

Russian speaking Jews all over the world in many cases combine high intellectual and general education level with almost complete ignorance of Jewish Tradition. Few organizations have addressed this issue on a systematic basis. Various government agencies took on parts of the puzzle and their consequences, but no one looked at the whole issue from a cultural and educational perspective. Machanaim stepped into this void with a multi-tiered, multi-faceted open approach to teaching what being Jewish can mean to someone acculturated in the Russian Communist environment.



FOCUS ON: BOOK PUBLISHING

Jewish people are, as we all know, **The People of the Book** and while most Russian-speaking Jewry might have lost their connection with the Book itself, they certainly have remained the reading people. Jewish families in Russia have always made reading their highest value, favorite and most cherished hobby, even preoccupation. Books top the list of

treasured possessions. That makes them one of the most effective tools to get Russians acquainted with Jewish Tradition, Jewish history and Jewish mode of life.

At the same time, that makes them a more sophisticated consumer; for the attentive and demanding reader, books must adhere to a higher standard and fulfill certain expectations. Russian-speaking Jews are characterized in many cases by a tricky combination of high intellectual and general education level with virtual illiteracy in Jewish tradition. Especially books that disseminate basic or foundational information about Jewish tradition must take this into account. Grown up Ph.D.s will feel insulted when addressed in a style fitting for a first-grader, although they may actually know less about Jewish tradition. In fact, the average Israeli child probably imbibes and understands more about the basic foundations that form our cultural models than the Russian communist-educated logical engineer can figure out.

Machanaim began publishing to respond to this need for books originally written and specially designed for this complicated reader. But these same readers also needed Russian translations of the classic texts, among them the Prayer Book and philosophy books, with original Russian commentary and notes that bridge the basic educational and cultural gaps.

Machanaim has written and published 21 books, focusing on several areas:

Jewish Holidays

These books are very popular among new immigrants, and serve as foundational materials in the FSU. They take a One-Stop-Shop, comprehensive approach: they usually include a text, relevant to the particular Holiday (e.g., the Book of Ruth for Shavuot), with translations and commentaries, history of the relevant events, the ideas underlying the holiday, and its laws and customs. **Machanaim** has published books on all Jewish Holidays, including the Independence Day and the Jerusalem Day. Booklets on Tu-bi-Shvat and Tisha B'Av were developed in conjunction with the Israeli Government for special "Judaism for everybody" services conducted for Russian speakers in 23 locations across Israel, as well as an abridged Machzor edition for the High Holidays in 2002 and 2003. Revised editions of books on Chanuka, High Holidays and were published in cooperation with the Absorption Ministry.

Prayer Books

Our most popular publications are Siddur "Shaarei Tefilla" and Machzor "Shaarei Teshuva" (High Holy Days machzor) for beginners. They present complete texts, translated into modern Russian, with clear instructions for the prayers, including symbols indicating when to stand and which prayers must be recited only with a minyan; when the ark is opened and closed. A rich commentary runs throughout the book. The commentary shows the sources and differences between various traditions, as well as dwells on the history of the prayer

and its meaning. First issued in 1996 in cooperation with the Joint Distribution Committee and the Steinzaltz Institute for Jewish Studies, this has been reprinted many times in conjunction with various bodies (e.g. Hochstein Foundation), and distributed among the immigrants from Russia in Israel, as well as among Jews in Russia.

There also exists a special collection of Shabat prayers with zmirot Shabat, and a bencher for smachot.

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Jewish Philosophy answers the needs of Jewish Russian community as educated technical people seek overall models for meaning in life beyond the communist models of suppression and atheism. **Machanaim's** publication of the collection "Catharsis" that includes Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik's classic work "Halachic Man" in Russian translation, as well as other pieces written by him or based on his lectures made the modern day approaches to Judaism accessible to the Russian speaker. **Machanaim** celebrated the new millennium in 2002 by publishing a new modern Russian translation, directly from the Arabic original, of the classical Rambam's work "Moreh Nevuchim, with the commentary made by the Russian translator, Michael Schneider, that helps understand the categories and sophisticated ideas of the book. The book is published in partnership with the Hebrew University. Forthcoming in this series in a new translation of a book written by Prof. Yoseph ben-Shlomo on Rabbi A.-I. Kook's philosophy.

TORAH STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Written in clear, modern Russian, "And You Shall Tell Your Son" is the only book of its kind. It presents the Torah narrative from Creation to Exodus, with parallel midrashim, in terms children can understand and relate to. With every page attractively illustrated, it is the ideal introduction for Russian-speaking children – and in many cases for their parents as well – to the stories of our forefathers and the Torah. Printed by Pincus Foundation in Russia in a quantity of 100,000 copies, it became so popular that many Jewish schools took it as a learning aid for the classes of Jewish Tradition. In 2004, **Machanaim** will publish a new edition that completes the stories of the Chumash.

FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH PRACTICE

These translations of books on basic Jewish rituals and religious practice follow the currently popular model of "Windows for Dummies" – books that provide the basics of potentially complicated disciplines in simple-to-understand language. **Machanaim's** series include translations of two Ehud Rosenberg's books - a book on Shabbat laws - "Laws of Cooking on Shabbat and Yom Tov" and a book on Kashrut - "Laws of Meat and Milk". These books present pictorial guides, helpful both for a beginner who is just starting to practice these laws, and to an observant Jew who wants to check some halachic details. **Machanaim** has released two printings of the Shabbat book and published the Kashrut book in 2003.

JEWISH LIFE CYCLE

One of the biggest mysteries for Russian immigrants is how to cope with life cycle events—marriage, death, births, etc – in a country where they have no clue about the "way it is done", particularly because everyone else seems to know. **Machanaim's** first book on the Burial and Mourning was released in 1998 and is almost out of print. This book covers laws of burial and mourning with the ideas underlying these laws, and in addition an exposition of Jewish ideas of Death, life after death and honoring the dead. Sections guide the Russian immigrant to how it is done in the modern day Israel and point to additional resources on the topic. At the request of Jewish activists in Russia, where one can not always have the service of hevra kadisha, exact sketches of tachrichin are included. There was also a booklet on marriage, published in cooperation with the Ministry of Religions.

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Machanaim occasionally has special opportunities to make Russian books available to the immigrant community, based on one of its courses, or repeated requests for materials by its teachers. Current editions in print include "Two Stories of Creation" and "Jews and Christianity" by Pinchas Polonsky, war memoirs and a book on Jewish life in Russia by Shimon Yantovsky. Soon to be published is the second volume of "Two Stories of Creation".

All **Machanaim** publications are available on the Internet site www.machanaim.org
They can also be ordered by mail: **Machanaim**, 2 Luntz Street, Jerusalem,
Phone 02-6256-006, fax 02-6257-117; bulk orders are available with discount. For more Information
about program development and partnerships, contact Miriam Kitrossky at Miriam@machanaim.org.