SCHWARZBARD
FOUNDATION

"טורי זהב"

Expert discussion

**"Israel: Ontological Bubbles and
the "Derech Eretz" community**

18 April 2024, Tel-Aviv

Round Table Program

15:30-16:00	Gathering and light snacks
16:00-16:30	Conference opening and presentation of the activities of the "Dor Moria" Association, the "Samuil Shvartsbard" Foundation, and the "Turei Zaav" Association.
16:30-17:00	Presentation of conceptual approaches to the phenomenon of "Ontological Bubbles".
17:00-17:15	Presentation of the "Dor Moria" Association research: key findings and general conclusions.
17:15-17:45	Discussion on the topic "Ontological Bubbles in Israel and the 'Derech Eretz' Movement."
17:45-18:00	Summary of the round table discussion and discussion of the activities of the "Derech Eretz" movement.
18:00-18:45	Break

Within the framework of Haifa Format project, 8 studies were carried out in 2023-2024:

- Attitudes of Israelis towards the armed conflict in Ukraine (March-April);
- Attitudes of Israelis towards the judicial reform (June);
- Attitudes of Israelis towards the issue of Israel's neutrality (July);
- Israelis' expectations from the 2024 US presidential elections (August);
- "Vision of the Future: Israel After the War" (October-November);
- "The Influence of World Leaders on the Future of Israel and the Middle East" (December);
- "Acute Issues Dividing Israeli Society" (February);
- "Attitudes of World Powers Towards the Situation in Israel" (March)

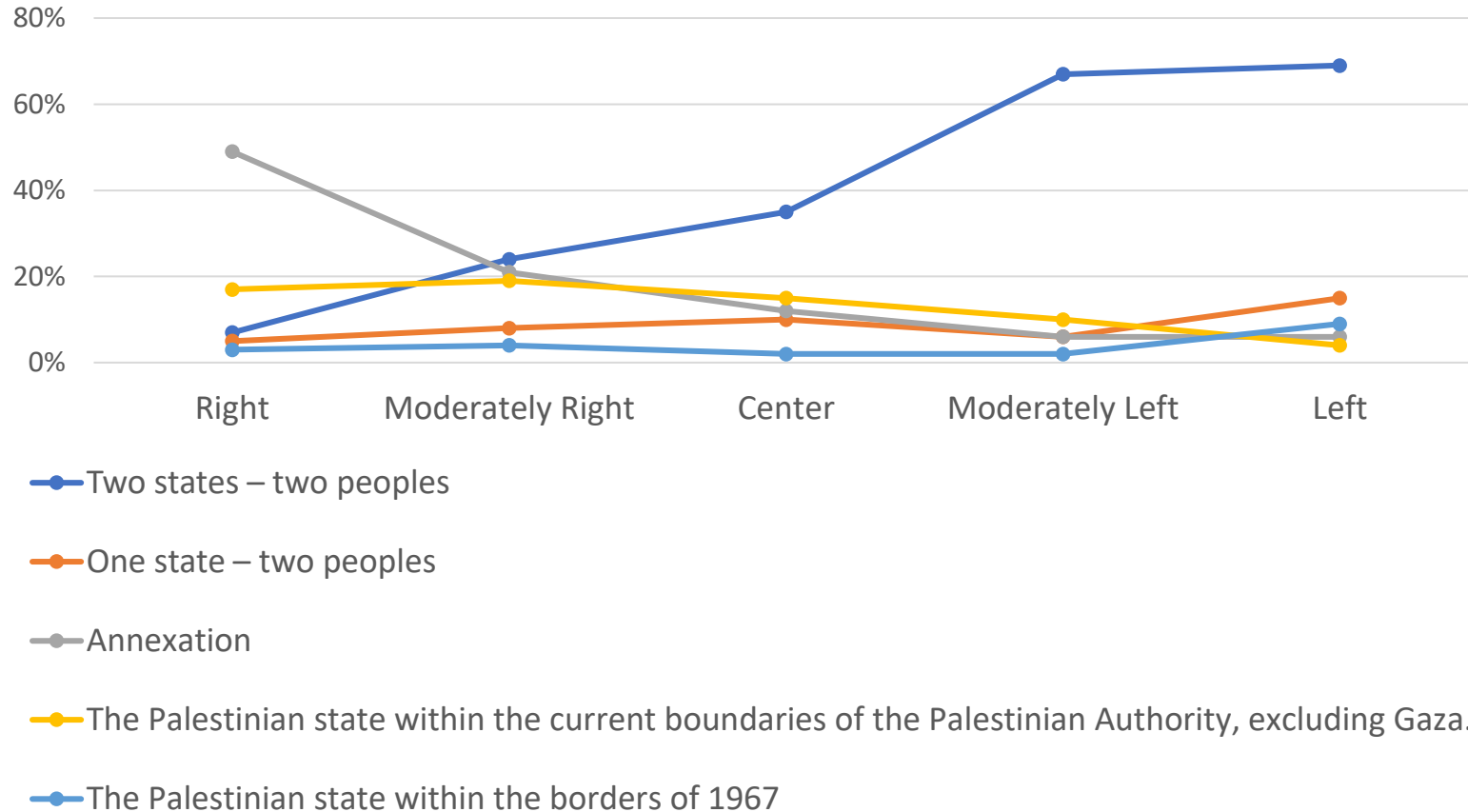**Radicalization of Israeli Society - an Empirical Fact**

