

THE FLOERSHEIMER INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES

New Directions in Haredi Society  
Vocational Training and Academic Studies

**Jacob Lupu**

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## **About the Author**

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## **About the Research**

The year 1996 marked a shift in the attitude of ultra-orthodox society to vocational and academic training for men. Also noted were changes in and expansion of vocational and academic training for women. Across Israel institutions of higher learning for *Haredi* men and women sprang, adapted to the special heterogeneous needs of this population. Thousands of men and women study in them and prepare themselves for a life of earning and integration into the labor market. This study reviews the shift from ideological, historical and socio-political perspectives and proposes recommendations to substantiate and expand this phenomenon.

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## PREFACE

When I told some of my friends that I was doing a study of vocational and academic training in Haredi society, I was generally greeted with exclamations of surprise and a recurring question: “What? Is there such a thing?” This response reflects the stigma attached to the Haredi community with regard to secular studies, which are the pathway to learning a profession and earning a living.

In this context, three qualifications can be mentioned:

First, the issue has been a subject of controversy in Haredi society for over 150 years. In the course of time Haredi society has tried out different combinations of secular and religious studies. In certain periods there were breakthroughs, and in others – retreat and retrenchment, as happened in Israel during the first 50 years of statehood.

Second, while it is true that Haredi society in Israel has not permitted general studies among men for the purpose of learning a profession, it has sustained for many years a system of general studies meant to prepare women for work.

Third, since 1996 there has been a change in the Haredi attitude toward vocational training and academic studies for men, and at the same time the areas of vocational training for women have been broadened beyond the traditional teacher training that had been their lot.

The aim of this study is to survey the situation today in Haredi society with regard to the mixing of religious and secular studies, in the light of historical and ideological processes – and particularly those that have unfolded in the

modern period. The further I investigated the subject the clearer it became that it embraces a variety of ideological and halakhic positions and that it is shaped by a chain of historical circumstances. The attitude of Haredim to this matter today is greatly influenced by the way of life of the society of scholars<sup>1</sup> as it developed in the State of Israel. This attitude is bound up with economic considerations, political stances, and halakhic positions, particularly of the rabbinic “sages”.

The Haredi attitude to secular studies is the main factor determining their integration into Israeli society and the economy. Israeli governments of the past tended to reconcile themselves to the fact that most Haredi men did not enter the labor market and were prepared to pay the price. This situation persisted until recent years; however, after the Knesset elections of early 2003, new political circumstances arose that enabled the government to come out and say, “No more money”, for direct financial support of broad sectors of the public, including yeshiva and kolel students. Today this issue ranks high on the national agenda, preoccupying both the secular and Haredi populations. Haredi leaders fear that combining secular and religious studies will produce far-reaching changes in the Haredi way of life. On the other hand, they cannot deny the need for change given the sorry economic condition of their community. Today most accept with reservations the trend to encourage vocational training and academic study in the Haredi sector, at the same time trying to regulate the process.

In this study I have attempted to clarify the processes that have been unfolding in recent years in Haredi society in Israel, from a historic, economic, and social perspective. It has been written from the point of view of an academic researcher who does not belong to the Haredi community and is intended mainly for decision makers. At the same time, it is my hope that Haredim too will read it and that the findings will strike a responsive chord.

It is my feeling that at this time the society of scholars and with it the Haredi community as a whole is at a historic crossroads and must keep moving in the

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1 Friedman, Menachem (1998). *Haredi Society*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. (All references are to works in the Hebrew language unless otherwise stated.)



direction apparent since 1996, that is, encouraging greater integration of secular and religious studies. This change is vital in terms of what it can contribute both to Haredi society and the Israeli economy.

I would like to thank, first of all, Prof. Amiram Gonen, who showed the way in his book *From Yeshiva to Work*.<sup>2</sup> Prof. Gonen encouraged and guided me in writing this study. Likewise, I wish to thank the Floersheimer Institute and its staff for the help extended during the work.

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<sup>2</sup> Gonen, Amiram (2001). *From Yeshiva to Work – the American Experience and Lessons for Israel*, Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies. (English version.)

# 1 MAIN POINTS

## **Attitude toward Secular Learning – the Historical Aspect**

The question of mixing secular and religious studies has always been an issue in Jewish life, but the clash between the various ideological views has mainly come to the fore in modern times. The spectrum of opinion ranges from total rejection of general studies and entrenchment in the Torah world to total rejection of Torah and concentration on general studies alone. Between the two extremes there evolved an intermediate position promoting “Torah and worldliness”, a suitable combination of the two.

Since the second half of the 19th century Jews in the Diaspora have had to contend with a major problem: how to combine modern life, based on general education, technological and scientific progress, and material advancement, with Jewish religious life. Different communities found different solutions in accordance with the historical, social, and cultural circumstances of each. Among the Jews in Arab lands a way was found to combine the sacred and profane without polarizing them. Among Ashkenazi Jews, together with the total rejection of secular studies, there also evolved approaches that permitted the combination of the sacred and profane at various levels. Some of them rejected certain subjects of general studies but allowed others. Other approaches shunted secular studies aside, giving them an inferior status and only allowing their pursuit in the less convenient hours of the day, while still others allowed for a complete mixing of the sacred and profane. Even among those who opposed secular studies there were different views. For example, in the first half of the 20th century the world organization of Agudat Israel was relatively

flexible compared with the uncompromising views of Agudat Israel in the Old Yishuv of Palestine.

After the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel a new situation arose. Jewish refugees (the “remnant” of the nation) found different ways to rebuild their lives in their new communities – whether in Israel or in other countries. The strategy chosen by the conservative Haredi faction, mostly coming from the Lithuanian community, was to rebuild the post-Holocaust Torah world, both in the physical and the spiritual sense.

According to this approach the present generation has a “metahistorical” role to play – to guarantee the existence of the Jewish people. Salvation will only come from rabbinic scholars who preserve, shore up, declaim, interpret and pass on the Torah in an unbroken human chain. From out of this cloistered Torah world will also spring the giants of the generation who will lead the Jewish people on the right path.

Responsibility for the preservation of learning therefore rests with every male in the Haredi community – all are mobilized in the effort to recreate the world of the yeshiva destroyed in the Holocaust. The right to study Torah for its own sake became an overriding obligation, pushing aside the concern for material well-being.

