twisted logic is this?! In this way Judaism alienates others, because it selects and separates by blood... If matters of the blood weren’t so central, everybody here would stop fighting over the Holy Land and all would come praying in the same Church. Dividing the Land is so stupid – it anyway belongs to G-d, not to humans.

Like Larissa, all other Christians in this small sample considered Judaism non-spiritual (*bezduhovny*), materialistic and overly preoccupied with rituals and rules, and therefore not attractive for anyone engaged in spiritual search. None of them considered *giyur* or wished that their children would convert to Judaism in the future. Marina considered the very idea of changing one’s ethnic identity by means of symbolic acts absurd and immoral. Like she could never become a Russian, a Russian could never become Jewish – *“all this is just a masquerade and a deception,”* she opined.

Perceived discrimination of Christians

All our informants agreed that Christians are unwelcome in Israel and that they often have to conceal or downplay their actual faith in order to get economic foothold and maintain everyday social relations with other Israelis. In our informants' view, both Sabras and Jewish Olim from the FSU were especially intolerant of ethnically Jewish Christians, perceiving them as disloyal and pervert, while ethnic Slavs were construed as 'natural Christians.' Thus, ethnically-Jewish Marina, who was generally satisfied with her life and social relations in Israel, said:

Israelis have never mistreated me as an immigrant, but I have felt isolated, even discriminated, as a Christian – since I never concealed my faith from anyone. Once a religious Israeli coworker threatened that she would report on me and I'll get fired...But I did not do a thing about it; my true self is more important than a job. And in the end – she was laid off and I stayed. If you work hard and are nice to the people around you – they appreciate you, because conscientious workers are very hard to come by in Israel...Several coworkers advised me to leave Christianity or at least not to wear a cross, but some others on the contrary were curious and asked questions – I told them what I know and even gave a Hebrew translation of the New Testament to one Moroccan woman...Some Israelis are not so happy with their traditions and are looking for the true faith...

Acutely aware of their otherness in Israel, the informants used different tactics to manage their identity in different circumstances. Thus, Larissa told that she never wears a cross on top of her clothes to work or in other public places, concealing it under the garments. When she was hospitalized and knew she would have to undress, she left the cross at home, so that “*not to stir unnecessary anger or dismay among the staff and other patients.*” Tania told that she had learned a lesson when the first owner of the flat she and her mother had rented took off the mezuzah from the door frame upon learning that they were Christians, explaining to them that mezuzah cannot be anywhere near a cross. Tania and her mother were hurt and ever since felt insecure in the home that was 'marked' on the outside as non-Jewish (with an empty place instead of mezuzah). In the wake of this encounter, Tania did not reveal her faith to anyone at the University where she studies and works.

Ruslan and Sergei, on the contrary, are very open if not demonstrative as Christians. Sergei blesses every client that comes for treatment in his clinic and openly prays while the massage bed is in operation – which, he believes, augments the treatment effect. Ruslan told that he has been attacked by local youth in various Southern towns where he comes to talk to the locals (i.e. proselytize) in order to attract new members to his church *Zhivoi Israel*. His car has been vandalized while he was conducting the services; he received threats to his home mailbox, etc. – all this campaign against him being sponsored, as he believes, by Beer-Sheba's Chief Rabbi, his personal enemy. He told with much poise that when he meets Judaic activists that offer him (as an apparent Russian immigrant) to place *tefillin* and help him find *tshuvah*, he responds with “*G-d bless you, but I believe in the true Messiah*” – which a few times earned him a few heavy blows and many curses from the by-passers. However, the hostility of the locals does not shake the faith of these believers, but rather makes it stronger. As a role model, some of them referred to early Christians who had suffered from the Orthodox Jews for their subversive faith.