"The divide between groups is growing. Even the events of October 7 and the war that followed, which were initially regarded as unifying events, can now be seen as having only a temporary binding effect on the pre-existing internal situation…"

https://en.idi.org.il/articles/53380

The possibility of complete destruction of the Hamas organization

	Possible	Impossible	Total
Political Orientation			
Ultra-right	%85	%15	100%
Moderately Right	%65	%35	100%
Center	%59	%41	100%
Moderately Left	%58	%42	100%
Ultra-left	%32	%68	100%
Country of Birth			
Israel	%65	%35	100%
Former USSR Countries	%69	%31	100%
Others	%72	%28	100%

After the war in Israel
(distribution of responses by political orientations)

Legend:
- Two states – two peoples
- One state – two peoples
- Annexation
- The Palestinian state within the current boundaries of the Palestinian Authority, excluding Gaza.
- The Palestinian state within the borders of 1967

The concept of "Two states for two peoples" is most supported by representatives of moderate and ultra-left **political views**, with 67% and 69%, respectively, endorsing it. In general, regarding the vision of Israel's political future, they show the greatest unity, with the distribution of responses for other options not exceeding 6% in most cases.

The "Ontological Bubbles" Hypothesis

Ontological bubbles are closed and self-reproducing worldviews that form within social groups.

Characteristics of ontological bubbles:

- Impermeability to alternative ideas and facts that contradict the worldview;
- Dehumanization of those holding other views, perceiving them as existential enemies;
- Manichean dualism: "sons of light" vs "sons of darkness";
- "Merging" of key dichotomies: Us/Them; Good/Evil; Truth/Falsehood; Ours/Theirs; Progress/Reaction.

Ontological bubbles form holistic, mutually exclusive pictures of reality:

- **Liberal narrative:** "*Open society on the path to universal emancipation*" (freedom, individualism, progress, globalism, secularity);
- **Conservative narrative:** "*United community in the struggle for survival and identity*" (tradition, collectivism, stability, nationalism, religiosity).

Israel today: a crisis of the Status Quo amidst Ontological bubbles.

Consequences of the formation of ontological bubbles:
- Paralysis of the political system due to the inability to reach compromises;
- Growth of mutual alienation and extremism;
- Threat to democratic institutions and social stability;
- Risk of losing national unity and state disintegration.

Israel's Problems:
- Deepening socio-political divisions in society;
- Instability of coalition governments and paralysis of reforms;
- Escalation of external security threats (Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah);
- Slowdown in economic growth and increasing inequality;
- Issues in the education, healthcare, and infrastructure systems.

The Spiritual Origins of "Derech Eretz" – A Bridge Between the Religious and the Secular

The origins of "Derech eretz" in Judaism:

- Respect for the dignity and rights of every person as a creation of G-d;

- Politeness, courtesy, and nobility in relationships with people;

- Harmonious combination of Torah (spirituality) with "earthly" affairs and concerns;

- Honesty, integrity, and responsibility as the highest virtues;

- Primacy of the common good over selfish interests.

