



*Forward*

WEEKEND READS

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**Opinion**

# **'I'm terrified for him': American Jews hearts are tied to Zelenskyy's fate**

By Rob Eshman

When Stephanie Gold, a Los Angeles lawyer, read that Volodymyr Zelenskyy told European Union leaders, "this might be the last time you see me alive," she broke down and cried. "I'm terrified for him," she said.

There's something unique about the way that Zelenskyy has entered the hearts of American Jews. In a week, Ukraine's president has gone from "Who's he?" to family. The concern for him is intimate and visceral. And the question that shadows every conversation about the war is, What will happen to Zelenskyy?

"No man has gone from joke to legend faster," L.A. director and screenwriter Michael Idov wrote in *British GQ*.

Of course, people around the world share a deep concern for Zelenskyy's fate. But the feeling is especially strong among American Jews.

"Tonight, we celebrate Shabbat with a world that is unified in this moment, behind a Jewish president of Ukraine who comes from a grandfather who was the only son of four who survived the Holocaust," Rabbi Ryan Bauer of Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco said in his weekly sermon.

Part of that is because, as a torrent of internet memes has established, he is a handsome and superb communicator with an improbable background: actor turned producer turned president turned leader of The Resistance, a Jew who speaks native Russian now being accused of Nazism by that same global superpower.

It's a classic Jewish story that has managed to unite us in a particularly fractured moment. When Gold and her husband Geoffrey, also a lawyer, hosted their usual friendly poker night

on Monday, the politically diverse guests, who often argue over Israel or former President Donald Trump, were unanimous in their support and concern for Zelenskyy.

“Every day I wake up worrying about him,” said Jacob Bass, 60, a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant who leans Republican. Bass, who immigrated to L.A. 30 years ago, said he can’t stop thinking about Zelenskyy, “because Russia wants to behead leaders.”

The worry has led to a phenomenon almost unheard of in my lifetime: Jewish unity.

In New York, Rabbi Labish Becker, executive director of the haredi Orthodox umbrella group Agudath Israel of America, told *The New York Times* Zelenskyy is “a source of pride” – and one reason the group was able to quickly raise \$2 million for Ukraine refugee relief.

In L.A., members of Temple Israel of Hollywood, a Reform synagogue devoted to progressive causes, have also launched a fundraiser for Ukrainian refugees. Rabbi Mari Chernow said affection and admiration for Zelenskyy resonates deeply with her congregation.

“He has entered our hearts,” the rabbi said.

There was a fleeting moment of unity like this when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on Nov. 5, 1995. The following day, I was among thousands of diverse L.A. Jews who stood together at a memorial service in front of the Jewish Federation building.

We sang “Shir HaShalom,” and looking around I saw Chabadniks, Peace Now-niks, women in sheitels and women in T-shirts. A rabbi who the week before had penned an anti-Rabin opinion piece sang along somberly nearby.

It was one of those rare moments when Jews, a small and fractious people, put aside their religious and political differences and all came together as one.

But make no mistake: Rabin was far from universally loved among Jews, and his legacy can still spark angry debates.

There are no debates, on the other hand, on how Zelenskyy has faced down Vladimir Putin. But what has turned this from simple Jewish hero worship for a man who exudes “Maccabee energy” to a matter of familial concern is that, like any deep relationship, it is mutual.

Not only did we embrace Zelenskyy, he embraced us back.

On two occasions since the invasion began, he has spoken directly to American Jews, asking them to speak out as Jews on behalf of Ukraine. “I’m asking you to help us, just support us,” Zelenskyy said in a Monday conference call with American Jewish leaders.

Earlier in the conflict, he appealed directly to American Jews, asking for them to come out as Jews, as he did, and act on behalf of Ukraine. “Do not remain silent now,” he said.

Rabin, even at his warmest, was gruff. Zelensky is the Jewish relative you have never met who throws his arms around you in the airport.

But Rabin comes to my mind not just because of what he stood for, but for the bitter memory of how he died. We have seen the movie, and we don’t want to watch it again.