What about earning a living? In the Haredi view economic subsistence is in some way guaranteed as a by-product of devotion to Torah, placing the matter in God's hands. At the same time that the value of “Torah alone” was internalized, so too was the utter aversion to devoting time to learning for the purpose of “getting ahead” (earning a living). This attitude produced a significant change in family roles, with responsibility for earning a living devolving on the woman while the man of the house devoted himself exclusively to Torah study. The Lithuanian community took the lead in promoting this way of life and in the State of Israel the Hasidic courts and Eastern Orthodox community followed suit.

With the political upset of 1977 and Agudat Israel's partnership in the coalition, and later with the creation of Shas and its tremendous success in the elections, the religious parties accrued a great deal of political power. They became the swing

factor in Israeli politics. From this point on, Israeli governments (whether leaning to the left or right) became partners in building up the Torah world according to the Lithuanian formula: *de facto* isolation of Haredi males in the world of the sacred and unequivocal rejection of general education and technical training.

This way of life was adopted by all Haredim in the State of Israel, and its standard bearers were two giants of the generation – Rabbi Eleazar Menahem Shach and Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. It was Rabbi Shach who “set the tone” and decreed that all male members of the community must devote themselves only to sacred studies, and Rabbi Yosef adopted this position despite the differences in approach between them. It is the ambition of every Haredi family in Israel that its sons will spend their entire lives in study, in the hope that one day they will become halakhic prodigies for the Jewish people.

The rehabilitation of the Torah world in the State of Israel has been a tremendous and unprecedented educational undertaking. The society of Haredi scholars grew enormously in the last quarter of the 20th century and today embraces thousands of institutions: Talmud Torah schools, big and small yeshivas and kolels where tens of thousands study. Moreover, alongside this society of scholars there are hundreds of Torah research institutes and Haredi organizations. However, it is just this enormous scope of activity that has increased its economic dependence on the state. The creation of a non-productive sector of such scope has had, and still has, far-reaching consequences – on the Israeli economy, on the Haredi community, and on Israeli society as a whole.

## **The Haredi Community in Israel – the Economic Aspect**

The character of Israeli society developed in a state where education and scientific and technological progress are the bases of economic strength. For many years there has been a division of opinion as to whether such a society can permit a large percentage of its members to remain outside the system and devote their lives to Torah study alone. This issue has become more acute in recent years with the worsening of Israel's economic situation.

The following facts can be gleaned from the Bank of Israel's report on "Policy for the Encouragement of Employment" (dated 17 July 2002):<sup>3</sup>

- About half the working-age population of Israel – about 2,450,000 people – did not work in the first quarter of 2002, of whom 2,150,000 were not part of the work force and 255,000 were unemployed.
- The level of employment in Israel is significantly lower than in other developed countries (members of the OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).<sup>4</sup> The level is particularly low among those with little education, Arab women, men with a Torah education, and inhabitants of development areas. The level of participation in the work force is significantly lower in Israel than in the developed countries even when employment in the military and security forces is taken into account.
- The level of unemployment in Israel is higher than the average in the developed countries. Levels are especially high among those with little education and in the Moslem population. While among Jewish men in general (aged 15-64) only a third do not participate in the work force, among Haredi men in this age group the level rises to about 80%. In the prime working-age group (24-64), 68% of Haredi men are not part of the work force.<sup>5</sup>

Studies on the correlation between education and employment show that the lower the level of education the lower the possibilities of job placement. It can be assumed that the situation will only grow worse in the future since the Israeli economy is basing itself more and more on technological developments, which

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3 Gottlieb Daniel, et al., (17 July 2002). *Policy for the Encouragement of Employment*. Jerusalem: Bank of Israel.

4 Iceland, Norway, Sweden, United States, Finland, New Zealand, Denmark, Canada, Japan, England, Australia, Korea, Holland, Portugal, Germany, Austria, Ireland, France, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Italy.

5 Ben David, Dan (July 2003). "The Israeli Work Force in World Terms", *Economic Quarterly*, 50 (1): 72-90.

favor skilled workers. The more the economy develops the greater will be the demand for such workers and the lower the demand for unskilled workers.

In light of the findings presented at the Herzliyya Conference by the Education and the National Work Group it is possible to gage the future effect of a high percentage of nonworking people on the Israeli economy and the strength of the country.<sup>6</sup> These findings show that at the present time about half the country's first graders are enrolled in either the Haredi or Arab school system. If these demographic trends continue the relative share of these two sectors in the educational system will continue to grow.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore possible to get an idea of what lies in store for the first graders of 2001 in the year 2025: half of them (that is, half the children of Israel) will belong to that part of the population lying outside the labor system or finding it difficult to get work because of poor education. Excluded from this group are Haredi women, who will be trained for the job market (with certain restrictions) and to some extent find a place in it. Most of the men among the current first graders will be outside the labor system because they will not have the requisite professional skills and will require public and government support. It can thus be anticipated that in 2025 the Israeli economy will lag even further behind the Western economies than today. Such a situation is liable to have serious consequences for both Israeli society and national strength.

## **New Directions**

As mentioned, together with its success in Torah education the Haredi community has plummeted to a condition of severe economic distress, so that it is not by chance that the poorest cities in the country are Jerusalem and Bene Beraq.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Herzliyya Conference, held on 16-18 December 2001 under the auspices of the Israel Institute for Democracy. The Conference discussed the country's strength and security.

7 Dr. Zvi Tzameret et al. (16-18 December 2001). "National Education in Israel". Working Paper. Herzliyya Conference of the Israel Institute for Democracy.

8 National Insurance report on poverty in Israel, December 19, 2000.

This economic distress is defined by the Haredi leadership as “voluntary poverty”, and efforts are being made to lighten the burden through the traditional Haredi means of mutual aid. At the same time, Haredi leaders are also aware of the changes occurring in Israeli society and of their effect on the Haredi community; they recognize the fact that in this community too the desire to improve standards of living is growing stronger and that mutual aid is not a satisfactory substitute for earning power and cannot guarantee the economic viability of the society of scholars.

These cross currents have speeded up the shift in Haredi attitudes toward general studies and vocational training. This shift, which began in 1996, involves a significant softening of the attitude of leading rabbis, giving such studies a kind of green light. However, their approval is still qualified and they are trying to steer the course of developments in a direction that complies with their outlooks.