"Derech eretz" as a universal ethic:

- Basic principles of humanity, relevant to people of different views;

- A guideline for moral behavior in society, regardless of religion;

- An antidote to fanaticism, intolerance, and moral absolutism;

- A basis for dialogue and cooperation "above barriers";

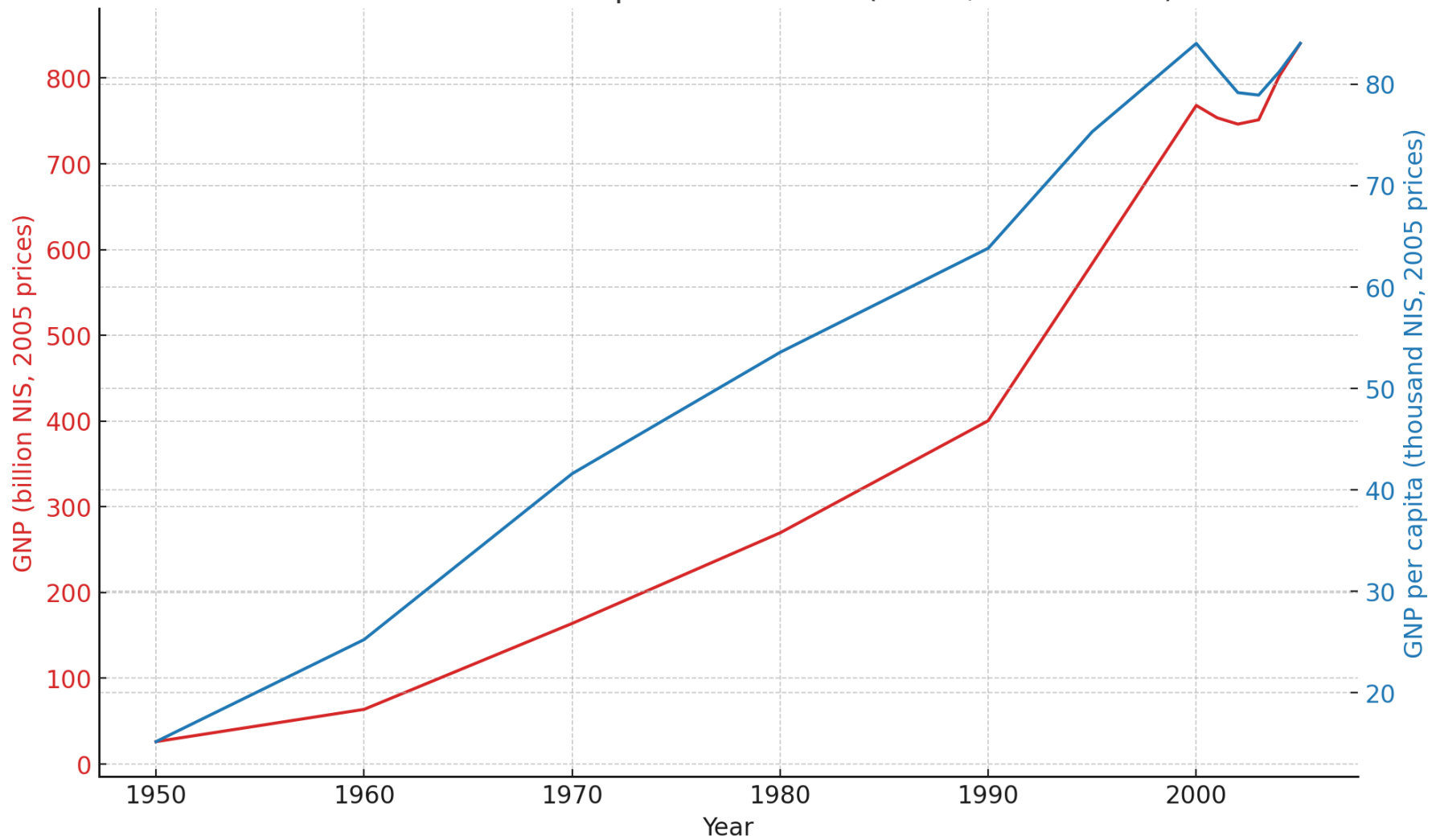- A path to harmonizing Israeli society in its diversity.