Our love of Zelenskyy is wrapped up in our fear for his death. We watch him and wonder if we are witness to a cruel pre-martyrdom, or if, by some [Jewish] miracle, the story will have a happy ending.

The future is far from certain, and yet we choose to fill that unknowing with hope. “I can’t remember the last time I stood at this pulpit and prayed for someone’s life,” Rabbi David Wolpe said last Shabbat from the pulpit of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, “but I pray that Zelenskyy lives.”

Rob Eshman is national editor of the Forward. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter @foodaism or email [eshman@forward.com](mailto:eshman@forward.com). Subscribe to his weekly “Letter from California” [here](#).

**Culture**

# Farewell Mr. Entenmann, your cookies and cakes live on

By Benjamin Cohen

The Entenmann's Freezer was taller than I was.

To be fair, at 5-foot-2, most things are taller than I am: grocery store shelves, that chain to turn on the overhead fan, your average adult human.

The Entenmann's Freezer was an iconic part of my childhood. Most families that have an extra freezer use it to store meat or frozen vegetables. Ours was packed to the brim with boxes upon boxes of Entenmann's. Sure, there were the classics: the chocolate chip cookies, the cheese danish twist, the crumb coffee cake. After all, these were the stand-by staples of any Entenmann's connoisseur.

But there were also enough donuts packed into that freezer to give diabetes to anyone who cracked open its door. At any given moment, you could find a dozen boxes of Entenmann's donuts in just about every variety: plain, glazed, crumb-topped. My all-time favorite was the "rich frosted," a no-frills black donut so pure and perfect, I often wonder if it had divine origin.

The inherent spirituality of Entenmann's was never far from my mind. I grew up the son of a rabbi. Each of my four older siblings would eventually become rabbis or marry them. My dad, in his infinite wisdom, thought it best to build a 1,000-square-foot synagogue onto the side of our home, an addition so large drivers slowed down as they passed to gawk. Rio de Janeiro had the Christ the Redeemer statue; suburban Atlanta had a comically large chapel attached to my living room.

We hosted services every Shabbat and the highlight for many of us, my dad's sermon notwithstanding, was the kiddush afterwards. It was all Entenmann's, all the time. I was tasked with setting up, which basically required me to open the freezer and carry as many Entenmann's boxes as I could into the sanctuary. If there was a bar mitzvah, we would also serve crackers and herring. I mean, we're not Neanderthals.

Some families had a swimming pool or premium cable; we had loaf cake. I remember being shocked to learn that not everybody had an Entenmann's Freezer in a synagogue attached to their house. Whenever we had friends over to play, they all asked for an Entenmann's snack.

And filling that freezer was just as fun as emptying it. You see, we didn't buy Entenmann's retail at the grocery store like any civilian. Each Thursday after school, I would go with my mom to the Entenmann's bakery outlet shop on the corner of North Decatur Road and Scott Boulevard, a 20-minute drive from our home.

I was sure this magical place was reserved for VIPs. Like it was only because my dad was a member of the clergy that we were allowed into this hallowed storefront that sold day-old donuts. At the very least, I thought the outlet was a secret, a sort of sugar-filled speakeasy that required a password and a glucose monitor to gain entry. I guess it didn't dawn on me that the average consumer did not require enough Entenmann's in bulk to merit a trip to a separate store. Each week, we'd clear out most of their discounted supply. The cashier had this special machine that tied the boxes together with a thin white string. It was a thing of beauty.

My childhood love for all things Entenmann's never really dissipated. A couple of years ago, I decided to go on an intense diet, concerned about the impact of decades of eating baked treats every day. When I reached my goal weight after two months of practically starving myself, there was only one reward I wanted.

I went straight from the scale in my bathroom to my car and drove to the nearest grocery store, where I grabbed a box of my beloved black, rich frosted donut. When I popped the first one into my mouth, I was so lightheaded I had to sit down. To this day, I always keep a box in my freezer for special occasions, the way others might save a bottle of Champagne.

