On Religiosity and Super-Religiosity (B): The Case of Jewish Ultra Orthodoxy

Gideon Aran
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Hebrew University, Jerusalem
Israel 91905
msaran@mscc.huji.ac.il

Preface

This is part two of my essay on Super-Religiosity. The first part, printed in the previous issue of *Numen* (2/3, 2013) presented the analytic model of Super-Religiosity. The following presents a case study which is an illustration and test of the formerly published conceptual discussion and theoretical argument. The present part applies the idea of Super-Religiosity to the peculiar instance of Jewish Ultra Orthodoxy. Though originally only partial and complementary, this paper may be read independently and has merits in its own right. It is a comprehensive, methodic and updated exposition of a particular Super-Religious society and culture. It focuses on the contemporary Israeli Ultra Orthodox known as Haredim. More precisely, this paper describes and analyzes the hard core of the Haredi group that manifests religious extremism. This examination of the Haredi case in terms of Super-Religiosity is harnessed to the attempt to deconstruct and reevaluate the prevalent concepts of tradition, extremism and fundamentalism.

The following comments on the nature of Jewish Ultra-Orthodoxy derive from my long, unmediated contacts with Haredim, during which I had the opportunity to experience various aspects of their life. Close relationships with Haredim allowed me to observe their daily routine - at home or at work, praying, studying Torah, hearing sermons and moral lessons in the *yeshiva* (Talmudic academy), discussing politics and gossiping with friends or leisurely dining with family. In addition, I took part in their special occasions: dancing in holiday celebrations or weddings, violently protesting in mass rallies, attending funerals, formal and informal audiences with rabbis, making pilgrimage to saint' tombs and sanctuaries. Especially privileged data is drawn from an extensive fieldwork - mostly (participant) observation and in-depth interviewing – of a

typically Haredi organization known by its acronym ZaKA (Stadler et al. 2005). The latter – already mentioned in part A - is a volunteer enterprise dedicated to the "sacred mission" of managing the death of the Israeli victims of Palestinian terrorism. I have been affiliated with ZaKA's Jerusalemite squad active in the arena of suicide bombing (Aran forthcoming). This unique, highly intensive and charged situation enables candid communication that breaks through the barriers of social control to include the disclosure of personal fantasies, occupational and even marital difficulties, misgivings concerning communal leadership, and venting of tension by joking that naturally is exempted from censorship and critically zeroes in on sensitive matters.

This study carefully documents not only pronouncements by Haredi leaders, their official representatives and semi-professional spokesmen but also the voices of grassroots members of the Haredi community who are rarely heard in most research that is attracted to Haredi virtuosos. I tried to detect and present the perspective of ordinary butchers and *kashrut* inspectors, grocery store owners and shoppers, regular Yeshiva students, tradesmen, beggars and - most importantly, the best interviewees – children.[1]

Due to the composition of ZaKA, the particular issues examined here and my personal interests, this study does not cover the entire Haredi spectrum but selectively concentrates on the more extreme, often fringe, Haredi groups. Specifically, my observations relate mainly to the *shomrei emunim* (Guardians of the Faith) Hasidic splinter and to the *yerushalmi'im* (Jerusalemites), as well as members of the *edah charedit* (Satmar, Neturei Karta) and Dushinsky. These Ultra-Orthodox regard themselves as *kana'im* (Zealots) (e.g. Liebes 1982). They number no more than 10-20,000.[2] Though representing only 3-5% of the Israeli Haredi population,[3] their eminence and influence are outstanding, and they epitomize a pure and consistent Haredism. The Haredi zealots inspire my ideal-type of super-religion.

The super-religiosity paradigm directs our attention to aspects of Haredim never systematically studied before. Haredi society, the topic at the empirical core of this article, has been the subject of elaborate and extensive research. This article introduces a

[1] Young children are keen observers and – contrary to many adults– usually tell the truth.
[2] Israel Bureau of Statistics' estimation.
[3] The Israeli Haredi population is about 5-6oo,ooo, 7-9% of Jews in Israel, almost half of the religious (Orthodox) Jews in Israel.

selection of insights derived from the study of Haredim, perceived as a paradigmatic instance of religious radicalism. The essential findings and conclusions of the "classical" research on Haredim, conducted over the course of the last forty years of the 20th century, are reorganized, redressed and updated in light of the prolific research on Haredim conducted over the past decade. The article is founded upon a re-reading of the literature on Haredi society in light of my own recent intensive field-study. The significant sociological/anthropological materials concerning the Haredim are critically examined and integrated anew in terms of an array of theses regarding traditionalism, fundamentalism and super-religiosity. Over the course of this essay I will make specific references to bibliographic sources. However I would first like to pay my debt to many experts in Jewish Ultra-Orthodox society who share a recognized field of academic subspecialty - Haredi Studies.[4]

This essay discusses only Haredi groups concentrated mainly in Israel,[5] and it

[4] The founding father of the historical and sociological research on Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy is Jacob Katz. His groundbreaking findings and paradigmatic revolution still inspire the field. His seminal works are used as a point of departure also of this study. (1986; 1993; 1998). Katz's direct disciples are Moshe Samet (1988) and Menachem Friedman. The latter became the leading authority on Haredim. Lessons learned from his publications and conversations with him have been invaluable. Here is a selection (1982; 1986; 1986a; 1990; 1991; 2010). Friedman's work was complemented and extended by his colleagues and students Haim Soloveitchick (1994); Samuel Heilman (1992). See also: Marc Shapiro (2005); Michael Silber (1992); Aviezer Ravitzky (1996); and William Helmreich (1982). Informative and insightful works were authored also by the journalists Amnon Levy (1988) and David landau (1993) ; the anthropologist Yoram Bilu (2003); the Jewish mysticism scholar Joseph Dan (1997) and others. Among the prominent students of particular aspects of Haredi society are Ely Berman who wrote on Haredi economy (2000); Tamar El-Or on Haredi women (1994). On Haredi women, see also: Yafe (2004); Roger Friedlander and Richard Hecht (1996) on Haredi involvement in municipal and national politics; Yossi Shilhav on Haredi urban patterns and ecology (1986); On devience among haredim see: Nachman Ben-Yehuda (2010). I also benefited from reading Haredi-related fiction, like Yisrael Segal and Dov Alboym (1997). The new - somewhat "revisionist" - generation of Haredi experts include Kimmy Caplan (1997; 2007; 2009). Nurit Stadler (2002; 2008); Yochai Hakak (2009; 2009a); Jacob Lupo (2003); Michal Kravel (2008); Nisim Leon (2008); Yehuda Goodman (1997); Eliezer Wiztum (2001); Benny Brown (2004) and others. Note the fine collection by Emmanuel Sivan and Kimmy Caplan (2003). The integrated body of all the above is at the background to my observations and contentions.

[5] Compare to Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy in other countries, for example, Heilman and Cohen (1989); Caplan (2007) ; Waxman (2000).

relates almost exclusively to Haredi men.[6] Not belittling the significance of Haredi heterogeneity, this essay generally disregards the ethnic and political divisions in the Haredi world, along with a number of dogmatic and cultic divisions, as they are of only secondary importance to the questions under examination.[7] The present argument relates to the broad common denominator within the Haredi world, and primarily to the paradigmatic radical groups in its midst.

Basic Traits and Some Peculiarities of Jewish Ultra-Orthodoxy

The super-religiosity of the Ultra-Orthodox has far reaching implications. This is most dramatically evident in a number of phenomena, such as their having the highest birth rate in Israel--with an average of almost eight children born per-woman (families with twelve or more children are not rare)--an impressive feat by any measure.[8] An additional example is the Ultra-Orthodox dress code:[9] on the Sabbath and Festivals, a considerable proportion of the men wear thick fur hats and heavy caftans, even during the sweltering Middle Eastern summer.[10] Haredi garb, nuanced and obligatory, is the equivalent of military uniform. As such it fulfills several functions: maintaining the boundaries of the community; enabling more effective social control; equalizing and at the same time allowing for signaling different ranks or subgroup affiliation (white or black socks; sidelocks tucked behind ears or untucked; minute shape and length of beard; width and curve of hat's brim, etc).

The super-religiosity of the Ultra-Orthodox is dramatically evident in a number of phenomena observable from afar, first and foremost by their outward appearance. The men can generally be identified by their thick beards, long sidelocks, black fedora

[6] This gender-bias, which reflects the patriarchal nature of Haredi society, is due mainly to the limitations of my particular field research. The unfortunate conspicuous absence of women is mirrored in the following text which often fails to employ gender-neutral language. See Chalamish (1995).
[7] Later on I will relate to several crucial divisions within Haredi Society, particularly Hasidim Vs. Mithnagdim, Eda Haredit Vs. the rest of Haredim, and Ashkenazim Vs. Sepharadim.
[8] The birthrate for Israeli women -- approximately 2.5 children.
[9] This description relates specifically to the Hasidim. See on p. 28
[10] Sosis (2006) invokes this phenomenon as an illustration of the high price of religiosity as indicative of one's obligation to the community.

(*lubavitchers*) or wide rounded hats (*gerer*), and dark jacket. On weekdays they wear a white shirt, and will never be seen wearing anything red, blue, yellow, green, plaid, or flowered. Even while they are relaxing or going "out," they will not wear T-shirts, jeans, or shorts, and they will generally strive never to be seen barefoot or with exposed forearms, even within their homes (Aran 2006). Even during those rare instances where they go to a swimming pool or to the beach, they will go into the water (frequently they will not venture further than the shallow water, as many have not learned to swim)[11] fully clothed, only at those sites which have set separate swimming times so as to maintain stringent homogeneity of the sexes, and they will abstain from lying on the sand.

Here is a partial sample of additional characteristics of the Ultra-Orthodox in keeping with their radical religiosity. Despite the fact that the Ultra-Orthodox community is unapologetically sexist and patriarchal, it is specifically their women who work and are the primary breadwinners, in addition to their multiple child-rearing and housekeeping responsibilities (Caplan 2007a). Similarly, while women are prohibited from learning most of the fundamentally sacred Jewish texts, particularly the Talmud, they outstrip their husbands in terms of their general modern education and various practical proficiencies.[12] Ultra-Orthodox households have record numbers of persons per-room, and record low numbers of vehicles and televisions per-family. Secular women, mostly tourists who circulate in their neighborhoods with a low neckline or sleeveless shirt risk a torrent of curses or even physical violence, including having acid thrown at their faces. A high school education and certainly university study are anathema. Their houses are devoid of plants or pets. The few homes that do have computers may not connect them to the Internet because of the possibility of exposure to obscenities. They do not purchase memberships at the local theater or football club, and they will not be seen at concerts or the cinema. They will generally not sit with spread or crossed legs. Pre-marital sex is not even up for discussion, but neither is dating or even unsupervised public meetings between the sexes. Marriages are endogamous and are generally arranged when the children are at a very young age, and the first, very short and monitored meeting of the

[11] Contrary to various rabbinic rulings according to which a Jew should teach his children to swim because it is a matter of life saving

[12] For example in arithmetic and foreign language skills. On Haredi women education and knowledge see Elor (1994).

couple takes place on the eve of the wedding.