Secular studies are not foreign to Haredi society; they are an integral part of women's education, and in recent times there has been greater recourse among these women to higher education and vocational training. New possibilities have been opened up to them beyond the field of teaching.

Likewise, one can find marginally in a few yeshivas a combination of religious and secular studies. Hundreds have already graduated from such yeshivas, taking the Ministry of Education's external matriculation exams and usually getting high marks, their success being comparable to that in state schools. The specific yeshivas are the old Yishuv ha-Hadash in Tel Aviv, where hundreds of Haredim have studied side by side with “national-religious” students, as well as the Ma'arava Yeshiva in Hashmonaim and Nahora in Beit Horon.<sup>9</sup> Most graduates from these yeshivas in fact continue their studies in the higher yeshivas, but some move on after a few years to academic institutes or colleges for Haredi students like the School of Higher Technological Studies or the Bene Beraq

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9 Some Haredim say that these yeshivas are not Haredi or call them modern Haredi yeshivas or yeshivas for “external students”.

Haredi College.<sup>10</sup> These young people are capable of entering the economic system and the job market no less than other Israeli youngsters.

In recent years significant changes have occurred mainly with regard to the training of Haredi men in academic and vocational frameworks. For example, for a few years now yeshiva students and graduates are taking vocational-training courses offered by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare or courses in colleges where they are getting an academic education in such fields as law, computers, economics, management, and accounting. This is something new in Israel, but it is not foreign to the Haredi population in the United States and France.

In the year 2002/2003 the following situation existed: over 2,600 Haredi men and women were taking the special vocational-training courses started after 1996.<sup>11</sup> Most of the courses are given at the Haredi Center for Technological Studies in Jerusalem and Bene Beraq: 1,500 men and women have graduated from the Center, of whom 900 have been placed in jobs over the years.<sup>12</sup> In addition, about 450 men and 700 women received (and are still receiving) academic training at the Bene Beraq Haredi College, the Jerusalem Haredi College, the Kiryat Ono Academic Center (Or Yehudah campus), the School of Higher Technological Studies, and Sha'arei Mishpat College.

As much as one must admire these institutions for academic and vocational training in the Haredi community (with all the difficulties they face), one cannot help noting how meager the numbers are.<sup>13</sup>

To understand the situation correctly it must be remembered that the changes mentioned above affect only those men who are either unable or unwilling to devote their lives to Torah study alone. Likewise they apply only to the rela-

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10 The School of Higher Technological Studies in Jerusalem includes the Lev, Naveh and Tal Institutes in Jerusalem and the Lustig Institute for Women in Ramat Gan

11 This figure does not include women training to be teachers or for other occupations in the Beth Jacob school system.

12 This figure was given by the Center in April 2003.

13 It should be remembered that no change has taken place with regard to women; only their possibilities have been broadened.



tively older men – above the age of 23. Indeed, one of the major obstacles to expanding academic and vocational training is the “bottleneck” at the secondary school level. At this level there is no preparation for general and/or technical studies. In both the big and small yeshivas tens of thousands of students are being educated in total isolation from secular studies. All Israeli governments have reconciled themselves to this situation and continue to allocate funds to Haredi educational frameworks at the high school level despite the fact that they do not offer general studies.<sup>14</sup> It is true that in Haredi elementary schools arithmetic and Hebrew are taught, but boys are “weaned” from such studies from the age of 13. This break therefore occurs at the critical age when non-Haredi youngsters are preparing themselves for the day when they will learn the trade or profession that will form the basis of their future employment.

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14 In contrast to what is happening in Haredi communities in the United States and France.

## 2 THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE: “TORAH ALONE” VS. “TORAH AND WORLDLINESS”

On the cardinal issue of whether Jews should dwell only in the tents of sacred learning or also expose themselves to science and worldly knowledge, many wide-ranging books have been written.

The argument goes back to ancient times, when the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures clashed.<sup>15</sup> In Jewish society an ambivalent attitude developed toward Greek culture: on the one hand, it was impossible to ignore its scientific achievements, and on the other, it was seen as a threat to Judaism in view of the basic opposition between its idol-worshipping aspect and the monotheism of Judaism. Greek culture was the culture of the Hellenistic monarchs who conquered Judea (Antiochus IV) and was adopted by the Roman Empire whose armies destroyed the Second Temple. Against this background the hostility between Judaism and Greek culture deepened and certain Jewish groups rejected this culture totally.

Hundreds of years later Christianity conquered the Roman world and became the guardian of classical culture (with certain adaptations to fit its monotheistic tidings), and the rift between Jewish and European culture deepened still more, the latter being seen as a new version of paganism. This attitude fueled the bitter

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenberg, Shalom (1988). *Religion and Science in Modern Jewish Thought*. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education. Intro., pp. 7-15

struggle against Maimonides and his concern with worldly wisdom.<sup>16</sup> The controversy surrounding Maimonides' writings, especially his philosophic works, highlighted the polarization in Jewish society. The struggle reached its peak in 1232, when the rabbis of northern France banned his *Guide for the Perplexed*. The ban deepened the rift between Maimonides' supporters and opponents, a rift which persisted into the beginning of the 14th century.

In the Jewish center that evolved in Eastern Europe the view that rejected all study of science predominated until the 20th century. In German Neo-Orthodox circles too, where the (indeed limited) symbiosis of Torah and science was pioneered, voices were heard at the beginning of the 20th century linking Jewish authenticity to maximum spiritual separation.<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter the two views will be reviewed briefly owing to limitations of space, particularly as they crystallized in the last generations. The development of these views in the most recent period will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **“Torah Alone”**

Those who champion the “Torah alone” approach argue that the very idea of “Torah and worldliness” implies that the Torah is lacking and flawed. Otherwise, what is the need for science? This approach expresses the age-old yearning for spiritual autarchy in the sense of the saying, “Go through it again and again, for everything is in it” (Avot 5:22), that is, the Torah contains all the wisdom that the Creator of the world intended for the Chosen People.

Among other things, this view is inspired by R. Shimon Bar-Yohai's saying: “When Israel obeys the will of God, others do its work”, meaning that as long as the believer keeps his faith, God will supply his needs and he has nothing to

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16 Moskowitz, Dafna (2001). *Teaching Two Humanistic Subjects in State-Religious Education*. Ph.D. thesis. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, pp. 266-269.