And, yet, despite my devotion to the brand, I never realized there was an actual Entenmann behind it all. That is, until this morning, when I read about the death, at 92, of Charles Edward Entenmann, who helped turn his family's New York bakery into a national brand. Turns out, he wasn't Jewish. And, even more shocking, he did not have a sweet tooth.

"I'm going to tell you something that's been pretty much a secret, most of my life anyway," his son told Newsday. "He didn't eat Entenmann's cake," and "just wasn't a dessert guy." So to Mr. Entenmann, I raise a glass of milk in one hand and a raspberry danish in the other. Thank you for providing me and my people so much sustenance and joy.

**News**

# Chicago 8th grader says she was made to draw pro-Nazi poster

By Louis Keene

It was a decidedly perplexing social studies assignment, even before Gladys Shelby's teacher told her she didn't have to draw swastikas to get a good grade.

As part of a unit on the Holocaust, Gladys, an eighth grader at Eliza Chappell Elementary, a public school in Chicago, had to design her own Nazi propaganda poster. She said she is the only Jewish student in the class, and that she told her teacher the assignment made her uncomfortable.

The teacher's response about not having to draw a swastika did not help.

"Obviously, I didn't just mean drawing a swastika," Gladys said. "I meant writing hate speech towards my people."

Assigned Feb. 24, the poster project was the latest of a series of off-putting moments during the unit, Gladys said, and the final straw for her mom, Scarlett Herrin, who contacted the teacher seeking an explanation. She said she expected the teacher to apologize and to commit to removing the lesson from the curriculum. Instead, according to Herrin, the teacher said the students had misunderstood the assignment.

The Chicago school system is now looking into the incident. Herrin said that in a meeting with her on Monday, the school's principal acknowledged that the teacher made a mistake and said Gladys can expect a letter of apology. But Herrin said the school's slow response compounded her daughter's distress over the assignment, and led some other students to accuse Gladys of trying to get their popular teacher fired.

The teacher, Tiffanie Reschke, did not respond to a request for a comment. The school's principal, Joseph Peila, directed questions about the incident to a Chicago school district spokesperson.

“Chicago Public Schools [CPS] is committed to fostering safe and supportive learning environments that celebrate, honor, and respect all members of our diverse school community,” the spokesperson, Evan Moore, wrote in an email. “The District is investigating this matter.”

In an interview, Gladys described the teacher’s approach to Holocaust education as “troubling.”

The class read an excerpt from “Mein Kampf” and had to answer questions about it – unusual in American schools. The class also read part of “Maus,” the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic memoir of the Holocaust that was recently banned in a Tennessee school district. Considering her Jewish background was well-known in the class, Gladys thought she might be called on to offer her perspective. Her classmates, she said, frequently glanced at her as the Holocaust was discussed. But when she tried to pitch in, she said Reschke undermined her.

“I’d say something about 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, because she’s never once said that,” Gladys explained. “If I said something like that, she’d be like, so were a lot of other people.”

When it came to the propaganda poster, which was a group assignment, Gladys said, some of her non-Jewish classmates were offended, too. One Black classmate told her that if she had received such an assignment about Black people, she would have left the school over it. Another classmate texted her that they felt guilty about having done the assignment.

Herrin, 34, said that on a phone call the day after the poster assignment, the teacher told her that the lesson came from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and that the students had misunderstood what was supposed to be a project creating informational boards about the effects of Nazi propaganda.

“Two separate units of class that are not together did the same project and over half the posters ended up like” Nazi propaganda, Herrin said. “It’s just like, you’re scapegoating the kids.”

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum does share lesson plans and other teaching materials relating to the Holocaust, including some related to Nazi propaganda. But none listed on its website involves an assignment like the one that Gladys described, in which students are instructed to make their own antisemitic signs.



During the same call, Herrin said, Reschke tried to reassure her of her social justice bona fides by informing her that she had adopted Black children, an assertion Herrin found irrelevant and dismissive.