Conclusion

This small sample of former Soviet immigrants who are of Christian faith exemplifies some typical issues that this minority faces in Israel. Many of them have low levels of formal education and no occupational record to speak of, with the ensuing difficulties of entering host labor market and earning a decent income. Many Christians feel alienated from the mainstream Israeli culture and hence make no effort to learn Hebrew, which further hampers their social and economic mobility. Most are unwilling to conceal their faith and often pay the price for their otherness – starting from social isolation by coworkers (Marina) and all the way to street violence and hate mail (Ruslan). Despite many struggles they face in the new society, Christians often underscored their satisfaction with whatever they have achieved and did not regret the decision to move to Israel, seeing it as the act of divine intervention in their lives (“thanks to the Lord that has led us to the Holy Land”). None of them expressed their wish to return to the FSU or move elsewhere in the near future, although they were open to their children’s possible future wish to seek better lives outside Israel.

Most Christians looked for a safety net and social support in the familiar Russian-speaking circles, particularly in the communities consolidated around Christian churches. The variety of churches have emerged in response to these spiritual and social needs of the immigrants; some of them are more traditional Russian or Greek Orthodox temples, while others (exemplified by *Zhivoi Israel*) are rather exotic, modeled on contemporary charismatic churches that resemble social clubs with elements of liturgy and prayer. Through churches, these Olim meet with Christian Arabs and other non-Jewish residents, such as foreign labor migrants; this expands their social networks and fortifies their image of Israel as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Another recent qualitative study (Raijman and Pinsky, 2011) has shown that Christian Olim have more positive feelings towards the Arabs (whom they meet as fellow Christians) than do most Jewish Olim, who have no personal contact with any minorities and construe all Arabs as enemies. This study has also shown that the Christians define in similar terms the social distance they have to native Israelis and to the Jewish immigrants from the FSU, as both categories openly dislike and isolate them. Many members of the Christian minority challenge the ethno-national regime of incorporation based on the Jewish ancestry and try by all means to avoid contacts with the authorities representing this regime (e.g., rejecting the option of *giyur*). This theme was rather prominent in our interviews too (exemplified especially by Larissa but also by Marina and Ruslan).

While ethnically Slavic immigrants treat their Christianity naturally, as defined by their original culture, those partly or fully Jewish have to overcome some internal qualms (however mild). Often this potential conflict is solved by stressing common roots of the two religions and their historic entanglement in the Holy Land. Judaism is typically construed by our informants as an obsolete faith stressing mainly rituals and everyday behavioral rules, while Christianity befits modern living, is spiritually developed and centering on the personal relations between self and deity. Despite their ideological negation of Judaic customs, many Christians (especially those partly Jewish) still comply with the ‘laws of the land’: pay some symbolic dues to the Jewish holidays (e.g., buy matzoth on Pesah, light candles on Chanukah) and respect the basic demands of Judaism (e.g., not mixing dairy and meat foods, not eating pork, and not working on Shabbat). Thus, despite cherishing their separate identity, the Christians fall in line with other recent FSU immigrants in terms of selective

acculturation to Israeli way of life that ultimately improves their chances for social inclusion and some economic security.

Reference

Rebecca Raijman and Janina Pinsky (2011). 'Non-Jewish and Christian:' Perceived Discrimination and Social Distance among FSU Immigrants in Israel. *Israel Affairs* 17(1): 125-141.

Интервью с Ларисой, христианкой (с сокращениями).

Расскажите коротко о себе

Меня зовут Лариса. Мне 42 года, я замужем, у меня две девочки – 16 и 10 лет. Я учитель, закончила университет в Ростове на Дону. В Израиле преподаю в школе математику, даю частные уроки. В Израиле с 2000 года.

Ваше отношение к еврейству и как оно изменилось в Израиле

Мое еврейство мне важно, потому что если бы мой отец не был евреем, то я бы в Израиль приехать бы не смогла так как мой муж русский. Быть евреем для меня – это значит обижаться когда евреев критикуют, или еще какие-нибудь антисемитские штуки. Быть евреем – это отзываться душой, когда в каком-нибудь голливудском фильме на свадьбе разбивают стакан. Быть евреем – значит, считать себя умнее других (смеется).

Как изменилось мое отношение к еврейству? Оно стало более обрядовым. Раньше я понятия не имела про еврейские праздники, разные красивые обычаи, вроде зажигания свеч в Хануку. Потом раньше я путала иврит и идиш, а теперь на иврите я могу говорить, а на идише – петь (Лариса участвует в русско-язычном хоре, объединяющем около 30 выходцев из СНГ в возрасте от 20 до 60 лет).