17 Stern, Eliezer (1983). “Chapters in the History of the Educational Ideal of Torah and Worldliness”, *People and Pathways*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, pp. 113-123.

fear. It follows therefore that working calls into question faith, for it demonstrates a lack of confidence in the ability of God to sustain one.

Proponents of “Torah alone” tended to ignore the writings in the Jewish tradition that affirmed the value of work, representing it as necessary on the physical-existential plane alone. In no way was it to be seen as an ideal or commandment obligating the Jew.<sup>18</sup> Refusing to see work as a commandment, while at the same time defining Torah study as such, created the gap between the sacred and the profane.

The “Torah alone” approach is based on three principles:

1. The fear that exposure to science can endanger the devout, and mainly the young, who are liable to become unbelievers as a result of looking into iconoclastic texts.<sup>19</sup> Those who maintain this view also use this contention against the argument that Maimonides studied science, claiming that Maimonides was a great and unique figure to whom the ordinary rules do not apply. Given his spiritual elevation, the study of worldly wisdom could not threaten him. However, when it comes to ordinary people, allowing the study of science can lead to rejection of the basic principles of the Jewish faith, and therefore it should be avoided as much as possible.
2. The second principle is connected to the Talmudic saying, “Since the destruction of the Temple, nothing remains of God in the world but the four pillars of the Halakhah” (Ber. 8a). In other words, the Torah contains all the wisdom in the world and therefore the study of worldly wisdom is a denial of the authority of the Torah. The Halakhah alone is valid religiously and spiritually and any other intellectual pursuit is forbidden. This way of looking at things is

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18 Shtadler, Nurit (2000). *Sacred and Profane in the Attitude to Work: the Case of Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel*. Ph.D. thesis. Jerusalem, Hebrew University, pp. 209-244.

19 Lamm, Nahum (1977). *Torah and Science*. Jerusalem, Elliner Library and Ministry of Education and Culture, Religious Education Department, p. 53.

rooted in an age-old tradition going back to the Talmud and persisting until today (in this context it must be said that Maimonides proved just the opposite through scrupulous analysis).

3. The third principle is the view that every minute not devoted to Torah study involves the sin of wasting time. This idea rests on the verse, “This book of the law shall not depart from out of your mouth but you shall meditate therein day and night” (Josh. 1:8). But here too different interpretations have been given, so that, according to some, external studies are permissible for the purpose of earning a living.

Many of those who advocate “Torah alone” rely on the writings and utterances of Rabbi Eliahu Dessler (1892-1953), head of the Gateshead kollel in England and spiritual director of the Ponevezh yeshiva in Bene Beraq in 1948. In his book *Letter from Eliahu* (“Security and Effort”, Part I) Rabbi Dessler bases himself on the sources and on Musar literature, asserting that work is not a commandment at all but a curse. It is connected to the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden and involves physical suffering as a punishment for his sin, as it is written: “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread” (Gen. 3:19). Only the accursed must work while the study of Torah purifies. Turning work into a permanent occupation is a great defilement which is liable to cause man to lose his spiritual dimension. This attitude inevitably leads to the idea that work must be minimized as much as possible and that whoever is forced to make the “effort” (to work) should do so modestly.

Rabbi Dessler fiercely criticizes Western society and the Enlightenment, which caused Jews to aspire to academic achievement on the pretext that it was necessary for their livelihoods. In his view this is tantamount to idol worship. He cites as an example the fact that the Nazis forced professors to do simple manual labor like everyone else and claims that many Jews have not learned the lesson.

Rabbi Dessler's views are accepted among Haredim today and his utterances on the subject are quoted day in and day out. At the same time, it should be noted that he permitted in a limited and qualified way certain practical but nonaca-

democratic occupations. This permission was given to people of deficient intellectual or spiritual capacity.

### **“Torah and Worldliness”**

In contrast to the approach that rejects science and secular studies, another approach took root that sees them in a positive light. Those who advocate work alongside Torah study find their moral justification in the Talmud; for example: “Rabban Gamaliel, the son of R. Yeudah ha-Nasi, used to say: The study of Torah combined with a worldly occupation is an excellent thing, for the energy needed for both keeps sinful thoughts out of the mind” (Avot 2:2) or, “Whoever says I have only the Torah ... does not even have the Torah” (Yev. 109b). Advocates of secular studies were apparently apprehensive lest religious scholars become dependent on support from outside..

In the Hellenistic period, Hellenism was widespread among Jews in the Mediterranean area, not only for its hedonistic element but also for its interest in the sciences. In the Middle Ages too the intellectual elite among Jews in Moslem lands showed much interest in the various sciences: cosmogony, biology, medicine. Many writings in these fields were translated from Greek to Hebrew or reached educated Jews through the intermediacy and translations of the Arab philosophers. Maimonides even elaborated a detailed justification for the study of science as a necessary means to strengthen faith and as representing knowledge that the religious scholar must master.<sup>20</sup>

With the 18th century came accelerated development in all the fields of science, and the increasing linkage of science and technology with economic systems. More and more people began to study the sciences, languages, and a wide variety of subjects in order to learn a profession. This turn of events forced traditional Jewish society to weigh the possibility of legitimizing the study of worldly wisdom in institutes of education and combining religious and secular studies. They could not ignore the intellectual challenges posed by modern

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<sup>20</sup> Lamm, *ibid.*, pp. 61-66.

science and increasingly felt the need to reconcile these new principles with their views as believers.

Over time, different approaches evolved that put forward different reasons for combining Torah with science:

1) The **rationalistic model**, whose outstanding advocate is Maimonides.<sup>21</sup>

Of all the views affirming the combination of Torah with science, the view of Maimonides is the most unequivocal and far-reaching. Understandably this is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of Maimonides' approach. I will only mention that according to him not only is it permissible to undertake secular studies, it is a commandment. Maimonides expressed this view in his *Guide for the Perplexed* as well as in halakhic rulings appearing in his *Mishneh Torah*. He affirms the study of such sciences as astronomy, the natural sciences, physics, biology, and medicine as well as grammar and etymology. His main reason is that the believer must sharpen his logical skills, because only in that way can he understand the relationship between the world and its Creator. According to Maimonides, secular studies are necessary for observing the practical commandments.