When Herrin escalated her concerns to the school's administration, she said Peila, the principal, was out of the office, and the vice principal did not take action. Peila scheduled a meeting with Herrin and Reschke upon his return. But Reschke called in sick the day of the meeting, Herrin said, and it was not rescheduled once she returned to class a few days later said.

Instead, Herrin met one on one with the principal on Monday, and was satisfied with his response.

But she said that the teacher's four-day absence – and her proclamation to students upon her return that she wasn't being fired – made things worse for her daughter.

"Had they addressed this immediately, I think we would not be having this conversation," Herrin said. "We would have said, 'Oh, this was a mistake,' but instead, the teacher dug her heels in initially, and then it turned into this."

As for the posters, Herrin said the principal assured her they would not be graded.

The incident recalls a Holocaust lesson at a Washington public school in December, when a library instructor had third-graders reenact Nazi killings in pretend gas chambers and mass graves and had a Jewish student play Hitler.

That teacher, who was not publicly identified, apparently made antisemitic comments during the period, saying that "the Jews ruined Christmas." The teacher was placed on leave for an unknown length of time.

Louis Keene is a staff reporter at the Forward. He can be reached at [keene@forward.com](mailto:keene@forward.com) or on Twitter [@thislouis](https://twitter.com/thislouis).

**Culture**

# Jewish writers from former Soviet Union watch invasion with fear, dread – and recognition

By Irene Katz Connelly

Novelist Zhanna Slor was born a few weeks after the Chernobyl disaster, in the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi. Her timely arrival probably saved her father's life. An engineer, he was slated to join cleanup crews at the radioactive site – until Slor's mother demanded he stick around for the birth.

That family story returned to her earlier this month, when invading Russian forces took over the nuclear site. The news “really crystallized the scope of the invasion,” said Slor, who published her debut novel, “At the End of the World, Turn Left,” in 2021. “Who would even want a radioactive city unless they were planning to take over the country?”

Since the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Jewish writers from the former Soviet Union have been watching with alarm and dread as war returns to the places their families fled. Some are glued to the news. Others are championing Ukrainian writing, hoping to preserve the cultural legacy currently under threat. Many are seeing key themes in their work, from the fragility of democracy to the immigrant and refugee experience, play out in real time – even as the onslaught of new developments often makes the daily work of writing seem impossible.

“It's been hard to read, hard to think of anything other than the war,” said Ellen Litman, a Moscow-born novelist and professor at the University of Connecticut.

Litman initially followed the war through TV Rain, one of Russia's few progressive television outlets. But after TV Rain was forced to shut down, she turned to the app Telegram, where she can read updates from friends as well as prominent Russian activists, lawyers and economists. For the past two weeks she's condensed those reports into “Telegram Chronicles,” short dispatches that she posts on Facebook for the benefit of English-speaking friends.

"I want them to know about the Russian people who are resisting this war and getting arrested and beaten," Litman said via email. "About the new laws the Russian government continues to introduce to suppress and punish any sort of dissent, about the growing atmosphere of terror there."

Boris Fishman, a Minsk-born novelist whose work chronicles the Soviet Jewish diaspora, said he has closer ties to Ukraine than to his native Belarus. As a teenager, he forged a deep friendship with his grandfather's home health aide, a Ukrainian woman named Oksana. Her cooking helped inspire his food-focused memoir "Savage Feasts." Fishman has traveled to Ukraine to spend time in Kyiv and in Oksana's home city, Ivano-Frankivsk.

Fishman says he's in daily contact with Oksana to check on her family. Though safe for now, they're waiting for the day when fighting arrives at their town.

The long history of antisemitic persecution in Eastern Europe has touched Fishman deeply: One of his few Minsk memories involves visiting a steam bath on a street named for a Cossack leader who sought to eradicate Jews, and his parents immigrated because of the daily "humiliation" they experienced. Yet Fishman feels a deep identification with the Ukrainian people, one that stems from his own heritage. In what he described as Russia's "demeaning" attitude towards Ukraine, he sees the treatment his family endured under Soviet rule.

"We were the underdogs, we were the unloved, we were the rejected, we were the ignored," Fishman said. "It's a shared minority victimhood."