Many Ultra-Orthodox carry on with their business during the annual State-wide siren commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, while the vast majority of other citizens stand at attention -- even if this necessitates stopping traffic. Some wear sackcloth and recite lamentory liturgy on Israel's Independence Day. They flood the streets each morning with their short, though quick steps--a gait thought of as comical by many secular Israeli Jews (Aran 2006) --as they clutch their *tefillin* (phylacteries) and a wet towel, on their way back from morning prayers at the synagogue and ritual immersion at the designated bathhouse (*mikveh*). There are few square inches of the walls lining their streets that are not plastered with layers upon layers of posters (*pashkevils*) which constitute a centralized medium of communal communication, facilitating the administration of social and religious matters, including slander and excommunication of those presented as deviating from the authoritative rabbinical path (Friedman 2005). In all these respects, the Ultra-Orthodox display their spirituality, dedication, and asceticism, and they have thus distinguished themselves and become alienated from their urban Israeli surroundings.

We can illustrate the peculiarity of the Ultra-Orthodox by describing, for example, their typical childhood experience -- unsurpassed in its regulative and exacting nature. Their educational and social systems enforce total separation of the sexes, beginning from the age of two or three. Their school-day, during which they are subjected to harsh disciplinary measures including corporal punishment, is lengthy and intensive. Their educational institutions, many of which are dormitory schools, generally do not have yards, open areas, or even closed areas which would allow for freedom of movement or intimacy. Even during their allocated free time, students are counseled not to play sports, engage in rowdiness, or rest idly. The world of nature is completely foreign to them. It is forbidden for them to either hug or kiss family and friends in public, and with the threat of tough sanctions they are encouraged to speak without obscenities, curses, or slang. Ultra-Orthodox children, and particularly their girls, take a substantial part in raising their younger siblings, even if the age difference is minute, while also being pressured to persevere and excel at their studies and display familial and communal maturity and responsibility.

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Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel are known by their Hebrew name, *Haredim*, those who are fearful (of God). They are akin to the Biblical verse from which they quote, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word." (Isaiah 66;5).[13] They have carried this self-designation proudly for the past two or three generations. Indeed, the Haredim represent a new, to a great extent Israeli, religious phenomenon.

Referring to them as *Hasidim* is a popular misnomer. The latter denotes a sector within Ultra-Orthodoxy, comprising about half of its members, who are the inheritors of a religious reaction, a charismatic revitalization which began in eighteenth century Eastern Europe and excelled in mystical spiritualism, the cult of dynastic leadership, intimate communitas, and active, enthusiastic, physical, vocal, spontaneous, and joyful lives. The other half stood opposed to the latter, popular group, and hence received their appellation, *mitnagdim* (opponents). They are also referred to as *Litvaks* because of their initial geographic concentration in Lithuania. This sector distinguishes itself by its emphasis on Torah scholarship as an almost exclusive occupation and as a preferred path for divine worship, thus accounting for their more somber, methodical, and intellectual character. The present rivalry between these two camps is not as intense as in the past, and in many respects they have gradually come to resemble one another and work together. That said, these two traditions are still distinguishable by virtue of their different lifestyles, worship and leadership models, social and economic institutions, and separate political organizations. Yet, they do not necessarily differ in terms of the relatively high degrees of their religiosity.

The divisions within each of these two groups--primarily among the hasidim with their schismatic proclivities--into sub- and countless splinter-groups are part of an over two-hundred year-old legacy. Hasidim identify themselves by their allegiance to a specific charismatic rabbi (*Admor*), while the Litvaks distinguish among themselves by their affiliation with Torah academies and methodological or legalistic schools. The template for internal organization among Haredim, like their styles of prayer, study, dress, speech, etc., is founded on the collective memory of a long-past Diaspora existence. Thus twenty-first century Haredi communities in American, Asian, or Western

[13] Also Ezra 10:3.

European cities continue to refer to themselves by the names of remote, small, long-abandoned Polish, Ukrainian, Romanian, Russian, or Hungarian townships (Vizhnitz, Gur, Brisk, Ponivizh, Mir, etc.). They coordinate a concerted effort to preserve singular trivialities from their folklore--the styling of the beard, the exact proportions of the fur hat (*shtreimel*), desserts at festival meals, tunes for the Sabbath anthems--not to mention doctrinal emphases which were formulated in a faraway time and place. Over time, additional factors naturally added to the divisions in the Haredi world, on the basis of one's place of residence, for example. A significant criterion is the extent of one's conservatism or adaptability in relation to modern surroundings in general, and the State of Israel in particular.

The roots of Ultra-Orthodoxy are in Eastern Europe, which is where the movement was established and from where it was exported to the West. The Jews from these countries are called Ashkenazy, and, in many respects, the Haredi movement is still fundamentally Ashkenazy. This, despite the fact that over the last three or four decades, and particularly in Israel, there emerged Ultra-Orthodox communities comprised of Jews of Middle Eastern descent--*mizrahim* (oriental). These Jews emulated the characteristics of their Ashkenazi counterparts and accepted their religious and political authority. They studied in Ashkenazi schools, venerated their rabbis, adopted their prayer formula, and even their Eastern European styled jargon and dress. Over the past generation, however, the *mizrahim* have rebelled, striving for autonomy and distinctiveness, and creating a deep ethnically-based division between the Haredim. The differentiation between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Haredim has had political manifestations as well in the form of competing parliamentary parties, particularly since the creation of the mizrahi-Haredi Shas party, which has become a driving force in public life in Israel (Leheman and Siebzehner 2006; Ben Refael and Sharot 1991; Ravitzky 2005; Willis 1993). Ashkenazi Haredim, on the other hand, segregated themselves into a number of party-based political-religious divisions (primarily Agudat Israel and Degel ha-Torah), among whom there erupted rivalries driven by competing interests.

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Various indicators have estimated the general Haredi population in Israel at almost 6-700,000, some 8-9% of the total Jewish population, and comprising about one-

third of Israel's religious Jews.[14] Many in Israel tend to overestimate the proportion of Haredi population as a result of their high visibility on the street and in public life--which can be attributed to, *inter alia*, their conspicuous stereotypical appearance and their high standard of political mobilization and organizational efficiency. Demographic data concerning the Haredim is all the more impressive when considering their high birthrate. Despite the conception of the Haredi community as an archaic vestige of the distant past, they are a very young population. Fifteen percent of today's educational system in Israel is Haredi.[15] The number of Haredi children below four is three times higher than that of the population-at-large. One projection estimates that the Haredim will double their numbers and reach the mark of one million within twenty years.[16] The Haredi community is both multi-aged and multi-generational.

Currently the Haredim are scattered throughout the world, and live primarily in Western metropolises such as New York, Boston, London, Antwerp, Johannesburg, Moscow, and even Bangkok (e.g. Shaffir 1974; Baumel 2003). The center of Haredi life over the past few generations was formerly in the United States, but it has since moved to Israel, which is quickly becoming the numerical and moral critical mass of the Haredi world. Israeli Haredim are becoming increasingly unique and avant-garde, with respect to both their quasi-Zionist, and, conversely, ultra-religious proclivities.

Haredim tend to congregate in exclusive neighborhoods in the central urban centers of Israel, especially Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak (as well as Netania, Rehovot, etc.), in certain peripheral towns (e.g., Hatzor in the north, or Netivot in the south), and in recent years, they have moved to new homogenous settlements beyond the Green Line (in the West Bank, e.g., Beitar, Kiriat Sefer and Kiriat Arba) (Shilhav 1989). The Haredim live voluntarily in crowded enclaves--sometimes referred to as ghettos--with clearly

[14] According to the latest data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (2004 Survey), Israel's population is seven million. In a large sampling of residents of twenty years of age or older, 81% defined themselves as Jewish, of which 44% defined themselves as secular, 27% as traditional, 12% as traditional-religious, 9% as religious, and 8% as Haredi. According to the data from the Guttman study, 14% of Jews in Israel see themselves as "strict" in their observance of the commandments, an additional 24% defined themselves as "strict to a great extent" in observing religious traditions, 40% were said to "observe some traditions," and 20% were said to be non-observant.

[15] One conservative forecast predicts that the statistic will rise to 18% within five years. See the paper produced by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (2007) which was utilized in government discussions as a basis for planning the building of classrooms.

[16] Compare the Israeli population growth per year – 1.4% – to the Haredi one – 7.1%.

defined and carefully guarded civic and cultural boundaries. Ventures out of their enclaves are limited and monitored, and most of their needs are met within the confines of the community.

The Haredim live a Spartan existence that is modest and disciplined, and, in general, they are the poorest sector of Israel's Jewish population as is evident in their low housing standards. More than 70% of Haredim live in households with monthly earnings of less than $450 per-person (versus 20% of secular Jews), and even according to the downward-skewed numbers of Israel's welfare and social security system, 60% of Haredim live below the poverty line.[17] Their participation in Israel's workforce is particularly low (approximately 75% of men do not work)[18]; only 18% of family income derives from work -- most of it done by women.

The surrounding Israeli society, with its modern, secular values, nationalistic ethos, and civil commitments, along with its materialism and affluence, serves as their antithesis. Israel's consumer attractions are also perceived as threatening the bases of Haredi asceticism. Formally, the Haredim are Israeli citizens, equal to all others, but in reality they enjoy certain privileged rights: an autonomous educational system, large subsidies, and exemption from compulsory military service. These unreciprocated privileges arouse acute public criticism and are seen by most Israelis as an unwarranted drain on public resources.

Origins and Trends of the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox

The Haredim are a part of the Jewish orthodoxy which was born only about 200 years ago. For the Jews of (mainly Eastern) Europe during the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, the onset of modernization represented a radical transformation that combined secularization, enlightenment, political emancipation, and massive westward migration. On the ruins of the traditional Jewish society of the middle ages, a revolutionary array of new patterns emerged: from complete assimilation through religious reform, to the territorial nationalism embodied in Zionism. It was in addition to these patterns, and as a reaction to them, that Orthodox Judaism emerged as a uniquely

[17] Compare to Israel's general statistics of 14% below the poverty line.
[18] Compare to Israel's general statistics of 33% of men who do not work.

modern phenomenon.