Русская и еврейская культура у меня разделяются так: по-еврейски – гефилте-фиш, пара знакомых песен на идиш и мое мнение, что в Израиле лучше, чем в других местах, хотя я в других местах не была (смеется). По-русски – все остальное. Еврейская часть не мешает моей идентичности, потому что это очень маленькая часть. Особенно в культурном плане. По крови я – на половину русская, на половину – еврейка, но в культурном плане русская половина, конечно, больше.

Русские, евреи и израильтяне

Евреи отличались от других граждан, тем, что были умнее. Если на двери врача была написана еврейская фамилия, я всегда как-то ему больше доверяла. До сих пор я помню врачуху из студенческой поликлиники – ее звали Галина Исааковна. Она мне правильный диагноз поставила, а все остальные только отмахивались. Потом учителя-еврейки – всегда были лучше всех прочих, более нормальные по характеру, более преданные своей работе, более порядочные люди. Не знаю почему, но в школе, где я училась все учительницы русского языка были еврейками.

Израильтяне отличаются от русско-язычных евреев. Но не все. Образованные ашкеназим от русско-язычных евреев не отличаются. А не образованные

мизрахим – очень отличаются. Потом израильтяне не всегда понимают юмор, особенно черный, и не любят цинизма. Я думаю, израильтяне просто менее испорченные. У них была более легкая жизнь, чем у нас, поэтому они более позитивные. Они не носили взятки во все места, их так не унижали, они не стояли в очередях, на них их начальство никогда так не орало, как это было принято в Союзе. Израильтяне более избалованные. Поэтому они лучше.

Смешанные браки и еврейство

Я не понимаю вопроса. Как это – продолжение еврейской идентичности? Сначала я хотела сделать гиюр, но потом это оказалось сложно, вернее мне сказали, что это сложно и я не стала. Почему я хотела – ради детей. У меня ведь все-таки девочки. Потом я решила, что они подрастут и сами все решат. Старшая уже мне сказала, что она не будет. И правильно, иудаизм – очень духовная религия, но в ее практическом выражении – столько одиозного. Какие-то миквы, шульхан арух, в-общем бред. Да и вообще иудаизм слишком занят вопросом крови. Как-то это материально. Родился от нужной мамы – молодец, родился от другой – сам виноват, надо было лучше выбирать маму. В иудаизме – это главная ошибка. Если бы не это, никакой бы войны с арабами уже бы не было – все арабы с радостью перешли бы в иудаизм и все бы дружили, все бы молились в одной церкви, и никто бы не делил Святую Землю. Это тупо – делить землю. Земля – божья.

Замуж надо выходить за порядочных людей. Чтобы было понимание, близость, чтобы был хороший характер. Уровень образования важен. А у евреев это неправильно. У них главное, чтобы он был еврей, а остальное – хоть трава не расти, а если у него три класса образования? О чем с ним говорить? Мой супруг – русский, я уже сказала. Если честно, там где я вращалась, и в школе и в институте, никаких хороших евреев не было. Я не помню, чтобы были евреи. Татарин был один. Азербайджанец. Был один, по-моему, еврей – полный придурок. Будущие супруги моих детей – откуда же мне знать? Лишь бы не алкоголики и не сумасшедшие, в общем молось. Думаю, все будет в порядке.

Общая оценка жизни в Израиле

Жизнью в Израиле я довольна. У меня все есть. У нас своя квартира, мы за нее, конечно, платим машканту. У нас есть машина – не новая, но нормально ездит. Заграницей еще не были, но в Россию ездим почти каждый год когда есть билеты по 200 долларов, обычно на Новый Год. Я бы уже и не ездила, но у мужа там живет отец и надо его навещать. Потом муж очень привязан к России и у него там друзья, которых он любит.