Together with this approach, Maimonides forbids earning a living from the Torah: “Do not use it to make a crown to exalt yourself or a spade to dig with. For the Sages said: Love work and avoid public office. And any study of Torah not accompanied by a trade must fail in the end and become the cause of sin. And the end of such a one is to rob his fellow men (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Halakhot for Torah Study, 83:10). This prohibition met with varied and contradictory interpretations among his opponents. In the Israeli reality, proponents of “Torah alone” found a justification for getting around the prohibition and earning a living from the Torah.

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<sup>21</sup> Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 61.

- 2) The **cultural model**, whose leading proponent is Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888).<sup>22</sup>

Rabbi Hirsch is the founder of the “Torah and Worldliness” approach and is considered the father of “Enlightened Orthodoxy”. As a believing Jew who was also part of modern Western culture, Rabbi Hirsch wished to combine the two world views. He tried to develop a theory that maintained that European humanism was an outgrowth of Judaism. His educational doctrine – “Torah and Worldliness” – was based on this idea. For him there was no contradiction between Torah and science that made it necessary to choose one or the other, but if the Jew nonetheless did have to choose, the Torah was preferable to secular education. Rabbi Hirsch maintained that secular studies help one achieve a deeper understanding of the Torah.

Another rabbi who worked to introduce the “Torah and Worldliness” approach was Azriel Hildesheimer (1820-1899), mainly by founding the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary. He also allowed university studies. This Orthodox approach developed in Germany with the spread of the Enlightenment and modernization, which created a growing link between economic success and knowledge, specialization, and technological progress.

- 3) The **mystical model**, personified by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook ha-Kohen (1865-1935).<sup>23</sup>

According to Rabbi Kook, the problem of combining Torah and wisdom (science) was not cultural but mystico-metaphysical: the very act of approaching the subject of the sacred and profane transcends ordinary socio-cultural bounds. The relationship between the sacred and profane is like the relationship between matter and form: the profane is matter, and the sacred is form. Rabbi Kook arrived at far-reaching metaphysical conclusions, saying explicitly: “There is no absolute profane truth in the world”, meaning that there exist only the sacred and the not-yet-sacred. In the final analysis, everything profane (the not-yet-

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22 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 81.

23 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 91.



sacred) is to be found in the Torah and is sanctified by it. It follows that, basically speaking, secular studies do not by their nature lack eternal sacredness and sacred studies will be sterile if they focus exclusively on the sacred. Secular studies are important not despite their lack of sacredness but because this is the way all life, all knowledge, all experience comes together in the end.

- 4) The **instrumental model**, also called “spicing, cooking, baking”<sup>24</sup> and identified with the Vilna Gaon.

This model derives from the halakhic concept of a “mitzvah sanction”. This is an act that has no religious value but is nonetheless important because it enables one to observe a commandment or strengthen such observance. This approach recognizes science as a means or instrument: if study (or some other secular activity) is carried out for the sake of observing a commandment, that is, for the sake of heaven; then it may take on a sacred aspect. Thus, for example, a religious value can be attached to eating, drinking, work, etc. Similarly, it is permissible to engage in secular studies if their aim is ultimately to help one observe commandments and study Torah. In this view, secular studies are not tainted with the sin of wasting time. This is not to say that they are given blanket approval; they are legitimized insofar as they have an instrumental value.

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24 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 109.

### **3 THE ATTITUDE TOWARD SECULAR LEARNING IN THE MODERN PERIOD: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **Eastern and Central Europe**

As a rule, secular studies among the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe were minimal. Before the 18th and 19th centuries the debate concerned only members of the elite as most Jews were engaged in crafts that did not require vocational training, or required at most training within the family circle or in a craftsman's workshop. School curricula and the training of scholars focused on the Talmud and Halakhah and even Bible and Hebrew language studies were neglected. Though there were isolated attempts to break out of the circle, in most communities those attempts were opposed.

During the 19th century, processes began to develop among the Jews of Eastern Europe that led to the erosion of traditional society and a growing rift between those upholding tradition and proponents of the Enlightenment (Haskalah) and modernization. The changes in the modern era occurred over a fairly short period of time relative to the long period that traditional society had managed to retain its character. In addition, the sense of stability and continuity of the keepers of tradition and their ability to maintain time-honored ways of life were undermined. Modernization and the growth of national consciousness accelerated the Enlightenment and the secularization of European society in general and Jewish society in particular.

The rift between the keepers of the faith and proponents of the Enlightenment was also caused by the way the Enlightenment movement tried to penetrate Jewish society. In Western Europe the spread of the Enlightenment among the Jews went hand in hand with their emancipation and the subsequent improvement in their social and economic status. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the Jews did not gain emancipation and the introduction of the Enlightenment had a compulsory cast to it, like other government decrees directed against the Jews.

These pressures were felt mainly under Czar Nicholas I (1825-1855). The Czar instituted significant measures to force the Enlightenment on the Jews of Russia and thus break down the walls of the ghetto and end their separateness as a minority in Russian society.

The first measure was the establishment of the state-appointed rabbinate: two rabbinical seminaries were set up in Vilna and Zhitomir (1847) and the rabbis who were ordained there became government officials, responsible to the state, rather than being chosen by the Jewish community.

The second measure was the spreading of a state-endorsed Enlightenment. Since Jewish proponents of the Enlightenment in Eastern Europe were without influence, the activists among them did not hesitate to ask the Russian government to impose the Enlightenment on the Jews. The government, in cooperation with such Jewish supporters as Isaac Baer Levinsohn, tried to establish new schools to replace the old “heders” in Jewish communities.

This attempt, etched in Jewish memory as the “*skoles* (school) decree”, was fated to fail in the face of the strong opposition of the leading rabbis (Menahem Mendel of Lubavich, Isaac of Volozhin). As a result, the rift between advocates of the Enlightenment and the defenders of the faith widened, and the more the spirit of the Enlightenment spread, the more extreme and less willing to compromise became its opponents. The fact that advocates of the Enlightenment were willing to seek help from a foreign government in order to spread it strengthened the resolve to fight it to the bitter end.

In the period of Czar Alexander II (1855-1881), characterized as a period of “reform”, the loosening of the reins brought about a great stream of Jews to the

gymnasia and universities. The Enlightenment became the leading force determining the economic situation of the individual. Among Jewish advocates of the Enlightenment it was Russian culture that overrode the values of Jewish culture and the transition from the traditional world to modern life was accelerated.