Soon, however, Orthodox Judaism split into two factions. On the one hand, an adaptive Neo-Orthodoxy emerged (first in Germany) and its adherents sought to be integrated into their surrounding civil, social, and economic environments – but only to the extent that these would not endanger their conformity to the halakhah. For example, the movement encouraged higher education and entering professions such as law and medicine, provided that such jobs did not interfere with the observance of the Sabbath, kosher dietary restrictions, and other commandments. A substantial proportion of this camp (mainly those of Polish descent) joined the Zionists in Israel and became known as the National-Religious (Luz 1988; Schwartz 2009). On the other hand, the conservative Ultra-Orthodox group was characterized by vehement, rabbinically sanctioned opposition to any sort of innovation, even putatively trivial changes to matters not covered by the halakhah. This camp thus linked itself strongly to the lifestyle and many customs associated with pre-modern times. One example which underscores the borderline irony of this behavior is the continuing practice among some hasidim (Gur) of tucking their trousers into their knee-socks, the etiology of which dates back to the mud spattered by horse-driven carriages on unpaved roads. Naturally, this camp tended to be closed and alienated.

Opposition to Jewish nationalism soon became an implement for recruitment and organization as well as a doctrinal principle of the Ultra-Orthodox. Thus Ultra-Orthodoxy, as an overt sociological phenomenon, should not be dated to before the end of the First World War with the founding of the Edah Haredit in Jerusalem, perhaps even to after the Second World War with the resettling of the Satmar sect of Hasidism in New York. Of course the phenomenon had prior roots relating to developments within Orthodox Judaism. More specifically, Ultra-Orthodoxy is the extreme reaction to the crisis which began in the middle of the nineteenth century, in Poland and primarily in Hungary, on the backdrop of the intensification of the Reform movement in many synagogues, on the one hand, and the response of many communities to the pressure of government initiatives which called for the adoption of the local language, culture, and identity by way of instituting compulsory secular education, on the other. In response, elements within the Orthodox movement resorted to changes which may be classified as

the invention of a tradition, which manifested itself as a halakhic and theological revolution (Silber 1992).[19] Paradoxically, this conservative enterprise is alien in many ways to the spirit of Jewish tradition.

We may discern additional key moments and figures in the rise of Ultra-Orthodoxy. A critical historical event was the establishment of the party-like Agudath Israel movement (1912), which responded to the challenges of the time by uniting all branches of Ultra-Orthodoxy (primarily hasidim and Lithuanians). It created a coalition of local, heretofore detached community representatives, forming a Haredi political agenda and promoting it in international and Jewish forums, and establishing a network of educational and financial institutions (primarily yeshivot). The succession of founding fathers of the Haredi world includes Hafetz Hayyim (d. 1933) who, in the generation preceding the Holocaust, pushed for the organization of religious life on an axis of stringency in the observance of the halakhah, and Hazon Ish (d. 1953) who continued with the formulation of Haredi dogma and mythos adapted to the new realities of the State of Israel. Subsequent leaders included the heads of major Torah academies like R' Shakh and hasidic *admors* like the Satmar and Lubavitch Rebbes. The past few years have seen indications of a leadership crisis and internal rivalries within the Haredi world.

Small Ultra-Orthodox communities settled in Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine,[20] and larger communities developed in the urban centers of Western Europe and America. The vast majority of Ultra-Orthodox communities in Eastern Europe were wiped out during the Holocaust, after which many survivors made their way to Israel.[21] In Israel, the Ultra-Orthodox were a distinct, demoralized, and timid group, whose members sought only to be tolerated and left to live their lives among themselves. The young Israeli society, saturated with vibrant and assertive secular culture, and in the

[19] See next two chapters.

[20] The present argument relates mainly to the *edah Haredit* which is a pre-state Old-Yishuv offshoot of Hungarian (and to a lesser degree Rumenian) Ultra-orthodoxy that assumed its distinct features in reaction to compromising tendencies among palestino-centered religious Jews during the 1920-30s. Their outspoken leaders were figures like R' Margolioth, R' Yoel Teitelbaum and R' Amram Blau. See, for example Kaplan (2004).

[21] The Holocaust is still very present in Haredi world. The traumatic memory shapes the Haredi mentality. Among other things, it is used to rationalize the Haredi will to survive against all odds.

midst of a pinnacle of achievements in nation and state building, represented a challenge for the Ultra-Orthodox. In the reality of the 1950s and 60s the Ultra-Orthodox movement was often seen as a sort of "living fossil" -- a tiny, negligible, and ridiculed element perceived as having conjured memories of a shameful past and no future. It was from this group that the successful Haredi movement developed in the following decades.

The contemporary urban, secular reality, which would seem to be a natural environment for the foundering seemingly dematerializing Haredi movement, has proven to provide optimal conditions for its flourishing. Paradoxically, it was the synthesis of a society of affluence and a welfare state on the one hand, with a liberal democracy and pluralism, on the other, which contributed to material, social, political, and principally, religious accomplishments which raised the Haredi morale to unexpected heights. In the past sixty years, Haredim have become integrated into the developing economy of urban markets, and have taken to fill characteristic job niches, ideologically neutral, close in proximity to their communities, and secure in terms of the possibility of community monitoring, e.g., currency trading and diamond dealing. On the backdrop of widespread poverty within the community, nouveau-riche Haredim have become conspicuous. Contrary to the predictions of sociologists, favorable economic conditions have not led to wholesale abandonment of the Haredi option. On the contrary; those with means enhanced the traditional philanthropic system. Many were now supported by fellow members of the community--even from abroad--and by the Israeli government as well. The latter has shown great tolerance for Haredi individuals and institutions, as evident in the official status and generous subsidies given by the government to the Haredi educational system. Even technological innovations have played a role in the resurrection of the Haredim who arose like a phoenix from the ashes. For example, with the support of modern electronics, it is now possible to circumvent the prohibition against kindling a fire on the Sabbath and thus to behave more stringently in other aspects of its observance, even in harsh weather conditions. Despite all of this, the Haredi rabbinate understands all too well that these ameliorative infrastructures have another, dangerous side. The combination of affluence and a national state is a potentially lethal double-edged sword. We will later expound on the threat engendered by proximity to Zionists, but, in the meanwhile, we should note that the comforts facilitated by economic achievements and

technological innovations are viewed by the Haredim as a "fourth Holocaust." They were able to overcome – against all odds – the first three Holocausts: the modernization and mass secularization of the Jews, the Nazi genocide, and the Zionist state. But they do not have full confidence in their ability to succeed yet again.

The Invention of Authentic Judaism (I)

The Jewish Ultra-Orthodox Haredi communities are not traditional; they are traditionalist. Traditional societies preceded the crisis of modernization. Traditional societies undergo change at a relatively slow rate, and thereby project a sense of constancy and continuum. The lack of awareness of change precludes any motivation to oppose it. An additional characteristic of traditional societies is the relative lack of collective options for selecting a way of life different from that which is accepted, together with practical ignorance of alternative social and religious identities, even as hypothetical possibilities. A traditionalist society, on the other hand, is modern, and, as such, it is aware of its fast rate of change. But it is distinctive from other forms of modernity in that it senses the threat embodied by change, and reacts systematically with efforts to return to yesteryear. Traditionalist societies are also well aware of alternative options for relating to modernization, including a number of viable and attractive lifestyles, some of which they may have experimented with. Nevertheless they have chosen not to adopt those lifestyles, even if this entails separation from valued and dear to them individuals and groups, who had already abandoned the camp.

In other words, traditionalist societies attempt to resuscitate and live in accordance with a tradition. That tradition is not just another total and self-evident reality, but something--essentially its absence--of which you are acutely aware and which you prefer over the varied and dizzying array of alternative ways of thinking and behaving. Consequently, retaining tradition entails the investment of energies in overcoming second-thoughts, temptations, disputes, and competitors. This arouses a need for apologetics to be used to explain this non-obvious choice. Ideologies or mythologies may develop and lend methodical justification to this strident movement against the current. The traditionalist knows quite well that his ardent religiosity is the product of free choice, but he will tend to contest this by presenting his religiosity as necessary or natural.

Moreover, while the traditional collective is universal, i.e., inclusive of all groups of the same origin (tribes, nations, villages, principalities), and can therefore be heterogeneous, the traditionalist collective is solely a sub-group, and typically a minority. Because it is both voluntary and selective, it has a relatively high degree of homogeneity and cohesiveness, and even summons feelings of uniqueness and superiority, i.e., elitism.

More often than not, the traditionalists--including the Haredim--are considered extremists. Their extremism is generally explained in terms of their return to the past, on the assumption that the past was typically more extreme than the present. I propose the converse approach. Traditionalism in general and Haredism in particular, are inherently different from those phenomena which they consider their glorious precedents. The Haredi distinctiveness is recognizable in that the prior models--which they purport to emulate--were actually less extreme, which may account for their survival and resourcefulness. A traditionalist group, being relatively small, selective, and homogeneous may afford to engage in experimentation with extremism. It can set high standards for dedication and discipline, particularly when there is a feeling of a mission, charismatic leadership, and the support of an effective rationalization apparatus. This type of group can afford to risk the consequences of raising the bar of demands on its members, on the one hand, and of sequestering itself from and even clashing with its surroundings, on the other. The extremist establishment is excused from the test of securing sufficient levels of internal integration and motivation, for the group is voluntary and exclusive; and from the test of guaranteeing adaptation, at least for as long as the modern surroundings upon which the extremists are dependent display a measure of tolerance and provide vital services.

We will now survey some fundamental attributes which qualify Haredi society as traditionalist. The following eight observations are partially supplementary and overlapping, progressively interconnected, and together constitute a characterization of the radicalism of Haredim.[22]

[22] Elements of the below subsection constitute an integrative reworking of the conclusions of the following scholars of Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy: Katz (e.g. 1986); Levy (1988); Friedman (e.g. 1991); Heilman, (e.g.1992); Ravitzky (e.g.1996); Caplan (e.g. 2007); Stadler (2008); Caplan and Stadler(2009).

First, Haredi traditionalism is an ecological, social, and cultural enclave.[23] Ghettoization is an old Jewish paradigm which was resorted to because of varying measures of external duress and as protection against harassment. Haredi ghettoization is fundamentally voluntary and entails a disengagement from fellow Jews. The Haredim thus draw upon the Diaspora tradition, and, alongside the diasporic idea of singularity, emphasize its by-product -- the idea of self-segregation. The latter is both ritual and geographic. A long tradition of living as a minority--experienced as an alternation between chosen and chased--which was once a function of the oppositional dichotomy of the *Jewish people* versus the world of *Gentiles*, has been now transposed to the Haredi community versus the world of the Zionists. The Haredim are the inheritors of contrarianism; they stand contrary to both supreme and hostile powers--the majority, the authorities, law enforcement, peddlers of idolatry--and, as we will soon illustrate, against history as well. The genetics of ghettoization are double-sided: on the one hand, they generate a feeling of superiority and arrogance, and, on the other, feelings of persecution, dependency, discrimination, suspicion, and animosity.