Работаю я по специальности. Ученики меня не обижают. На жизнь хватает, да и мы и в России никогда богато не жили. Я привыкла и довольна. Главное, чтобы был мир. И чтобы Бог давал здоровье. Судьба детей – думаю им тут лучше, потом они живут на Святой земле, это очень хорошо. Не то что тут до Бога ближе - это все ерунда, где молиться. Если от души – так Бог тебя хоть где услышит. Просто приятно жить на родине Иисуса. Думаю, это я хорошо для детей решила.

Религия и духовность; иудаизм и христианство

Духовные искания – ну я не знаю. Мне кажется, что это от места жительства не зависит. Раз Богу было угодно, чтобы я в Израиль приехала, он знает, что для меня лучше. Я для себя духовности без религии не представляю. Все равно

человек что-то ищет. Даже если он не хочет – ищет. Все не случайно. Господь, пастырь мой, он ведет нас по правильной дороге.

Пока никуда ехать не планирую. Английского у меня нет, куда ехать. Да и вторую «клиту» я не переживу. На все это надо очень много здоровья. А если дети захотят – так пусть едут. А мы уже тогда за ними. Пускай бы ехали, все таки Израиль – пороховая бочка.

Мое отношение к иудаизму как религии – плохое. Датишные достали, бездельники, они думают, что если они эту юбку надели то они уже лучше всех остальных. А все остальные для них – гои. Меня это бесит. Кто им дал право определять, кто первого сорта, а кто второго? А сами-то они уж конечно, высшего. Думаю, что они заблуждаются. Наверяд ли Бог требует соблюдать весь этот бред. Для них верить не главное – главное соблюдать. Они бездуховные, и мало образованные, а ходят с таким видом, как будто каждый – Карл Маркс в молодые годы.

Мое отношение к христианству очень хорошее. Это единственно правильная религия. Потому что в христианстве важна духовность. Вера. Рост. Творчество. Помощь ближнему не по обязанности, а искренне, по зову сердца и совести. Я думаю, каждый человек изначально христианин, так как жалеет все живое. Христианство – это и есть духовность. Просто иногда христианство извращают или неправильно понимают. А идея – чудесная.

Моя жизнь в Израиле повлияла на мое отношение к религии в худшую сторону. Раньше я не знала, что такое иудаизм и у меня было несколько романтическое отношение к нему. Теперь я "знаю врага в лицо". Евреи нарушают важную заповедь – запрет гордыни. Потому что они считают, что они избранный народ. Ну подумай, каждый еврей, даже преступник – уже избран Богом. В это можно серьезно верить?

То что в Израиле религия не отделена от государства рздражает. Но в чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят.

Соблюдение еврейских и израильских традиций

В моей родительской семье ничего такого не отмечалось. У еврейских бабушки и дедушки я не так часто бывала. А моя русская мама хорошо готовила гефилте-фиш и меня научила. Никакой мацы мы не ели. Только раз, я помню, нас кто-то угостил и мы ели мацу с бульоном. Отец, по-моему, стеснялся своего еврейства; в-общем, он говорил, что он интернационалист. Я помню, как когда я получала паспорт, у меня даже сомнения не было, какую национальность записывать, конечно "русская". Я помню, что паспортистка задала мне этот вопрос и я очень удивилась, ну что она такие очевидные вещи спрашивает. Потом когда я пришла домой и показала паспорт, мне показалось, что отец немного разочарован.

До отъезда в Израиль мы в моей собственной семье ничего такого не отмечали. Только однажды мы оказались на ту-би-шват в сохнутском семейном лагере, и там рассказывали про ту-би-шват. Была зима, деревьев мы конечно не сажали, но помню, что нам велели выпить 4 стакана вина – белый за зиму, потом белое вино и немного добавить красного – это как бы весна приходит, потом белого вина мало, а больше долить красным, а потом уже стакан красного вина за весну. А так как на закуску были только сухофрукты, то что было дальше, вы представляете.