At the Los Angeles Review of Books, editor-in-chief Boris Dralyuk, who hails from Odessa and immigrated to the United States in 1991, has been publishing reflections from Ukrainian writers caught in the crisis. For him, this isn't just a matter of covering breaking news. At a moment when Ukraine's autonomy is at risk, Dralyuk believes it's vital to make the country's literary culture visible to international audiences.

"What strikes me most is the strain of humor that runs through these works," Dralyuk said. "Sometimes wistful, sometimes sly, sometimes broad, and so typical of the Ukrainian frame of mind, in any language."

Indeed, sharing literature from the region has become a common way for onlookers of all backgrounds to show solidarity with Ukraine. "We Lived Happily During the War," a poem by the prominent Ukrainian-born writer Ilya Kaminsky, went viral on social media. Journalist Talia Lavin, who learned Russian and Ukrainian in college and counts Kaminsky

as an inspiration, published four poems in translation by the Ukrainian poet Iya Kiva in her newsletter.

“Translating poetry may seem like the farthest thing from useful in a war, but to me it’s an act of cultural defiance,” Lavin said, noting that Russian rulers have attempted to suppress the Ukrainian language for centuries.

Some writers have seen their literary preoccupations become breaking news items. Moscow-born graphic novelist Anya Ulinich, who has written about the Russian immigrant experience, is now documenting the Russian assault through illustrations she posts on Instagram. In her own novel, Slor explores the complex nature of immigrant identity for Soviet refugees, who saw the country they fled abruptly cease to exist. It’s a topic that feels especially relevant, and especially thorny, as Russia comes to look more and more like “the country we escaped.”

But while family history has informed her work in the past, she hopes it won’t have to in the future. “Luckily my family is all here now, or I would have all sorts of new things to write about,” she said.

Litman has been writing fiction about Russia’s political trajectory, from potential democracy to total autocracy, after the fall of the Soviet Union. With the onset of war, that arc has appeared in stark relief.

Her book’s new resonance doesn’t mean Litman is getting much work done. “All I’ve been doing is following those Telegram channels and writing and posting about the war,” she said.

Irene Katz Connelly is a staff writer at the Forward. You can contact her at [connelly@forward.com](mailto:connelly@forward.com). Follow her on Twitter at [@katz\\_conn](https://twitter.com/katz_conn).

**Culture**

# Nominated for 13 Oscars, she hasn't won one yet – that's a record

By Curt Schleier

Diane Warren is the Susan Lucci of the Oscars.

Lucci, of course, played Erica Kane for the 40-plus year run of the daytime soap, “All My Children.” During that time, she received 21 Daytime Emmy lead actress nominations, and only one win – on her 19th try.

Warren, who was nominated for best song for “Somehow You Do.” has received 13 Oscar nominations – the most ever by a woman who has never won.

Warren said she thought it was “cool” to be compared to Lucci.

“She eventually won,” Warren said. “Check this out. My first nomination was 34 years ago, so I’m still in the game.”

“How cool is that? And the nomination really is the win, because there are only five songs chosen. They pick five songs and one of them was mine. I haven’t won the Oscar yet, but I’m hopeful. But you never know.”

Asked if she has practiced the face she will make if she wins, Warren throws a hand up in glee and puts on a 1,000 watt smile. She says she doesn’t need to rehearse how she’ll react if she loses.

“I have that one down pat,” she said. “I don’t need to practice it.”

Warren’s competition, which includes Billie Eilish, Beyoncé and Lin-Manuel Miranda, is stiff. Still, “Somehow You Do,” a song that yearns for hope and better times, is a strong contender.

It's sung by Reba McEntire over the end credits of "Four Good Days," a moving film based on a Washington Post story about a family struggling with addiction. Mila Kunis and Glenn Close star as a heroin addict and the mother who fights for her, even though she believes it a losing battle.

"Somehow You Do" is the latest in a long line of hits for Warren that began in 1982, when she wrote the lyrics for Laura Branigan's "Solitaire." She got her first Oscar nomination [with Albert Hammond] for "Nothing's Gonna Stop Me Now" from the film "Mannequin."