The Role of Emigrants from the Russian Empire in the Zionist Movement and the Establishment of Israel's State Institutions

- **Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky** – born in Odessa, Russian Empire (now Ukraine).
- **Haim Nahman Bialik** – born in Ivnitsa, Russian Empire (now Zhytomyr Oblast, Ukraine).
- **Chaim Weizmann** – born in Motol, Russian Empire (now Brest Region, Belarus).
- **Zalman Shazar** – born in Mir, Russian Empire (now Grodno Region, Belarus).
- **David Ben-Gurion** – born in Płońsk, Russian Empire (now Masovian Voivodeship, Poland).
- **Moshe Sharett** – born in Kherson, Russian Empire (now Ukraine).
- **Yitzhak Ben-Zvi** – born in Poltava, Russian Empire (now Ukraine).
- **Berl Katznelson** – born in Bobruiki, Russian Empire (now Gomel Region, Belarus).
- **Meir Dizengoff** – born in Akimovka, Russian Empire (now Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine).
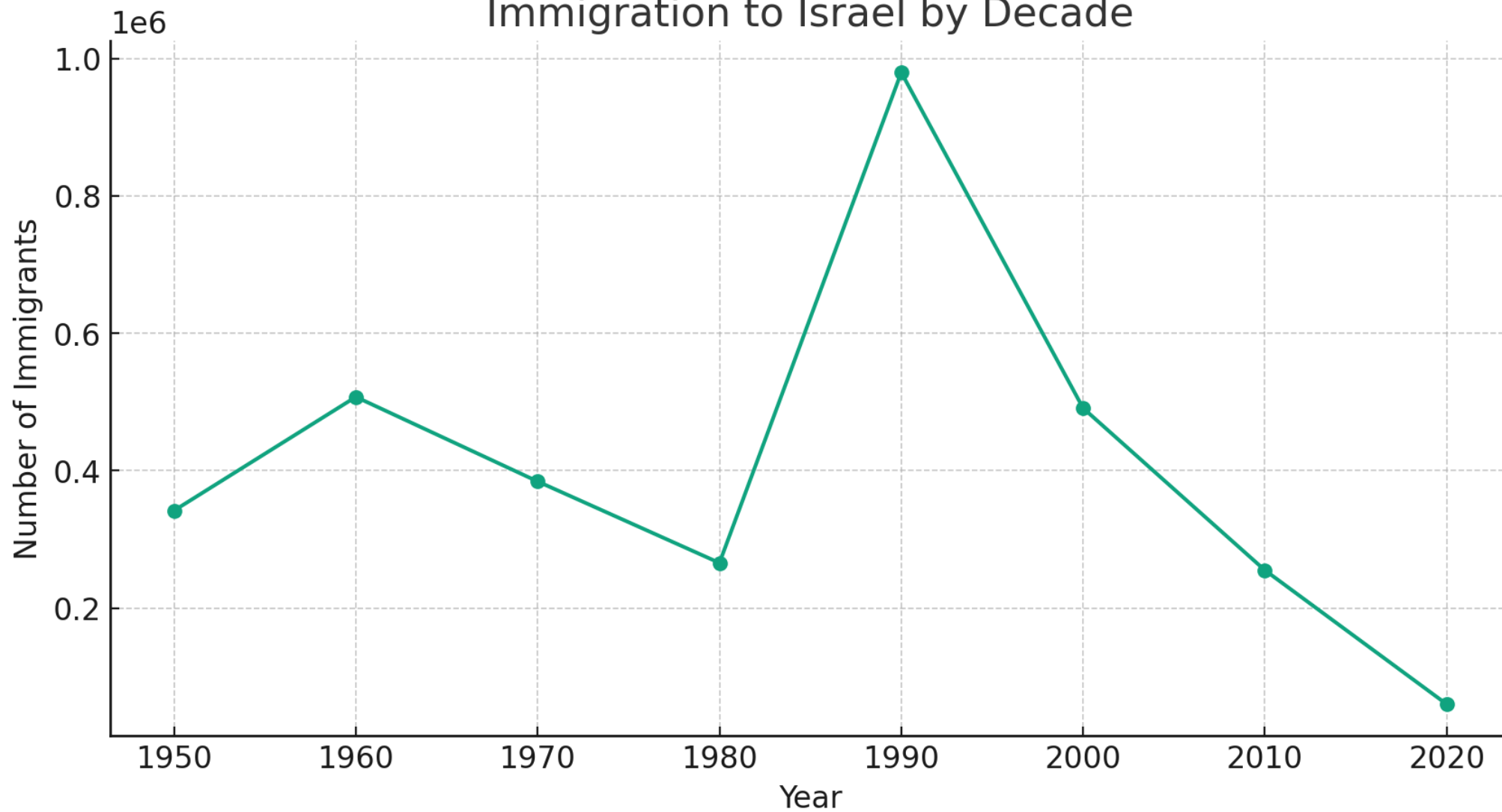- **Golda Meir** – born in Kyiv, Russian Empire (now Ukraine).