После переезда, я намного больше отмечаю. В хануку зажигаю свечи день-два, а потом забываю и бросаю. Если приезжают гости из России, то обязательно зажигаю свечи в шабат, конечно, без молитвы. Это я так их знакомлю с израильским колоритом. В рош-а-шана обмакиваю яблоко в мед – верю, что это дает здоровье. Ну не вредит же это. А муж не хочет, потому что вообще не ест меда. Раз делали Песах дома по всем правилам, тоже когда были гости из России, но только быстренько, одно в другое обмакнули, съели – и все, пошли спать. Конечно, мы едим хлеб на Песах и никакой хамец, избави Бог, не сжигаем. Я думаю, что это ужасный обычай – сжигать хлеб. Это просто преступление. Наши родители голодали; до сих пор многие люди в мире голодают, а тут такое варварство.

В Судный День мы, конечно, едим. Ничего такого специального не делаем. Судный день – это детский праздник. Мне очень нравится – дети могут свободно ездить на велосипедах. Все гуляют, машин нет – чудесно! Вообще-то,

Я идеи Судного Дня не понимаю – надо не раз в год о своих грехах думать, а постоянно проверять, как ты живешь. Вот в этом все евреи – раз в год они нравственные, а в остальное время – как выгодно.

Еврейский календарь меня не трогает и мне не мешает. Суббота – это хорошо, что есть выходной. Как-то я работу получила в субботу, в религиозной пнмие (интернате), потому что доказала, что нееврейка. Евреев в субботние воспитатели не брали. Транспорт мне не особо мешает, я привыкла, да и машина у нас есть. Суббота, воскресенье – все это условности.

Раббанут меня не волнует. Я думаю, что это смешно. Они думают, что для кого-то они важны, что кто-то их слушает. Да на самом деле у раввинов нет никакой силы. Их слушают только ортодоксальные, а любой нормальный человек всегда может раввинов послать и зарегистрировать брак за границей или у адвоката. Так и многие израильтяне поступают.

А вот похороны израильские меня пугают. Однажды я видела израильские похороны: тело никто не видел, только сестра покойной зашла опознать, потом вынесли тело на носилках завернутое в тряпку, посчитали сколько мужиков, мужиков, слава Богу, хватило, потом что-то читали на иврите, а все как попугай повторяли – амен. Потом принесли к могиле, и прямо так вывалили тело в яму; ни гроба, ничего, они ее вываливали и было видно, что тряпка в которую ее завернули, была в крови. Это было кошмарно. Потом засыпали землей и все. Я была в шоке. Я рада, что меня похоронят так как я захочу. Все-таки душе важно, относятся ли к телу с уважением, или сваливают в яму как мусор.

Кашрут мы конечно не соблюдаем, но как-то вся эта атмосфера действует. На работу колбасу с салом уже не возьмешь, да и дома как-то не тянет есть мясо и йогурт в один присест. Да, в русских магазинах все покупаю – мясо, колбасу, сметану, творог, коньяк, конфеты. Но в Израильских тоже покупаю – кур, молочное кроме сметаны, масло, шоколад, всякий рис-крупы, рыбу, вино и пиво. Потому что есть то, что в русских магазинах дешевле и вкуснее, а есть, что в израильских. В русских магазинах можно что-нибудь ностальгическое купить – кильки, русские конфеты, икру.

Из израильских праздников мы отмечаем День Независимости – идем с детьми в авиамузей, раз были в танковом музее. Там всегда в этот день бесплатный

вход и авиа-шоу. На День Катастрофы я обязательно зажигаю нер зикарон (поминальную свечу).

Советские праздники отмечаем обязательно - подарки девочкам на 8 марта, ну и мне, конечно. И мужу – на 23 февраля. Звоним также знакомым и в Израиле и в России – поздравляем. Новый Год отмечаем дома по-семейному, но готовим традиционное – холодец, салат "Оливье", торт "Наполеон". Обязательно наряжаем елку. У нас большая искусственная елка, мы ее привезли из России, а тут каждый год покупаем для нее игрушки, и у нас теперь их уже много. Елка до сих пор стоит наряженная, еще не убрали. Подарки обязательно на Новый Год, еще и соседям-израильтянам отпущу торта, и они мне всегда говорят – хаг sameах и поздравляют. Они марокканцы; у них 5 детей, но они все работают. 9 мая я слышу из окна – мы живем близко от Памятника, где проводят каждый год церемонию, и я через окно все слышу, если я не на работе. Мне нравится, что наши старички надевают ордена. Это красиво и я горда за них и за себя, и за нашу историю. Все таки мы не второй сорт и только благодаря нам фашизм побежден и Израиль существует.