There can be no Haredism outside of those exclusive concentrations[24] which excel in their puritanical norms, ascetic values, and indigent realities. An emphasis on physical and symbolic walls separating Haredi communities from the world, sophisticated social monitoring backed by a high degree of institutionalization, authoritarianism, centralization, and density is the infrastructure of the drive to establish the ghetto as a saintly community. In this framework, there is no privacy or space exempt from surveillance and regulation, be it formal or informal. A peculiar social control mechanism which falls somewhere between formal and informal calls to mind a historic analogy to groups of Christian and Muslim saints. I refer to those violent "modesty squads" that patrol the streets of Haredi neighborhoods to deter and punish unmarried youngsters seen fraternizing with the opposite sex, incinerate public bus stops which display women in their advertisements, and threaten business owners (e.g., fast-food

[23] Emmanuel Sivan has called fundamentalism an "enclave culture." (1991).

[24] With the exception of Chabad Hasidim. This has to do with their unique missionary orientation.

establishments) who may potentially lead adolescents to idleness or sin, etc.[25]

The borders of the Haredi enclave are delineated clearly and are protected by a variety of signs warning both those exiting and entering, a distinct language (mainly Yiddish), and other control mechanisms such as an intensive gossip industry, oaths and excommunications, and even violence capable of destroying property and vigorous fisticuffs. This type of violence is directed at internal deviants and external trespassers. In addition, there are mechanisms which place obstacles before those who wish to leave the community, starting with a systematic denial of opportunities to learn skills which are required to survive in the surrounding world (e.g., learning a foreign language, knowing how to manage a bank account, or gaining experience in courting members of the opposite sex), by threatening eternal damnation in hell, and even declaring a period of mourning for those who have crossed the boundaries, as if they had actually died.

The Haredim are pressured to keep their trips outside of the borders of their neighborhoods to a minimum. This is facilitated by the fact that most of their daily needs (religious services like ritual baths, in addition to commerce, welfare, judicial bodies, and self-policing) are met within the confines of the community. The Haredi enclaves are however only semi-autonomous. While Haredim attempt to segregate themselves from their surroundings, their yearning for purism paradoxically entails their dependency on their surroundings and acceptance of some of its rules, primarily when it comes to a variety of services, from security, to medicine, to garbage collection.

A reason and the result of Haredi self-segregation is the community's almost complete lack of social relationships with secular Israelis. Even those few Haredim who come into contact with the secular through business dealings, etc., tend to restrict their interaction to its instrumental and superficial aspects and generally do not allow the relationships to develop to the point of visiting each other's homes and meeting each other's families. Until recently, the two sides knew very little about each other, and even that was tainted with misconceptions and stereotypes. In the past few years, the Israeli public has taken a greater interest in the Haredi world as can be observed from the group's extensive coverage in the media, though the press tends to accentuate outlandish

[25] Compare to analogous phenomena in Calvin's Geneva (16th century) and Humeini's Teheran (1980s). For example Simpson, (1988). Also see Aran et al. (2008).

and scandalous stories connected with them.

Second, Haredi traditionalism is represented by an over-institutionalized collective. The Haredi institutional system is dense and extensive, and it is comprised of total and greedy institutions (e.g. Goffman 1968; Coser 1974). Only few aspects of Haredi social life are not institutionally monitored and regulated. In these circumstances of institutional maximalism, Haredi society has little room for intimate life and privacy, or spontaneity and creativity. A Haredi has few chances to be alone and develop his individuality. His activities are almost always observed, and the Haredi public-sphere is thus dominant and makes visibility a fundamental key to religious and social life. Most Haredi time and space is institutionally controlled. For example, one cannot open a commercial business within the confines of the community without first receiving the approbation of the religious authorities who must ascertain that the business will not deviate from or act independently of their authority. An additional example relates to every weekday morning, when, immediately after their early rising from bed, Haredi men are expected to assemble for public prayer (in many cases, they are expected to report to synagogue even before dawn, as in the period of the penitential *selihot* prayers preceding the Jewish new year), and reconvene later in the day at the study hall for partnered study of the Talmud (which, on occasion, continues throughout the night until the morning, as on the first night of the festival of *Shavuot*, Pentecost). The Haredi map is restricted to the neighborhood, the facilities in which are all within walking distance, accessible, familiar, and supervised. The Haredi calendar and clock are comprised of pre-appropriated days and hours which are to be dedicated to set tasks.

The critical institutions without which a Haredi community could not be classified as such are a synagogue, ritual bath, kosher butcher, demarcation of boundaries which may not be crossed on the Sabbath and a Talmud Torah school for children. All of them are vital for assuring cultic, educational, and administrative autonomy. Hasidic communities attribute importance to the house of the rebbe as well, but even they regard the Torah academies--the yeshivot--as supreme among all of their institutions.

During the 1980s and 90s, the Haredim were aptly defined as a “learning community,” where almost all men were full time students at Torah academies. Sixty percent of Haredi men define their studies as their primary occupation (versus nine

percent in the general population). The yeshiva is the backbone of Haredi life (Beruer 2003; Halbertal and halbertal 1998). Only there can one fulfill his religious obligations and learn to be a religious, Haredi Jew. Yeshivot serve not only to advance religious knowledge, but to ensure moral growth as well. There is no need for any supplementary medium, as, according to the Haredim, the entire world can be found within the yeshiva and specifically within the "four cubits of halakhah."[26]

Haredi society houses countless yeshivot that provide study facilities for each community's entire male population (Women have a parallel educational system, the most ubiquitous of which is the Beis Yaakov Seminary) (El-Or 1994, Ch. 2). There are no members of Haredi society who are not affiliated with a yeshiva, and Haredi life is almost non-existent outside of these institutions. Half of Haredi men, up to the age of forty or even older, prefer Torah study over any type of work -- this in addition to their exemption from military service which absolves them of compulsory and reserve duty from the age of eighteen.

The yeshiva is a total institution. It covers the life span of a Haredi, from the *heder* (lit.: room) for toddlers to the *kollel* for family men. The yeshiva also covers the entire breadth of the life-cycle of the individual, and functions as a place of prayer and study, as a framework for socializing and leisure, and as a sort of community center which provides material aid, housing, health, and even psychological support. A Haredi male will spend most of his years within the yeshiva, from morning until evening, day in, day out. Assiduous scholars who study for upwards of eighteen hours per-day are not a rare sight.

Over the past few generations, authority in the Haredi world has passed from local and community rabbis to the heads of the yeshivot. Complete subservience to these charismatic figures, together with a clear hierarchy, a demanding daily schedule and lack of free time, as well as uniformity, rigorous disciplinary codes, expected scholastic and moral excellence, detachment from home, and a single-sex environment create a monastery-like mold.

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[26] "From the day that the temple was destroyed the Holy one Blessed is He, has nothing in the world except the four cubits of the Halakah" (B. Brachot 8a). For background see: Spiegel (2011).

Life in a closed and segregated environment facilitates effective socialization that is of little relevance to leading a full life in normal society. Even the halakhah is exempt, in this rather artificial situation, from the need to pass the test of adjustment to real life situations. In contemporary Haredi society halakhic rulings are judged according to their internal consistency rather than according to their applicability, and what matters is the ability of a chosen few to contend with their demands in the ideal conditions of a quasi-monastic community. Only within the Ultra-Orthodox enclave may the sacred texts be read literally, that is "correctly."

Third, Haredi traditionalism has witnessed a change in the relative standing of the written halakhah versus popular practice. In the distant past, youngsters learned to be Jews, and *ipso-facto*, religious Jews, from their parents, older siblings, relatives, and neighbors. One's growth in accordance with an ideal model occurred not intentionally, but secondarily, at home, in the homes of friends, on the street, and in the synagogue. The kashrut laws governing the preparation of food were learned by young women while cooking with their grandmothers and young men learned to don phylacteries by watching their fathers don theirs each morning. Tradition was thus perpetuated on the basis of mimesis. In contemporary Haredi society, on the other hand, this socialization occurs in specialized institutions, and centrally in the yeshivot (for children, adolescents, and adults), through the instruction of teachers and monitors and with the help of written materials. The "people of the book" lived for hundreds of years emulating a "living tradition," and only in the last few decades have they began to rely on the "written tradition" (Friedman 1987; Soloveitchik 1994). The degeneration of the traditional community which had once ensconced its members in the tradition of the "self-evident," gave rise to a surge in the importance of the text along with the Torah academy as the means of preserving the religious legacy. Haredi life is mastered and guided by a vast array of texts, consisting mostly of classical responsa literature, and even manuals which detail appropriate behavior for every possible situation, from recommendations for and illustrations of the proper pace of breathing, or the way to go shopping, to a detailed, technical guide how to put on a belt or cover a sleeping child with a blanket.[27]

[27] Jacob Katz was the first to relate to this development, and was followed by his students Friedman and Soloveitchik.

The living and written traditions can exist in an environment of reciprocity and symbiosis, or, detachment and competition. The Lithuanian sector emphasizes books and learning. The Hasidim emphasize the practical side of living and the communal experience. We can elucidate these differences in terms of the tension between the letter of the law and *minhag* (customs).[28] It is difficult to establish, a priori, which of the two is more conservative. *Minhag* may change while the text may confer approbation for change. *Minhag* is seemingly more malleable and permissive than the immutable law. Yet, as we noted with regard to halakhic measurements, *minhag* may also invite greater stringency than the written law.

Throughout Jewish history, *minhag* has been an expression of the continuity of tradition, on the one hand, and tradition's proclivity to change over time and to become diversified in different communities, on the other. Change and variegation serve to concretize the function of the religious community at large in the establishment of ritual norms. From the moment Orthodoxy, especially Ultra-Orthodoxy, entered a defensive posture against modernization's erosion of Judaism, the community leadership, aware of the innovative potential of *minhag*, became ambivalent toward it. It also became apparent that the believing community at large, whose standards had become deficient, was not to be relied upon. If the Jewish tradition had once insisted on *minhag*, the reality in which the Haredim now live leaves them with no choice but to curb the standing of popular practice, and prefer written rulings instead. This revolution--endemic to Haredi religiosity--reaches its ironic peak when even in those cases in which rabbinical rulings are issued in accordance with *minhag*, the inquiries attempting to ascertain the popular practice are made not vis-à-vis observation of contemporary reality, but by surveying testimonies in halakhic literature as to popular practice in the past.