The Role of Emigrants from the Russian Empire in the Formation of the Israeli Army and Security Services.

- **Yigal Allon** - Born in Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Russia.

- **Rehavam Ze'evi** - Born in Jerusalem, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Russia.

- **Chaim Laskov** - Born in Barysaw, Byelorussian SSR (now Minsk Region, Belarus).

- **Moshe Dayan** - Born in Kibbutz Degania Alef, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Ukraine.

- **Ariel Sharon** - Born in Moshav Kfar Malal, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Georgia and Belarus.

- **Rafael Eitan** - Born in Moshav Tel Adashim, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Russia.

- **Meir Amit** - Born in Tiberias, Mandatory Palestine (now Israel), family from Russia.

GNP and GNP Per Capita Over Time (Israel, 1950-2005)

Immigration to Israel by Decade

Conditions for influencing political decision-making.

Any socio-political movement should have:

- Social base: a sufficient number of members within the social group;

- Political base: parties and politicians who lobby for the group's interests at the state and local levels;

- Economic base: representatives of big business and tools for monetizing the group's social capital;

The movement/social group must possess instruments of influence:

- Elections: entry of the group's representatives into the legislative/executive government;

- Lobbying: influencing political decision-making between elections;

- Social mobilization: organizing public pressure and electoral processes.

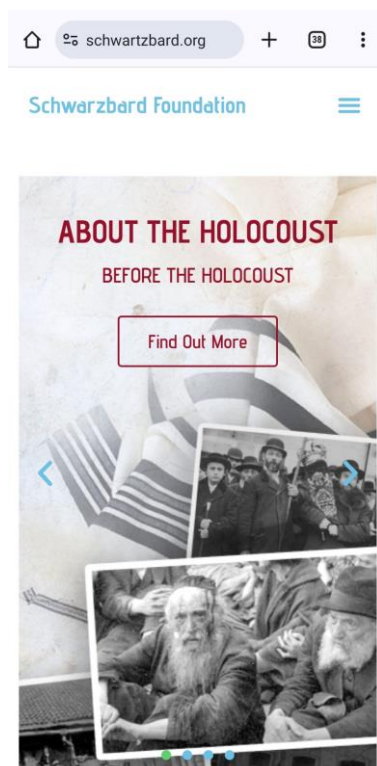**The situation with Russian-speaking Israelis**

- Presence of a significant social base (1.5 million people);
- Absence of a political base (insufficient representation in the Knesset and government bodies);
- Weakness of the economic base (lack of consolidated support from big business, lack of mass funding for socio-political movements);
- Insufficient use of influence tools (low electoral activity, lack of effective lobbying, low level of social mobilization).
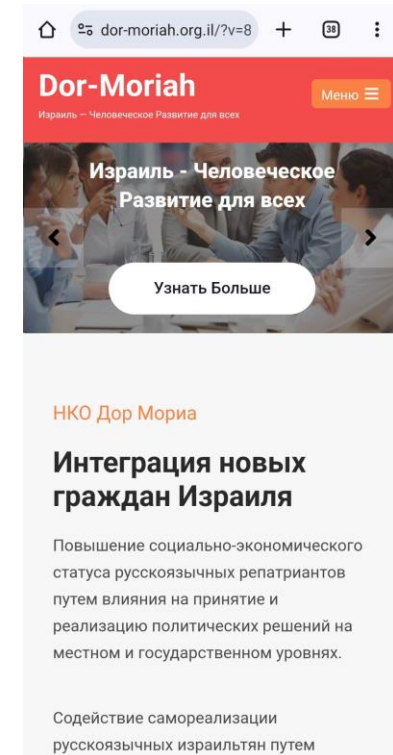
Results:

- Low socio-economic status of the Russian-speaking community;
- Limited influence of Russian-speaking Israelis on political decisions affecting their interests and on politics in general.

Tasks for the movement:
•Ensuring societal consensus on the vision for the future;
•Overcoming the fragmentation of Israeli society;
•Achieving long-term political stability;
•Adapting to new security challenges;
•Launching a new wave of economic growth and innovation;
•Modernizing the country's social infrastructure.

For Notes

Thank you for your attention

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www.dor-moriah.org.il