In most areas of Poland-Podolia, Volhynia and Galicia, Hasidism ruled, serving as a buffer against the Enlightenment and secularization. However, it was into Lithuania of all places that the Enlightenment penetrated most easily, the stronghold of the *Mitnagdim* (opponents of Hasidism) and a great center of Torah study. Overtly, the concentration of students in isolated milieus like the yeshivas would have been expected to protect them from outside influence, especially given the strict regimens there. Nonetheless, the new spirit made inroads here too and many students fell under its sway and left the yeshivas. This state of affairs is described with great delicacy by Hayyim Nahman Bialik in his poem “Alone”, written at the age of 15 after studying at the Volozhin yeshiva:

All were borne by the wind, drawn by the light  
A new song gladdened the morning of their lives  
And I, a tender fledgling, was forgotten in people's hearts  
Under the wings of the Divine Presence.  
Alone I remained and the Divine Presence too ...

The response of the rabbis was to turn the yeshivas into a social and educational ideal. The world of the yeshiva became the place where heart and soul were given to Torah study, totally divorced from “worldly wisdom” – though this strict approach had already prevailed in the period of the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797).<sup>25</sup> Most attempts to introduce general studies into the yeshivas failed, since the rabbis considered them a threat to the very existence of the Torah world. Among the opponents of change in this and later periods there developed a stubborn spirit of separateness along with zealous adherence to law and cus-

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25 As mentioned above, the Vilna Gaon was not against “worldly wisdom”, as long as it was used to further the understanding of the Torah. He himself wrote mathematical and geographic works and showed a lively interest in medicine, though far from being under the sway of the Enlightenment.

tom. This spirit is epitomized in the words of Moses Sofer (Hatam Sofer, 1762-1840): “Why look for new things not imagined by our forefathers? ... What is new is biblically forbidden”.

In the 19th century, when Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch developed his system of “Torah and Worldliness”, pious rabbis rejected it outright, especially the Lithuanian rabbis. One of their leaders, Hayyim Soloveichik (“the Brisker”, 1853-1919), banned the study of the local language and reading nonreligious newspapers and books.

A symbol of this opposition can be found in the legendary story of R. Naphtali Zvi Judah Berlin (“the Netziv”, 1816-1893), who headed the Volozhin yeshiva for 30 years, R. Berlin closed the yeshiva because he refused to meet the demand of the Russian minister of education in 1881 to include general studies alongside religious studies in the curriculum. This is held up in the Haredi world as a symbol of victory in the struggle against outside influences.<sup>26</sup>

Ideological and social insulation from the influence of the Enlightenment was greatly helped along by the Musar movement, founded by R. Israel Salanter (1810-1883). The movement took a conservative and aggressive stance, with emphasis on the emotional, experiential and moral sides of Torah study. The movement entrenched itself mainly in the yeshivas, trying to root out the slightest traces of openness and nationalistic tendencies from among its students. The movement's center in Kovno (Kaunas) became a radical Haredi stronghold ranging itself against the Enlightenment and Jewish nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the opposition among the Haredim, attempts were made to combine religious and secular studies. As described in the previous chapter under “The Cultural Model”, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and his successor, R. Azriel Hildesheimer, took the most important steps in this respect. In 1934, R. Yehiel

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26 Lamm, Nahum (1977). *Torah and Science*. Jerusalem, Elliner Library and Ministry of Education and Culture, Religious Education Department, p. 37.

27 Luz, Ehud (1985). *Parallels Meet*. Tel Aviv. Afikim, Am Oved, pp. 23-54. See also Atkes, Immanuel (1978). “The State-Endorsed Enlightenment and the Changes in the Status of the Enlightenment in Russia”. *Zion* 43, p. 313; Atkes (1982). *R. Israel Salanter and the Beginning of the Musar Movement*. Jerusalem: Magnes

Weinberg, head of the rabbinical seminary founded by R. Hildesheimer, tried to transfer the institute from Berlin to Palestine. This was prevented because of the opposition of extremist Haredim in Jerusalem and the ruling of R. Hayyim Ozer Gordzenski of Vilna (1863-1940). R. Grodzenski was prepared to accept a “modern” seminary in Europe but maintained that having one in the Land of Israel was out of the question. The ambivalence here is clear: “Torah and Worldliness” is acceptable with reservations after the fact but it is unthinkable to allow it to enter the Holy Land.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, R. Isaac Jacob Reines, one of the founders of Mizrachi, opened a yeshiva of this type in Lida, Russia. His aim was to train rabbis and educators who could teach Talmud, Hebrew, and general studies and were aiming to enter the world of commerce. Later he also tried raise the educational level of “heads of households”. As expected, the yeshiva was fiercely attacked by opponents of change. After World War I and the death of R. Reines, the yeshiva ceased to exist, but the new direction it envisaged makes it an historical milestone.

A similar effort was made in Latvia, worth mentioning because its initiator was the founder of one of the three schools of the Musar movement – R. Simha Zissel Ziv Broida, known as “the Grand Old Man of Kelme” (1823-1897). The curriculum of his Kelme seminary included three hours of general studies, justifying his approach in the following words: “Things of the earth are the gateway to the things of heaven”, meaning that general education helps man understand the works of God and therefore the sanctification of God means showing that even in the period of the Enlightenment a Jew can be modern in his ways, his dress, and his general education and at the same time be a rabbinical scholar with elevated moral and religious characteristics.<sup>28</sup> His school operated for about 20 years, its graduates including well-known figures in the Haredi world, like R. Nathan Zvi Finkel (“the Grand Old Man of Slobodka”, who founded another school of the Musar movement), R. Mordecai Epstein, R. Naphtali Trop, etc.<sup>29</sup>

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28 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 32.

29 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 32.

This approach, as mentioned, was rejected by the Lithuanian yeshivas. Nonetheless, it is significant that the innovation was introduced by the founders of the Musar movement, which dominated the yeshiva world at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover the fact that the “Grand Old Man of Slobodka” was a disciple of the movement undoubtedly gives a certain legitimacy to this approach, since when all is said and done it comes from the Haredi world.

After the occupation of Lithuania by the German army in World War I, the Germans passed a compulsory education law that designated special schools for the Jews where the language of instruction would be German. After the war, Hebrew and/or Yiddish were taught in these schools and three systems developed: a secular system where the language of instruction was Hebrew, a secular system where the language of instruction was Yiddish, and the religious Yavne system. In 1928 the Yavne network opened a Universal High School for Torah and Science and later, in Lithuania, another 40 schools, representing over a third of the Jewish schools in Lithuania.