The centrality of text does not render the rabbis redundant. In addition to authoring sacred texts they are critical for providing interpretation, guidance, and models for emulation. While rabbis wield continually expanding authority, this is paradoxically no longer an exclusive function of their expertise in the sacred texts. In the past, the

[28] A centuries old rabbinic debate has revolved around the question of the halakhic status of popular practice versus that of the written halakhic code, and is accompanied by a wealth of scholarship (e.g., Zimmer 1996).

standing of rabbis was dependent on their command of the Talmud and its commentaries, and their ability to derive reasoned ordinances grounded in those texts. Recently, though, the deciding factor has become the charisma of the rabbis--with no consideration of their intellectual-legalistic talents or expertise--and it is their presumed function as interlocutors with the divine that accounts for their compelling personalities. We may observe, in this respect, a pontification of Haredi leadership:[29] the rabbinical authority that derives from heavenly inspiration renders the leaders absolute and infallible, and now governs areas once thought of as extra-religious, e.g., political preference. This phenomenon of vesting leaders with uncontested authority--that ironically derives not from the Torah, but from the leader's personality and prestige--is known colloquially as *da'at Torah*.

Concomitant with the textualization and legalization of Haredi life, a new trend of spiritualization is emerging, as evidenced by a turn to the mystical and messianic kabbalistic literature, as well as "popular religion" with its veneration of saints, pilgrimages to ancient tombs, and "everyday miracles" (Goodman and Bilu 1997; Bilu 1985; 1992).

Fourth, Haredi traditionalism is discernible in the increasing appeal for stringency. The Jewish tradition has always had a variety of exegetical schools--with lenient, intermediate, and stringent tendencies--and, generally, none was thought to be more legitimate or prestigious than the other. There is a classic dispute between a school of Mishnaic Sages that issued lenient rulings versus one that was more stringent -- the dispute, respectively, between the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. With rare exceptions, the halakhic rulings favored Hillel's flexible approach, which was presumably more attentive to the human situation and social circumstances, despite the famed pluralistic dictum in rabbinic literature which states that both sides of a dispute are the "living words of God." The Ultra-Orthodox community, though, has been commandeered by the doctrine of stringent interpretation, which is identified with religious excellence. In fact, the Haredi movement of the last generation was dubbed "The World of *Humra* (Stringency)."[30] In the traditional past, stringency was an option

[29] The first to note this phenomenon and describe it as Papal-like was Jacob Katz (1992).
[30] An expression coined by Friedman (1991).

reserved for only a select few, while in the modern, traditionalist present, stringency has become a norm which typifies the entire community. Of course, collective stringency is possible only as a voluntary preference of a selective minority, a sect of religious virtuosi.

I will invoke two examples of far-flung Haredi stringency. The first signals the beginnings of a trend which first appeared only recently and has aroused alarm and reservations even among the Ultra-Orthodox, and it remains to be seen whether it will be embraced by the masses as an obligatory ruling. A number of cemeteries in Israel have received unprecedented requests from Haredim that their relatives be buried in separate, sex-segregated plots. Sexual segregation is apparently being applied post-mortem as well.[31] A second example is of interest because it entails an outright nullification of an arrangement which made religious life more tolerable and had thus earned the sanction of great rabbis. The Halakhah commands that all *hametz* (leaven) be "burned" before the onset of Passover. Since this would potentially lead to an immeasurable amount of work and heavy financial losses, the Orthodox authorities issued a *heter* (permissive ruling) that allowed the sale of one's leaven to a non-Jew (at a symbolic price, and with the intention of re-purchasing the leaven after the holiday). Certain Haredi groups have rejected the *heter*, thereby subjecting themselves to the particularly demanding religious project of locating and destroying all leaven and leaven-products from their properties. As these examples substantiate, Haredi stringency focuses on defined halakhic areas: generally those that distinguish the religious and are of characteristic ritual nature, and fundamentally on areas of personal status and ritual purity, on the one hand, and the kashrut of food, on the other. In those civil and criminal sectors in which the national authorities and laws naturally maintain a strong presence, e.g., matters of contracts and acquisitions, the Haredi tendency for stringency is diminished. As we will soon illustrate, there are occasionally areas of particularistic halakhic stringency, the justifications for which are not necessarily religious, but rather political.

Traditional Talmudic discourse is typified by sophisticated analytical debate, the representation of various positions, complex dialectics, and the delicate weighing of the pros and cons (*shaqla ve-tarya*). From its inception, the Ultra-Orthodox moved for the translocation of the critical mass of religious life to an entirely different legal genre

[31] Note the segregated public transportation buses in Jerusalemite Haredi neighborhoods.

represented by the *Shulhan Arukh*, which is a compendium of definitive rulings, a sort of bottom line of the Talmudic discourse which precludes disagreement or doubt given its lack of nuance and dispute. A précis of this extensive compilation, the *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, or the more authoritative *Mishnah Brura* became canonized in a manner which preemptively precludes any discussion of alternatives. The Haredi resolve for stringency was not without hesitation or concern. Its leadership was fully aware of the possible pitfalls of such behavior, and, most importantly, the possibility that this resolve would cause departure of members of the community. A current effective method of stringency is the dissolution of traditional distinctions between various levels of stringency by elevating them collectively to the highest possible level. An indication of this inflation and consolidation can be found in the de-facto nullification of the relatively low level of prohibitions, i.e., rabbinical proscriptions (*de-rabbanan*), and the conflating of these and most prohibitions to an absolute level as if they were in fact biblical prohibitions (*de-orayta*). In this regard, an adherent of the "father" of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Hungary is quoted as saying that every single ruling in the *Shulhan Arukh*, major and minor alike, is of the same weight as the Ten Commandments.[32]

We have already noted that these stringencies tended to militate against popular practice. It turns out that the stringencies of Haredim have the capacity to dissent from the laws of the *Shulhan Arukh*. In certain cases, supreme authority is attributed not to the written law, but to what they refer to as the "spirit of the law." This revolutionary concept is an expression of contemporary Ultra-Orthodox rabbinical interpretation which has pretensions of awareness of the original intent of the ancient rabbis, and of the semi-prophetic capability to uncover the hidden meaning of the Torah. It is in this spirit that one of the fathers of Ultra-Orthodoxy rejected a permissive, lenient ruling, and, at the conclusion of his ultimately stringent ruling, wrote explicitly: "Even if a heavenly divine voice were to pronounce 'Grant permission,' and even if (biblical) Joshua were to agree, I would (nonetheless proscribe and) say 'It is not in the heavens.'"[33]

[32] Akiva Joseph Schlessinger ; (Silber, 1992)
[33] R. Hillel Lichtenstein (1860), regarding permission given to cook with wine that was produced by a non-Jew on the Sabbath (Silber, 1992). The phrase "it is not in heavens" is most notorious and carries radical implications (e.g. Levy 2010).

The Invention of Authentic Judaism (II)

The **fifth** observation concerns the issue of Haredi traditionalism between conservation and innovation, or their attitude toward change. We shall open with the ruling of the Hatam Sofer (1762-1839)--the rabbi of Pressburg in Hungary and the harbinger of Ultra-Orthodoxy--that has become something of a Haredi motto: "the new is forbidden by the Torah"[34]. This is the antithesis of the credo of the acculturated Orthodox, who maintain that "the old will be renovated and the new will become sanctified." The Haredim have turned reflexive conservatism into a dogmatic principle. Hence, wearing sneakers or sandals is considered an abomination, and heavy, and lengthily-cooked food like *kugel* or *cholent* have been transformed into indispensable elements of the Sabbath ritual. Similarly, many in the Ultra Orthodox community have maintained Yiddish as their spoken language.[35] Their abstaining from speaking Hebrew may be attributed to Hebrew's status as a sacred language designated solely for ritual use, or to the fact that it has become the profane vernacular of the Zionists in Israel.

Truth be told, one does overhear Hebrew being spoken among young Haredim (Assolin 2008). Contemporary Haredi culture indeed shows other obvious indications of formerly denounced innovation including the use of radio-tape players and computers, maintaining personal hygiene, and pleasure-trekking in Israel. Indeed, these and other changes become absorbed partially, usually on the margins of society, and not without staunch opposition. It is no coincidence that the most effective agents of change are, first and foremost, and for reasons that we will soon enumerate, Haredi women, along with new immigrants and those living in the Diaspora who import foreign influences like sports or eating pizza. An air of flexibility and adaptability is apparent also in the interpretations of old symbols and practices. In many cases, the innovative trend is actually conservative, as in the case of the revolutionary-reactionary understandings of fundamental concepts such as Exile and Redemption (Scholem 1976 esp. part 1). What was considered according to a thousand year old tradition an oxymoron--"exile within the Land of Israel" and "exile among Jews"--has become in the course of Haredi radicalization an accepted term for the contemporary existence of the Ultra-Orthodox in

[34] A play on Leviticus 23:14.
[35] Excluding Gor hasidim

the Zionist State.

One comes away with the impression that the Haredim give inordinate importance specifically to cultural artifacts that have no detectable religious meaning and make these into flashpoints when it comes to their opposition to change. R. Schlessinger (1837-1922), a disciple of the Ktav Sofer (son of Hatam Sofer) and himself a founding father of the Ultra-Orthodox, placed a grave prohibition on members of the community outlawing any change of one's name, language, or dress, as these are the "roots of Judaism, the inheritance of our holy forerunners." In the Haredi world, these three foundations of Judaism are known by the Hebrew acronym *sha'le'm*, i.e., perfect and authentic. In this manner, the preservation of elements which, without a doubt, derived from non-Jewish European surroundings received the status of a biblical commandment.[36] Ironically, some traditional elements thought to be essential for the struggle with modernization are specifically not religious--in the word's most limited sense--and generally fall into a gray-area of halakhic debate. These include any changes to the synagogue worship service or even elements of folklore. The Haredim insist upon these issues no less than halakhah proper. It is precisely the halakhic tradition revolving around legalism and textuality that served as a moderating factor, and it is no coincidence that Haredi radicalism turned to conservatism in extra-halakhic areas.