All told she's written nine #1 hits and 32 that cracked Billboard Magazine's Top 10. She's won a Grammy, an Emmy, two Golden Globes, three Billboard magazine Songwriter of the Year trophies and is an inductee in the Songwriter's Hall of Fame. She spoke to the Forward about her nomination and career:

**You wrote "If I Could Take Back Time" for Cher at a time when her career was not flourishing. Is it true she didn't want to do it?**

She needed it. I had to beg her, get on my knees and hold her leg down to try it. Yeah, that's a true story. I'm happy I did that. I've written lots of songs that people didn't want to do. Toni Braxton didn't want to do "Unbreak My Heart." Sometimes you just got to try it. It's like a jacket in a store. You may not like it on a hanger, but try it on.

**What if you could turn back time? What would you do differently?**

I wouldn't do anything differently, because I think if you change one little thing you change everything. Everything I did, even if it was f--ked up or I didn't do something the way I should have done it or something I wish I didn't go through, you can't change it because it's like the butterfly effect and throws everything off.

**I'm a little surprised by your answer. Wikipedia says you grew up alienated because you were Jewish.**

I didn't feel alienated growing up Jewish. I just felt alienated growing up. I felt alienated in general. I was a weird kid. I wasn't one of the popular kids. I had my little weirdo friends. I was always the outsider, which is fine. I'm glad I was the outsider. I'm glad I'm still the outsider.

**What was your Jewish life like growing up?**

My parents weren't super religious. For holidays, I'd go to my aunt, but I always felt Jewish.

**How did your interest in songwriting begin?**

I knew I wanted to be a songwriter from when I was a kid. My father brought me a little guitar when I was 10 or 11 and I just started making up songs. I got really obsessed about it and feel the same way years later.

**You grew up in the era of the singer-songwriter and the Troubadour, probably not far from where you grew up in L.A. Who were your influences?**

I grew up also in the era of Motown and the Beatles. That's where my earliest musical influences were. I wasn't influenced by the singer-songwriters, I was influenced by the radio, the Brill Building songwriters and the Beatles. The whole California thing didn't influence me as much as the Brill Building.

**Pretty much every story about you mentions that you are relationship phobic. Is that true?**

The irony is there, because here I am writing these songs that people fall in love to and get married to, yet it's not re-ally my thing. I don't want to be in a relationship. I have my friends. I love my cat. I got to live it in every song I wrote and then it's over and I'm in a new relationship with another song.

**What's your attitude going into the awards ceremony. Do you think you'll win?**

Last year I thought I had a chance for "Seen," a song for a great Sophia Loren movie ["The Life Ahead"]. The Oscars were on my dad's birthday and I thought that was a sign. But it's kind of funny. People don't remember what won, They remember the songs. And the song from last year is being recorded by everybody; it's becoming a standard.

**You've won so many major awards, but still, it would be nice to break the streak, wouldn't it?**

It would be nice to win finally, yes. I'm not gonna lie. It would be great. I would love it. Especially with this song. Wouldn't that just be the best?

**Opinion**

# **Soviet Jews built the start-up nation. Israel should rush to welcome Ukrainian refugees today**

By Dany Bahar

Over 2 million Ukrainians have fled their country in the 14 days since the aggressive Russian invasion began, creating the fastest refugee crisis in modern history.

Ukraine's neighbors – such as Poland, Hungary, Moldova and Belarus – have been the first destination for most of these refugees, as the rest of the world watches in awe as the numbers continue to increase day-by-day.

When the news cycle inevitably shifts, the global solidarity toward refugees will be replaced by attempts to limit the inflow of these refugees, just as was done to the Syrians, Venezuelans and other displaced populations fleeing persecution and violence over the past decade. Israel is already debating how many non-Jewish refugees to allow to stay.

But in truth, countries should be competing to take in refugees, not figuring out how to send them away. Welcoming the stranger is not only the morally right thing to do, but will inevitably lead to enormous medium and long-term economic gains if coupled with the right policies.