Likewise, a teachers seminary was opened in Kovno where secular studies were offered alongside religious studies under the direction of R. Joseph Leib Malakh, head of the Telz yeshiva.<sup>30</sup>

## **Islamic Countries**

The Jews of Islamic countries were exposed to modernization at a later stage than the Jews of Europe, and in a different social and historic context. The attitudes of Torah scholars in the Eastern communities to the Enlightenment and modernization were also different.

The Jews of the East were influenced not only by regional processes of modernization but also through the involvement of the Jews of Western Europe. The latter mobilized from around the middle of the 19th century to protect the rights

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30 The Lithuanian government agreed to exempt yeshiva students from the draft if they engaged in general as well as religious studies, and the Rabbi agreed.

of their “underprivileged” brethren in Islamic countries and to improve their circumstances. One of the major projects of European Jewry was the establishment of modern schools by the French Alliance Israélite Universelle school system. The aim of the Alliance schools was to provide students with education and culture on the French model. Dozens of such school were founded from the middle of the 19th century in North Africa (mainly Morocco, from 1862), Egypt, the Land of Israel, and other countries around the Mediterranean basin.

Other factors that increased the exposure of Eastern Jews to Western culture were the improvement in their legal status and the fact that they were concentrated in centrally located cities and developed coastal towns.

Prior to the 19th century, well-to-do parents directed their sons to Torah studies, but with the spread of the new spirit the inclination to provide them with a Western education grew. However, not only the elite were exposed to these influences but also many belonging to the middle class and even the lower rungs of society. The total number of Torah students among Eastern Jews declined in the 18th and 19th centuries despite the overall growth of the Jewish population. The variety and complexity of crafts in the modern period and the need for an education led the more able to devote most of their time to general studies, with only a little left over for Torah studies. Torah study ceased to be the only option for everyone and became the concern of the few, sometimes only of the aged, whose numbers also declined with time.<sup>31</sup>

The phenomenon that characterized the communities of Eastern Europe was not seen in Islamic countries, namely concentration of thousands of Torah students in yeshivas outside their communities, with the aim of isolating them from outside influences and turning them into a scholarly elite whose entire lives would be devoted to Torah study. Also unlike the case with European Jewry, no basic ideological opposition developed to combining religious and secular studies. The fear of breaking down barriers after getting a general education and assimilating in the majority population did not exist. For this reason Eastern Jews did not require complicated halakhic justifications or compromise solu-

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31 R. Mashash, Joseph (1968, 1975). *Letters*. Jerusalem, p. 93.



tions like “Torah and Worldliness”. The Jews of the East tended to adopt practical solutions, based on compromises that seemed natural to them and had no need to give these solutions an ideological hue.

For example, when an Alliance Hebrew teachers’ seminary was opened in Casablanca in 1946, modern Hebrew literature was taught. The writings of Moses Mendelssohn and the poetry of Bialik, history, and the study of tradition were all part of the curriculum. Local rabbis supported the activities of the seminary. Even R. Shaul Ibn Danan, president of the High Rabbinical Court in Morocco, praised the seminary and its graduates, who began to teach in Alliance schools.<sup>32</sup> Such an act would have been seen as apostasy by Haredi rabbis in Eastern Europe.

Another example is the seminary for rabbis and religious judges founded in 1952 by the Moroccan Rabbinical Council (the body that included all local rabbis in the 1950s). The curriculum of the seminary was formulated by the rabbis of the High Rabbinical Court and included secular studies alongside religious studies.<sup>33</sup>

## **The “Old Yishuv” in the Land of Israel**

The “Old Yishuv” (Settlement) in the Land of Israel also saw a struggle develop over the system of education that would be suitable for the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Orthodox circles put great store in this struggle, seeing it as central to the shaping of the way of life of the Jews of the country. Religious zealotry spread to all areas of life while the Torah sages gave the zealots their blessing and the traditional leadership of the Old Yishuv saw this zealotry as a legitimate phenomenon aimed at fighting modern education to the death. The most active figure in Jerusalem was R. Moshe Yehoshua

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32 Laskir, Mikhael (1983). “Jewish Education in Morocco”, *Sounds of the West*. Jerusalem: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Institute, p. 182.

33 Moroccan Rabbinical Council. *Jewish Law in Moroccan Communities: Book of Regulations*. Mevaseret Jerusalem: Institute for the Moroccan Jewish Heritage, pp. 289-292.

Leib Diskin. After his death his son, Y. Y. Diskin, took the lead in the struggle together with Y. H. Sonenfeld, who was active in the most difficult period of the Old Yishuv – the first half of the Mandate period.

Already in the Ottoman period a ban had been placed on “deviant” or “forbidden” schools. The Jewish-Austrian poet Ludwig August Frankel had arrived in the country with the aim of founding a school where general studies would be part of the curriculum. Though the Sephardi Chief Rabbi, Hayyim Nissim Abulafia, had given his consent, the Ashkenazi Haredim placed a ban on the school (1856). The ban on general studies was renewed by R. Diskin (1878), who even extended it to include all areas of Eretz Israel and all immigrants to the country until the coming of the Messiah. There was no way to cancel the ban or mitigate its force. It must be said though that the ban was instituted against the better judgment of entire sections of the Orthodox world, such as the German branch, which gave financial support to Ashkenazi educational institutes.

The Haredi community was indeed given to internecine strife, but their principal struggle was to shape the new society being formed in the country with the waves of immigrants that arrived. One of the high points in this cultural war surrounded the Benei Moshe school in Jaffe (1893-1896). The school was set up with the aim of translating the Spiritual Zionism of Ahad Ha-Am into practical terms. Among other things, it intended to shift the emphasis from religion to nationalism and to combine religious and secular studies. These aims provoked the ire of Haredim, who were also opposed the teachers hired to teach there. Not only were these teachers non observant, they also wished to give education a secular-national hue and treat religion only as a school subject, using the study of Scriptures only as an aid in studying Hebrew and History.<sup>34</sup>

In 1867 the Alliance was part of the first attempt to establish a “general” school in Jerusalem. This initiative to modernize education was doomed to failure. The same thing happened in Tiberias and Jaffe. The failure was a result of the opposition of the Ashkenazi rabbis and the fact that the modernizers failed to get sufficient support from the Sephardi rabbis.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, in 1882, Nissim

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34 Luz, Ehud (1985). *Parallels Meet*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, pp. 116-146.