The **sixth** point is that traditionalism is always selective, and, despite all, creative. This is discernible first and foremost in its apprehension of the past. A traditionalist will choose a certain period and adopt an idealized image of that age as a model worthy of revival. Particular historical circumstances, to a great extent reconstructed or invented, represent the original, ultimate religiosity. The "golden age" adopted by the Haredim is not that of the biblical patriarchs or of the David and Solomon's monarchy. Nor is it the period of the Mishnaic sages in the Middle East or of the great medieval rabbis like Rashi and Maimonides in Southern and Western Europe. Instead, their fixation is on the Jewish reality of sixteenth through nineteenth century Eastern and Central Europe, which was neither glorious nor exceptional for any special qualities, but had the distinction of being

[36] This odd "commandment" was accepted despite its contravention of the important dictate that the Jews "not walk in the ways of the Gentiles" (Leviticus 18:3), a law, which, according to Maimonides, possesses incontrovertible authority.

the last traditional period *before* the crisis of modernization.[37] The arbitrariness of this traditional choice is substantiated by the mandatory mode of dress adopted by the Haredim, which is neither biblical nor Hasmonean, but the dress of the Polish nobility in the late middle ages. Even Haredim of North African origin have appropriated this garb.

The above case shows that innovation applies to both norms and myths. The Haredi original mythologizing of martyrdom discussed earlier illustrates it. Indeed, it is difficult to find examples of ex nihilo Haredi inventions. Generally speaking, the Haredim--much like other traditionalists--rummage through the tremendous archives of their past in which one can find almost anything, selectively retrieve an existing principle, often subterranean or marginal, and bring it to the surface, to center stage. This represents a change in emphases and degrees of legitimization, and, as we noted before, such change can be wrought by the very presentation of the principle alone, regardless of its original context where it might have been balanced or constrained by others. In the traditional past, Talmudic and halakhic interpretations were flexible and variegated and had various layers and streams, sometimes contradictions; but, nonetheless, coexisted in one basket. This is what gave religious Judaism a richness that facilitated its endurance and customization to individuals, groups and situations. The Haredim lost something of this Darwinian survivalist potential with their proclivity for preferring selective, unambiguous, and obligatory interpretation.

The Jewish tradition ingeniously preserved a harmony among countless interpretations, homilies, metaphors, sayings, ethical teachings, legends, and stories, which together constitute the material contained within the Aggadic component of the Talmud, Midrash, and Kabbalah. This includes a fair amount of categorical, embellished, and provocative statements which, in their wider contexts, were considered acceptable despite their problematic nature. With the help of irony or historical perspective, these putatively offensive, ridiculous, or bizarre materials could be assimilated tolerably without causing any damage. Moreover, the old rabbinical tradition tended to view many passages from the multi-layered Torah as containing general ethical teachings or abstract

[37] The psychologist of religion Nurit Novis suggests another possible rational for Haredi focus on this rather inglorious era. This paradoxical choice might be related to the self-image of the "suffering Jew" necessary to uphold today's Haredi ethos.

pedagogical lessons, rather than as directives for uncompromising activities or as the foundations of specific political agendas, as do today's Ultra-Orthodox. Materials which were "soft" in their original contexts have been hardened by the Haredim, and characteristic legendary materials were transformed at a stroke simultaneously into both theological principles and halakhic commandments. A well-known example is that of the "three oaths."

Invoking a verse in the Song of Songs (2:7 -- "I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, by gazelles or by hinds of the field: Do not wake or rouse love until it please!"), the Babylonian Talmud relates that God made the Israelites swear to "not ascend the wall" (traditionally understood as a prohibition against mass immigration to the Land of Israel) and "not rebel against the nations of the world." God is then said to have turned to the Gentiles and made them swear that they would not subjugate the Jews excessively. Many quote an additional version of the narrative of the oaths which imposes an additional prohibition: "to not press the end," i.e., to abstain from coercing God to bring the redemption before its preordained time. A treatise on the oaths was published in the foundational book of R. Joel Teitelbaum (d. 1979), the leader of the Satmer Hasidim and their splinter-sect, the Neturei Karta (lit.: watchmen of the city), the most hard-core contemporary Haredim. This treatise, which became a cornerstone of Ultra-Orthodoxy, utterly transformed the status of the oaths. In contrast with their relatively marginal and somewhat esoteric character, Teitelbaum placed the oaths at the center of the Jewish outlook of Haredim. While these oaths were never considered proper laws, and were certainly never considered one of the six hundred and thirteen commandments enumerated by Maimonides, they have been accepted in the Haredi world as an actual, unqualified interdiction. This worldview has even witnessed one version of the treatise which portrayed the Holocaust as a divine punishment for the abrogation of the oaths -- a natural segue to our next point.

The **seventh** point concerns the position of Haredi traditionalism regarding history. The aforementioned oaths are, first and foremost, a reflection of the realities of diasporic history, when the Jewish people had no national autonomy and were but a weak, dependent minority. Given these conditions, the violation of the prohibitions would be absurd and with catastrophic consequences. Are the oaths still binding given the

change in political circumstances, with mass immigration to Israel a pressing need, and rebellion a feasible option? What was, in its original context, a testimony to a realistic and responsible reading of history, a manifestation of adaptability to political constraints, has now become an a priori religious principle, binding under all circumstances.

Among the Haredim, the authority of the oaths is greater now than at any point in the past, with implications reflected in their political passivity, in general, and their abstaining from any nationally-colored initiative, in particular. Only taking a stand against history guarantees the distinctiveness and singularity appropriate for the Jewish people. This is the source of the extra sensitivity exercised among the Haredim when it comes to any step that could be interpreted as having messianic meaning. The redemption can only come at the preordained time and only from heaven in accordance with a divine plan that cannot be predicted, but that can be potentially hastened, though only through prayer and observing the commandments. The negation of historical activism, and particularly that which entails legitimizing and collaborating with the Zionists, is so extreme that it has become entangled in a self-contradiction. In contrast with the prevailing inclination among Haredim, the Satmer rebbe forbade public demonstrations, even against the Zionists. For demonstrations are callous and violent acts, which, even if directed against diabolical forces, nonetheless unintentionally emulate their actions. Rebellious anti-Zionism constitutes an inherent self-contradiction and contains a Zionism-like core.

Opposition to the State of Israel is not solely because the country is secular. The state is illegitimate in the first place because its birth and existence were predicated on entering history with an intention to change it. Particularly illegitimate are the messianic implications inherent in the activities of the Zionists, and this is why Orthodox nationalists are thought of as worse than secular Jews, due to their self-declared advancing of the redemptive process. Herein lays the dual paradox which punctuates the Haredi stance. First, the Haredim prefer non-Jewish countries over the Jewish State. Second, the religious legitimacy of the Jewish State would still be challenged even if it were ruled by the Sages of the Mishna and Talmud, because its establishment is seen as an act of “pressing the end” - bringing the redemption on a historical plane through human power and political means.

The principle of Haredi passivity is related to a supernaturalist understanding of the world. Only inherently ritual activism is allowed in this world. In parallel fashion, truth is not historical, but metahistorical. As much as the Haredim prefer the past over the present, they identify the past with the present and fuse them together into the realm of the eternal. This is not a comparison of the present to the past, but of the temporal and meta-temporal (Ravitzky 2006, introduction).

The **eighth** point concerns the relationship of the Haredim to Zionism and the State of Israel. The formative experience of Ultra-Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century was that of their reaction to modernization and secularization, and the policy of self-segregation. Calling for "not walking in the ways of the Gentiles" thus became a core of their theology. The next stage, in the twentieth century, saw the struggle against political nationalism become a focal challenge, and anti-Zionism became thereby an additional credo. Criticism of, and even open hostility toward, the Zionist movement and its substantiation in Israel, was for the Haredim not merely an ideological tenet, but a trademark, an organizational axis, and a base for mobilization and agitation. This attitude became so entrenched that Haredim of the extreme fringe refuse to accept the national identity cards issued to all citizens of Israel though aware that it entails renouncing entitlements such as social security. Similarly, Haredim have called Israeli agents of law-and-order "Nazis" and some of them have considered collaboration with the State's Arab enemies.

Zionism, from the Haredi point of view, is both a transgression and heresy. First, because it replaced the halakhic basis of collective Jewish identity by a national-ethnic one. The Israelis' insistence on their Jewishness, despite their secularity, contributes to their being considered by the Haredim even worse than the assimilated Jews. The secular State is worse than the countries of the world precisely because it underscores its Hebrew-Jewish character. Furthermore, while outside of Israel the Haredim enjoy complete exemption from any national responsibilities, the coercive Jewish sovereignty in Israel is for them a shameful hassle. The historic experience garnered from hundreds of years without autonomous political and military capabilities imprinted upon Judaism an aversion to collective initiatives that entail risk, and this aversion was transposed both to the mental disposition and to sacred texts inherited by the Haredim.

In their heart of hearts, the Haredim are well aware of the fact that the Zionists realized several core elements of the ancient messianic dream of religious Judaism -- it was the secular nationalists who returned to the Holy Land, undertook the ingathering of exiled Jews, and guaranteed prosperity, security, and pride for the Jewish people. But since they did not go about this process in accordance with the Torah and its commandments, their actions were likened to satanic, false-messianism. The Zionist enterprise entails an arrogant challenge to God, epitomized in the reliance of secular Israelis on their human, political-military powers, rather than those of spirituality and faith. In addition, the Zionist entity is said to entail a desecration of religion and morality: it is described as corrupt, egocentric, and materialistic, and is accused of violating the Sabbath in public, eating forbidden foods, and being sexually promiscuous.

The past few years have seen indications of the relinquishing of these extreme positions and, to a great extent, anti-Zionism has been replaced with a-Zionism, and on occasion, even with proto-Zionism. We can classify sub-groups of Haredi society in accordance with their differential location in the myriad of positions toward Zionism. We discover a high correlation between the extent of anti-Zionism and other indexes of Haredi radicalism, including proclivity to moderate violence. Generally speaking, we can distinguish between wide circles of "new Haredim," who advance themselves through various tracks of acculturation, and the hard-core of the contra-acculturated (e.g., Neturei Karta and the Satmer hasidim), who, notwithstanding their diminishing proportions have maintained a strong moral standing.[38]

Haredi Fundamentalism

. In Israel the Haredim are seen as the embodiment of authentic Judaism not merely in the eyes of the Orthodox, but by secular Jews as well.[39] The former respect the Haredim, while the latter, despite their reservations, find themselves captivated by their exotic flavor. Either way, the prevalent convention of viewing the Haredim as perpetuating an

[38] In recent years some radical Haredi (mainly Hasidic) groups left the Edah Haredit, (e.g. Dushinsky and Shomrei Emunim) though they still maintain hard core Haredi life style.
[39] It is not the case in the US and notably not among Reform.

ancient religious tradition has not passed scholarly muster in recent years.[40] It is clear, nowadays, that this is a new, if not revolutionary phenomenon. Haredism is a modern phenomenon, or, more precisely, yet another Jewish reaction to modernity, or a genuine and creative religious attempt to contend with the new, secular world.