The story of modern Israel exemplifies the tremendous gains that Ukrainian refugees could bring to their host nations if they are given the chance to do so.

Between 1989 to 1995, as the Iron Curtain was being pulled down, over 600,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union arrived in Israel, increasing the population of the country by nearly 15% in only five years. By the mid-2000s, the total population of Israel increased by 20% due to this inflow.



Let that number sink in. This is comparable to the United States admitting 60 million refugees in just a few years (the U.S. currently admits only 125,000 refugees per year – a shamefully low number, though a big improvement from the 15,000 quota established during the Trump years).

In many nations, refugees must go through a lengthy process to be recognized as such, often spending years without the right to work or to receive benefits.

In Israel, through its Law of Return, immigrants from the former Soviet Union who were able to prove Jewish ancestry immediately received citizenship – along with full access to the labor markets and social benefits such as health care, education, retirement and more.

At the time, I'm sure some prophets of doom predicted that increasing the number of workers in the economy by 20% would tremendously hurt Israelis, as increased competition would result in lower wages. But in an influential study, my Brown University colleague Rachel Friedberg found that this was not the case: the wages of Israeli natives were not affected by the huge inflow of immigrants at all.

In fact, dozens of studies that have looked rigorously at the effect of large immigrant flows on wages, in the United States and beyond, consistently show that the newcomers have little to no impact on the salary of the incumbents. In part, this is because immigrants bring skills to the economy such that they do not end up competing with locals, but rather complementing them.

This was quite the case of immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel who, alongside tremendously effective public policy, played a big role in Israel becoming the “startup nation” we know today.

Perhaps it was due to the pogroms in the Russian empire and the antisemitism that characterized the institutions of the Soviet Union that Soviet Jews were more likely to get trained in scientific and technical disciplines rather than investing in businesses, which were not portable and more prone to punishment by authorities. But whatever the reason, when this population immigrated to Israel, they brought important and in-demand STEM skills to the growing technology sector.

But public policy also played an important role: in an effort to make sure immigrants from the former Soviet Union were properly integrated into the labor markets, the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce (today the Ministry of Economy) through a public-private partnership invested in firm incubators that hosted new ventures ran by

immigrants in their teams, which helped make Israel the country with the highest number of venture capital funds per capita today.

Among the many success stories of immigrants in the Hi-Tech Israeli scene is the story of P-cure, a firm that provides patient-centered proton therapy treatments for cancer, founded in 2007 through one of these incubator programs. Its founder, Michael Marash, was originally from Belarus and immigrated to Israel with his parents in 1990 while in college. Before becoming an entrepreneur, Marash took advantage of Israel's publicly-subsidized education system, completing secondary and tertiary degrees in genetics, as well as an MBA.

Marash's gravitation toward STEM disciplines was shared with many first- and second-generation immigrants from the former Soviet Union. It should come as no surprise, then, that Israel has become a preferred destination for the largest global multinational corporations' research and development centers, converting Israel into the country with the largest investment in R & D as a share of its gross domestic product.

The example of Israel is an important one, but it is not the only one. For readers of the Forward, it would come as no surprise that Jewish scientists who fled from Europe to America during the Holocaust were also instrumental in developing scientific progress in the United States in ways that would have been inconceivable to achieve otherwise, as this study shows, as well as marking important contributions in many other occupations and industries.

John von Neumann, a Hungarian Jew, was one of the most proficient of these scientists and became a founding figure in computing, as well as a core member of the team of the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb.

The list goes on and on. It is the rule, not the exception, that persecuted populations from all corners of the world, when given the chance, can convert anything they touch into gold. That will also prove to be true of Ukrainian refugees today, if only we give them the chance.

Dany Bahar is an Associate Professor of Practice of International and Public Affairs at Brown University's Watson Institute . An Israeli and Venezuelan economist, he also is affiliated to The Growth Lab at Harvard Center for International Development, the Brookings Institution and the Center for Global Development .



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