Политика, арабы

Мои политические взгляды такие – Либермана я терпеть не могу, жирный противный боров, он мне чем-то напоминает Путина, тоже глядит в Наполеоны. Путина тоже не люблю, маленький фюрер. Я голосовала раз за "зеленых" – которые за права животных, а раз за Кадиму. Просто хотелось как-то поддержать кандидата-женщину – Ципи Ливни.

К арабам я не знаю как относиться. В теории хорошо, но встречаю их на шуке – они очень неприятные, и я их немного боюсь. Думаю, они нас ненавидят. Когда они кидали на нас бомбы – я тоже их ненавидела. Хотя в теории понимаю, что народу арабскому война не нужна. А на практике стараюсь этот арабский народ обойти десятой дорогой. Раз встречалась на конференции с арабскими учителями математики. Думаю, они когда с нами доброжелательные, они просто подлаживаются, чтобы влезь к нам в доверие. Это восток. Тут никто правды тебе не скажет. Это у них в крови.

Думаю русским с арабами делить нечего. Когда 10 лет назад я училась в ульпане, муж мой работал на мойке машин вместе с арабами и он с ними дружил.

Моя жизнь в Израиле. Никто меня не ущемляет. Может как русскую и ущемляют, а как нееврейку – нет. Ни разу с таким не сталкивалась. Две мои девочки учатся в государственно-религиозной школе. Там сильная математика. Никаких проблем с приемом не было. Я думаю, им (израильтянам) все равно. Гиюр делать не буду, и мужу моему это бы не понравилось. В гиюре нет никакого смысла.

Принадлежность к христианству

В чем выражается моя принадлежность к христианству? Во-первых я ношу крест, мне его подарила мама, а потом я его еще в храме гроба господнего в Иерусалиме освятила. Я читаю Библию и девочки мои читают. Я должна им дать православное воспитание. Для этого в Израиле есть все возможности. Ездим в монастыри, в Иерусалиме есть христианские церкви. Раз мы ездили в кибуц на Кинерет, так там вообще много церквей. А так я стараюсь хоть раз в месяц приехать в субботу в Иерусалим и отстоять службу.

На Пасху я обязательно пеку куличи, мы их потом еще неделю едим. В магазине тоже можно купить, но это не то. Потом едем в церковь к службе, а если не получается, то муж один едет в Иерусалим, чтобы освящать куличи и празднуем Пасху. Яйца крашу. Если в воскресенье у меня есть уроки – беру выходной. В школе не знают, что я православная. Зачем дразнить гусей? Будут косо смотреть. Тут это не принято. Когда я шла в Сороку на госпитализацию, я крест оставила дома, стараюсь, чтобы его не видели. Израильтяне нормально могут реагировать если я скажу, что хитсианка, но крест для них – как для сатаны. Поэтому я его ношу под одеждой. Но его и положено под одеждой носить. Только священники могут носить крест сверху, а так это нательный крест.

У меня есть иконы, они в спальне. Две мне подруги подарили, одну я сама купила в Москве. Мне очень нравится икона "Божья мать острообрамская". Там богомать без младенца – беременная Христом. Очень люблю эту икону. Она мне говорит обо мне. Моя духовная суть еще толком не родилась – что-то очень важное еще только зреет в моей душе. Я еще в пути. Думаю, что Израиль – это важная часть моего пути. В России я верила как-то по привычке. Там теперь все в церковь ходят, это стало модно. Там легко все соблюдать. А тут нелегко. Израиль – это испытание для моей веры. Мне не хватает, что в Беэр-шеве нет православного прихода. Я пробовала искать христиан, но это все какие-то сектанты. Православие – это часть меня, это то, что я знаю, на чем выросла. Оно везде – в русской литературе, в русском кино, в истории, в музыке, в искусстве. Я даже не представляю, как это можно, не верить.