Since Haredism is a religious project that repudiates its innovative nature, has uncompromising pretensions of returning the present to what it grasps as the authentic religion of the past, and demands legitimacy and exclusivity, it is a traditionalist movement. In addition it views its modern surroundings as negative and threatening, and declares war thereon. Thus we may say that Haredism is a traditionalism of a variety known as fundamentalism which has featured in the headlines prominently for the last two generations.

The current convention in scholarly literature is that the relationship of fundamentalism to the modern, secular world is not that of utter negation, but is rather multi-dimensional and ambivalent. To understand this relationship we need to move beyond the often-mentioned dissonance of invalidating the contemporary ethos of politics, philosophy, and science while at the same time embracing their by-products, including advanced technology or sophisticated organizational and promotional methods. Behind the rejection of their modern surroundings, there lies a fascination and compulsive attraction to it. The world of the 20th and 21st centuries is the arch-enemy of fundamentalism, and, simultaneously, it is also the source of its religious inspiration and the arena for its ambitious worship of God.

In addition to the complexity of the relationship of fundamentalism to modernity and its obsession with authenticity and purism in response to the challenge posed by drastic changes in the surrounding social environment, fundamentalism represents a charismatic religious revival marked by enthusiasm and feelings of undisputed credibility, high confidence in the justness of the path, and unrestricted devotion, to the extent of rigid regimentation of life, a certain mortification of the flesh, and the urge to impose the "truth" on others. No less importantly, fundamentalism is a protest against those aspects of modernization and liberalization that affect religion, and which may be seen in the unsealing and changing of principles of faith and rituals. Furthermore,

[40] Jacob Katz was the pioneer, and was followed by a succession of his students.

fundamentalism sees social differentiation leading to the specialization and privatization of religion as particularly disastrous. It rejects the fact that religion has become yet another social institution, which neither controls nor intervenes in other institutions, such as polity which have become autonomous. Religion was left with the narrow, specific role of providing tranquility, loving-kindness, grace, and redemption to a particular voluntary community, and is thus criticized as merely presiding over ceremonies on holidays and at sacred sites, and as being relevant only to family matters and the recreation of a small group. The fundamentalists demand that religion dictate the dress, food, and lifestyles of the majority, in addition to the distribution of wealth, or war and peace, of all. Fundamentalists are thus "very religious".

We may suggest the following characteristics of Haredi society and religiosity that may serve as the basis for comparison with other instances of fundamentalism:

A. Selective retrieval of ancient holy writ, and reliance thereon as a source of inerrant authority and a literal guide to actual behavior.

B. Negating the legitimacy of, and forming actual opposition to the national state,[41] on the one hand, and the liberal-democratic society, on the other; and portraying them as decadent and diabolical sinners and heretics.

C. Criticism of and hostility toward the religious establishment that collaborates with the authorities and gives its approbation to secular, libertine values; toward the mainstream of their coreligionists whose religion is only nominal or ritualistic; and toward other religious groups which are apprehended as dangerous heterodoxy.

D. Sharp distinction between the collective of the faithful, the elect, and all others who are considered infidels and the embodiment of evil incarnate.

E. A tendency to create a counter society with accentuated borders along with high religious and moral standards that transform it into a virtuous community--with effective social monitoring mechanisms and totalitarian proclivities--which strives for ideal interpersonal relationships and perfect organizational and class structure.

F. Relatively simplistic theology, maintaining that religion was given from heaven, that there is life after death and reward and punishment, and that allows room for miracles, revelations, spirits, and satanic forces.

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[41] Except for American fundamentalists that sacralize the Nation, the Constitution etc.

G. Moralism and puritanism, which are expressed in exhortations for modesty in dress and behavior, prohibitions on drugs and alcohol, an emphasis on the wholeness of the patriarchal family, segregation of the sexes, and conditioning respect for women on rigorous restrictions on their public appearance and initiatives.
H. General interest in politics, skewed toward rightist, authoritarian--specifically hawkish and conservative--views, with a gravitation to ultra-politics which combine parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means, and, which on occasion resort to direct activism and even violence. The sanctification of politics may underscore the transition from religious politics to political religion (Aran 1986).

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, there may be all sorts of variations and supplements, some of them quite widespread, e.g., charismatic leadership, messianic proclivities, or fusing the religious with the ethno-national motif.

Rather than attempting a definition founded upon reduction to one critical theme, we may view the above inventory as a syndrome of characteristic paradigms--variables, in essence--which together comprise a "polythetic definition" of fundamentalism (Hamilton 1985). In prototypical instances of fundamentalism, more or less all of these characteristics will be apparent. So too in the case of the Haredim.

A similar approach to the study of this phenomenon has been employed in the ambitious *Fundamentalism Project* (Marty and Appleby 1991-2004). Its five comprehensive volumes contain a systematic survey of a spectrum of cases among which there is a "family resemblance" that forms the basis for generalizations regarding fundamentalism. They have become, in the meantime, a roster of classic fundamentalist cases. Jewish fundamentalism is presented in two varieties: *Gush Emunim* (Aran 1991) known as the hard-core of West Bank settlers at the epicenter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, on the opposite pole, the Haredim. The former group is portrayed as manifesting active, offensive fundamentalism, engaging its surroundings and campaigning to change them and their leadership. This is the "world conqueror" archetype. The second instance of Jewish fundamentalism, that of the Haredim, is generally thought to be passive, insular, estranged from, and hostile to its surroundings. Recent studies mark a transformation in the portrayal of Haredi fundamentalism. Likewise, our discussion reveals it as dynamic, initiating, involved with its surroundings;

and attracted to the world as an arena for innovative activities, both civic and religious. The realities of public life in Israel offer a variety of examples of daring, original Haredi experimentation.

Recent Developments in the Haredi World

The vitriolic nature of Haredi opposition to the State of Israel has become more moderate, even though criticism and misgivings are still the dominant line. In many areas of Haredi life, there are signs of de-facto recognition of the State; and, recently, fissures have appeared in the previously united opposition to de-jure recognition of the State as well. Haredim cooperate with state institutions and have even become champions of certain proto-fascist values.

The classical Haredi position, which encouraged passivity and reconciliation, would be considered dovish in today's political climate. On issues of national security, they formerly maintained consistently pragmatic, compromising, and minimalist policies. Recently, however, Haredim have tended to support positions which are considered consonant with the right wing of Israel's political spectrum. Israeli Ultra-Orthodoxy has become a solid element of the right-wing, which has realigned of late in response to the geopolitical crises of the last three decades. Haredim back a hawkish regional policy: they maintain a maximalist position on the question of settlement and sovereignty over those parts of the West Bank and Gaza with high Palestinian concentrations, and are active in their support of the use of armed force to retaliate against Arab countries and Muslim populations. The rightist tendencies of the Haredim are endemic mainly to younger members and grassroots elements of the community, in contrast with a thinning segment of the religious elite. In recent years, though, the leadership has been pulled by the constituency toward the right.

Set against the backdrop of the recent violent conflict with the Palestinians and the terror attacks in the cities of Israel to which significant numbers of Haredim were exposed, with some injured and even killed, a degree of chauvinism has emerged among members of the Ultra-Orthodox community. An important element of this is a kind of Jewish solidarity, a certain empathy with fellow Israelis, the basis of which is primordial or ethnic rather than political.

We cannot dissociate changes in the Haredi disposition toward the State from the story of their success. We have recently witnessed a substantial rise in their population, standard of living, public image, and self-confidence. Their political gains are impressive and are accompanied by what they view as a cultural renaissance. A conspicuous manifestation of their success is their widespread and elaborate institution building.

Paradoxically, the modern secular and nationalist Israel of the last forty years has proven a particularly fertile ground for the thriving of the Haredim. They have benefited from the fact that they live as a minority in a Western, urban, technologically advanced and economically solid, democratic welfare state, and are surrounded by a relatively tolerant society. These favorable circumstances are reinforced by other factors. First, the almost total political mobilization of the Haredi community during election season, accompanied by the considerable organizational and public-relations skills of Haredi political representatives and administrators. Much of the Haredi constituency's strength derives from Israel's parliamentary system, in which smaller coalition partners wield power disproportionate to their size and may command--as the Haredi parties have for many years--the deciding bloc of votes in cases of close and contentious legislation. Haredi splinter parties have entered different coalitions and supported the important legislation in foreign and defense policy of either of the dominant blocs, in order to be rewarded with funds and legislation that further their sectorial interests.

Second, the ideological and leadership crises that have developed in Israel, together with widespread disillusionment and fatigue brought about by ongoing armed conflicts and routine cases of corruption among government leaders, have brought about a de-Zionization and a decline in secular Hebrew culture. This trend has been accompanied by a "re-Judaization" of Israel and the reemergence of positive attitudes toward tradition and religion. These trends were further intensified in the aftermath of the right-wing's victory in the 1977 elections, which put the Haredim into central positions of influence in both political and economic spheres, and, for the first time, saw the appointment of Haredi politicians as senior government ministers.

As the Haredim proudly testify, the pinnacle of their many achievements has been the construction of a "Torah World": the substantiation of the ideal of yeshiva study. They portray this success as the revival of a golden age that had passed into oblivion.

There is hardly any credible historical evidence, though, to support their image of that once extant Torah-learning society which they purport to have resuscitated. Such a "society of learners" is a phenomenon unprecedented in Jewish history (Shtampfer 1995; 2010, part 2).

For hundreds of years, intensive study of Torah was seen as an ideal, though no society ever came close to its complete realization. While living the "yeshiva life"--a widely admired lifestyle which lent authority to its practitioners--was the aim of many, in practice, it was an aspiration realized by few. A small elite group ensconced itself within the world of the yeshiva--a wholly sacred environment exempt from the trials of the profane world--while the remainder of the traditional community went about their lives as laymen. This resulted in a division, or stratification, between a near-caste of Torah scholars on the one hand and merchants, craftsmen, beggars, and others on the other. While the former provided spiritual leadership, inspiration, and legitimization to the community, the latter supported both themselves and the select group that devoted itself to perennial, full-time Torah study. In this division of labor between the two sectors, the students fulfilled intellectual and ritual functions that were primarily symbolic in nature, while the others took care of the other responsibilities essential to the community, such as, security, economic activities, dealing with the sovereign powers, etc (Ben Sasson 1969).

The current devotion of an entire group to a life of Torah study has, predictably, produced an inward orientation, isolation, and extremism. But other, less expected outcomes, seem to have developed as well: a certain opening of the Haredi society and a degree of rapprochement with the secular state and its secular citizens. Paradoxically, concomitant to the radicalization of the Haredi society and its attendant increasingly anti-Israel positions, there are also signs of turning toward Israelis and Israel. The Israelization of the Haredi public is a phenomenon recognized by the rabbinical authorities and perceived as threatening the integrity of the community.

The great success of the Haredi community bears the seeds of an oncoming crisis. For one, this success results in greater dependence on the State of Israel. This dependence, which is primarily financial, and demands ever greater political involvement, has a number of important implications. In order to sustain their privileges,

the Haredim find themselves granting--sometimes unwillingly--legitimation to the State. For the community to receive subsidies requires its constituents to vote, elect representatives to the parliament, join coalitions, and even serve in the government. This implies identification with--even if qualified and begrudging--and sharing responsibilities for the national entity, which, not long ago, was considered an abomination. Increased engagement with the state also entails the establishment of a network of ties with the secular public and its institutions. Such routine contact and intensive mutuality cannot but influence both sides, and particularly the smaller and needier of the two. The erosion catalyzed by this Israeliness is reflected in all aspects of Haredi life, including their spoken- and body language.

The current Haredi reality of a "society of learners" has seen the transformation of what originally was --and apparently was intended to be--the province of a select few become the universal public domain and the standard for the entire community. Whether a society can continue to afford the luxury of turning an ideal model of religiosity and communality into a general norm is open to question. For such an ideal model can hardly exist without complementary structures--such as those provided by Israeli politics, economy, and culture--which lend contrast and context, and, consequently, vitality and meaning to the Haredi community. Without the latter, a collective can barely survive, let alone prosper, as basic social functions would remain unfulfilled.

The deeper the plunge into the depths of the Torah world, the greater the dependence on the profane world; while greater proximity to and immersion in the national experience facilitates entrenchment in the Torah world. An illustration of this irony may be seen in a phenomenon which, until its appearance in the last generation, was unthinkable: the enrollment of Haredi women in the workforce (Greenber 1996; Friedman 1998). One would expect that these women would function as brokers or conduits for importing and exporting values and norms between the Ultra-Orthodox and secular communities, and thus assist in blunting the sting of the resentment and hostility between the two cultures. In practice, though, the phenomenon has engendered something entirely different: the salaries of Haredi women have enabled their husbands to engage in Torah study from morning to night, thus further disengaging them from the surrounding society and facilitating a "totalization" of their internal world. An additional example:

the launching of Haredi media outlets. The potentially deleterious effects of the adoption of innovative communication technologies were offset by the opportunity it offered Haredim to make do with their own media, rather than expose themselves to that of the secular world. More generally, we have here evidence of the integration of Haredim with their surroundings, though not of assimilation (Sivan and Caplan 2003).

Furthermore, we may posit that Haredi society is undergoing two parallel, though presumably contradictory processes: Israelization (Lupo 2003) and religious radicalization.[42] It is possible for the two contradictory trends to develop in different time frames and by way of separate groups and institutions, but it is also possible for the two to be absorbed in the initiatives of the very same agents. In this manner, contemporary super-religiosity can reach the absurd. ZaKA, the Haredi volunteer organization that handles the Israeli victims of Palestinian suicide bombings is but one intriguing instance of such an absurdity.[43] ZaKA is doubly subversive: it is an authentic extension of Jewish super religiosity successfully imposing Haredism on the Israeli scene. ZaKA is also a Jewish super religiosity initiative to open the borders of Haredism from within.

Afterword

"There are many gateways to the Palace." In Jewish sacred texts the palace refers to the most elevated realm, where God resides, the ultimate objective of the devout. This quote by R' Nachman of Breslau is traditionally interpreted as suggesting that the proximity of the divine could be reached through different avenues, some of which might be ostensibly sinful and heretic, indirect or strange, but nevertheless approved if not desirable.[44] This is what I have been told by the Faithful of the Gush while I conducted my study of the hard-core activists of the Jewish Settlement in the West Bank movement. Precisely the same quote has been related to me by the hard-core haredim - another version of religious Jewish radicalism - when I conducted my study of ultra-orthodox ZaKA. In both cases the super-religious were challenged by the fact that I stuck to my secular stance despite my highly motivated and heavily invested research that exposed

[42] Compare to the two parallel but contradictory processes that the Palestinians citizens of the State of Israel undergo: Israelization and National (Arab) radicalization.
[43] See Preface to Part I.
[44] *Ptachim harbe' La'palatyn*. Likutey Moh'ran, Torah Kuf-Yod-Bet (112)

me to their pure deep religiosity. Ruling out the possibility of Jew's immunity to the effect of true religion they came to the conclusion that my scientific project was in fact hiding an authentic though inadvertent and innocent - a bit crooked – way to God I was seeking. They reminded me of the Aggadic distinction between tacit and manifest forms of Jewish sainthood and entertained the idea, tongue in cheek fashion of course, that I am, actually, a Hidden Saint (*tzadik nistar*), just one in a generation according to old legends, whose sanctity is more valued than that of a regular saint. Then the semi-humorous exchange with the haredi subjects naturally switched to discussing *prima facie* religiosity. They portrayed three images of perfect Jewish religiosity, or three different role models of Jewish religious virtuosity: *talmid khakham* (Rabbinic Scholar); *tzadik* (Righteous, or Just); and *khasid*.[45]

The above three alternative personifications of ultimate haredism are quite similar to Gershom Scholem's Three Types of Jewish Piety (1973).[46] The first ideal-type of (ultra) orthodox Judaism is the talmid khakham who epitomizes the value of intellectual and contemplative life. This rational man is devoted to an extensive and concentrated study of the scriptures (mostly Talmud) and tradition (mostly halakhah). His authority is based on his mastery of the canonic texts and his methodical ingenuity to add ever another layer of exegesis and apply it to changing exigencies of Jewish reality. The second archetype of perfect Jewish religiosity is represented by the tzadic who – in a rather oxymoronic sense - embodies the idealization of Jewish normalcy. This model is reflected in the *balabyit* at his best, that is, Jewish middle of the road decent, conscientious, diligent, benevolent citizen of the community and family man that meticulously observes Torah commandments while dedicated to the purity, integrity and well-being of his society. His test is all-round balance, manifested in composure and

[45] Note the tendency to blur the difference between the two concepts of tzadik and khasid and mix them. In later periods even a reversal of the terms took place. Conventionally though wrongly in a sense, today's tzadik is the charismatic leader of the khasidim, and a khasid is a follower of a tzadik.

*46. A*lso in Scholem 1997. It should be noted that Scholem speaks in terms of Religiosity too.

47. This 19th century East European educational and cultural school is associated with the name of its founder, R' Israel Salanter, and with its Khasidic predecessors of the 10-11th century like *Chovat Halevavot*, or R' luzato, and its later prominent figures like *Hafetz hayim*. Note the growing influence in recent years of the Musar Movement and its doctrines and great figures (Etkes1993)

sobriety, and aimed at reinstating order, keeping exactly the right measure, seeking peace, justice and straight forward piety, thus harmonizing and eventually redeeming the world.

The last paradigmatic ultra-orthodox is the most radical of the three: the khasid, translated here as saint for lack of a better term. In contrast to the talmid khakham, he is a man of deeds rather than abstract thought, and in contrast to the tzadik he is a man of the nonconventional or exceptional, rather than the norm. He goes to extremes in his pursuit of purity and consistency. The khasid claim to fame is his tendency to go far beyond the written or customary rule. He is suffused with enthusiasm, self-denial and bold and ascetic spirit. His test is not just maintaining radical world-view or ethos but translating it into radical action. Sainthood is manifested in ideology, temperament and most important, actual behavior.

The three types are not exclusive of each other and yet they may vary independently of each other. Not all torah scholars are righteous, and a righteous person is not necessarily a torah scholar. This kind of relationship between talmid khakham and tzadik was typical of the past traditional Jewish community. However in contemporary Jewish traditionalist - orthodox and especially ultra-orthodox – communities the above two tend to go together. The correlation between the scholastic aspect of religiosity and the ethical one is especially pronounced in the haredi case. Those that study hard and master the sacred text are supposed to be of high moral status and those who are of high morality are supposed to excel in yeshiva studies. Moreover, as pointed out by Scholem, righteousness, the quality of the tzadik, is generally considered in Jewish culture as something that can be taught and for which one can be educated and trained. So much more for the talmid khakham. Erudition, sophistication, even intelligence may be cultivated and upgraded through ambitious yeshiva course. To be sure, haredi education is geared to promote both such intellectual and ethical values, and see them as integrally related.

Haredi socialization in general and torah academies in particular concentrate on shaping their youth in a mold as close as possible to the two ideal-types of talmid khakham and tzadik. The former is achieved by focusing more than forty hours a week on rehearsing and scrutinizing the Gmarah. The latter is sought by exposing the students to sermon-like lessons of ethics and spirituality (*musar*) and closely supervising the

students' daily activities by special politruk-style specialists (*mashgiakh*). [47] The Musar teachings are rather selectively and narrowly interpreted and applied. Among the more salient topics valued in haredi moral education are clean language that prohibits slander, gossip and dirty phrases (*shmirat halashon*), and body control and finesse.

The third ideal-type of Jewish religiosity, the khasid, by its very nature cannot be accomplished by schooling, exercising or guidance. Sainthood, naturally enough, is not taught in the haredi yeshiva. In fact, the traditional Jewish reservation, or even certain distrust, towards the khasid is still quite noticeable in contemporary ultra-orthodox society. Paradoxically enough, while this radical option is suspect to a degree and completely absent in torah-centered curriculum, it is nevertheless regarded as more religious than the other two acclaimed options and their commended combination. In effect, the haredim tend to regard the khasid as a paragon of super-religiosity.

While haredi formal educational system seeks to set a combination of talmid khakham and tzadic as a role model, various informal but effective social mechanisms promote the khasid role model that competes with and threatens the other two. In recent years rabbinic scholarly standards as well as pious moral standards are partly overshadowed by (radical) action as a haredi index of a religiosity measure. Revered Jewish saintly figures seem to get a certain exemption from strict halakhic observance, intensive yeshiva studies and ethical merit, in favor of pious action. Throughout Jewish history no collectivity of saints as an organized and distinct group has been allowed to come into being. Jewish saints were tolerated and even admired and glorified only as extraordinary individuals rather than as a class, movement or organization. This is in contrast to the Christian Church that co-opted sainthood even as a group phenomenon; praised and canonized it though kept it at arm's length. Judaism shunned such monastic orders.

In a way, the hard core of present day haredim is an institutionalized collective sainthood. Haredi world has become an organized khasid community of its own where super-religiosity is the norm. This order-like super-religious phenomenon is a novel one, explosive but self-defeating.

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