35 *Paix et Droit – Organe de L'alliance Israélite Universelle*. Averil: Jerusalem (1921)

Bachar, founder of the Alliance in Jerusalem, succeeded in getting the support of the Sephardis for the initiative of the *maskilim* (Haskalah advocates). He founded an Alliance school in the face of Ashkenazi opposition and despite their ban on the school. Subsequently the Alliance joined forces with Benei Moshe to set up a school in Jaffe. Members of the Old Yishuv saw the Jaffe school as a threat to the existence of Orthodox Judaism and everyone associated with it as an enemy.

In the beginning of the 20th century there were already nine Alliance schools operating in the country – in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias, Haifa, and Jaffe, as well as the Mikveh Israel agricultural school. The schools maintained a traditional atmosphere and the education was religious. The curriculum included religious subjects, Hebrew, and general studies.<sup>36</sup>

The vast majority of students and teachers in the Alliance schools were Sephardis. Religious zealotry in the Old Yishuv was confined to Ashkenazi circles, finding no expression among the Sephardis. Sephardi youth in Jerusalem received their education in Sephardi talmud torah schools, in the Tiferet Yerushalayim yeshiva, in the Doresh Zion seminary, and in Alliance schools for boys and girls.<sup>37</sup> The Sephardis were not afraid that the study of languages and the sciences would lead their children astray.<sup>38</sup>

The representatives of the Alliance were not content with the creation of educational institutions. As in North Africa the Alliance bore the seeds of cultural change to Eretz Israel on the European model. In Jerusalem there evolved a social stratum whose basic outlooks with regard to religion, tradition, and society were significantly different from those prevailing in the Old Yishuv. This stratum of *maskilim* included the teachers and administrators of the Alli-

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36 Rinot, Moshe (1990). "Education in Eretz Israel: 1882-1918", In: Lisak, Moshe and Gavriel Bach (eds.), *History of the Jewish Settlement in Eretz Israel since the First Aliyah*. Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, vol. 1, pp. 621-716.

37 The Tiferet Yerushalayim yeshiva was closed a few months after the British captured Jerusalem in World War I.

38 Efrati, Natan (2000). *The Sephardi Community in Jerusalem, 1840-1917*. Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, p. 24.

ance schools and other schools like Ezra (the Lemmel school) and the Evelina de Rothschild school. To these were added physicians, consular officials, bank clerks, etc. These *maskilim* mostly represented Jewish philanthropic societies wielding prestige and power in the Jewish world and were not dependent economically on the Old Yishuv. The Alliance school was the link between the various groups of *maskilim*. From the 1880s the spirit of nationalism predominated there.

The opposition of the Ashkenazi Haredim to changes in education, which began, as mentioned, in the Ottoman period, became all the more spirited in the period of the British Mandate because the position of traditional education was seriously undermined. The number of students in nationalist/Zionist schools increased rapidly while the number in the traditional schools of the Old Yishuv declined. Even the sons of many of the rabbis and political leaders of the Old Yishuv went to the “forbidden” schools. This reality, and the need to distance their youth from secular influences, strengthened the trend toward segregation among the Haredim.<sup>39</sup>

Achieving this segregation was a difficult task, because it went against other values in Judaism, such as the common religion and destiny and mutual responsibility. In addition, the economic and political dependence of the Haredi community on the institutions of the Yishuv was unavoidable. The trend toward segregation encouraged the development of extremist positions in everything that concerned relations between the Haredim and the non-religious population, Zionism, and the Haskalah. In Jerusalem, particularly among the Neturei Karta and Hungarian Haredim, an extremist approach evolved that rejected any contact with different cultures and secular occupations. They were also opposed to the European style of clothing of the Lithuanian yeshiva students and their relative openness to secular studies. Needless to say, they completely rejected the “Torah and Worldliness” approach of German Orthodoxy. Thus they kept Rabbi Hildesheimer from opening an orphanage in Jerusalem that was aimed at giving children a modicum of general education and vocational training.. One of

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39 Friedman, Menachem (1978). *Society and Religion: Non-Zionist Orthodoxy in Eretz Israel, 1918-1936*. Jerusalem: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Institute, p. 19.

the aims of Rabbi Hildesheimer in setting up the orphanage was to keep the children from falling prey to the Christian missionaries operating in the city, but ironically he was accused by the religious zealots of corrupting the children and handing them over to the “foreign harlot” (namely, Christianity).<sup>40</sup>

Displays of zealotry and extremism were also seen in the Israeli branch of Agudat Israel, which were that much more striking in view of the relatively moderate positions of the Agudat Israel world organization. The world organization was pluralistic and showed a willingness also to accommodate modern shadings. The movement sought compromise, such as in the ruling of R. Joseph Rozin (“the Rogachover”, 1858-1936) that although it was forbidden to mix sacred and profane studies, the latter were permissible if studied separately. However, the world organization too was dead set against the “Torah and Worldliness” approach. Opponents were afraid that schools like Frankfurt's science-oriented secondary school or Hildesheimer's Berlin Rabbinical Seminary would be set up in Poland and Lithuania. The very existence of a more moderate approach in the world organization was enough to cloud the surface.

In 1921 one of the heads of Agudat Israel in Jerusalem warned the leadership of the world organization about opening schools in Jerusalem whose curriculum would differ from what was accepted in the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv. The Agudah people in Jerusalem were also opposed to the appointment of administrators and educators who were not of their extremist persuasion. A number of episodes that provoked spirited public debate in those times are etched in historical memory, such as the appointment of Dr. M. Auerbach as principal of the Benei Zion talmud torah in Jerusalem in 1926 and the affair of Miss K. Nahman, who arrived from Germany in 1928 to raise the level of education in the Jerusalem girls' school. In the latter case, extremists stopped her appointment to a teaching position even after she was transferred to the peripheral areas of Safed and Tiberias. Other examples are the opposition to opening a school in Tel Aviv by Gur Hasidim (who arrived in the Fourth Aliyah) because of its curriculum and

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40 Lamm, *ibid.*, p. 39.

the appearance (clean-shaven) of the directors, and opposition to teaching English in the Gur Hasidim talmud torah.<sup>41</sup>

The struggle over education in the years 1924-1929 between the Agudat Israel world organization and the movement's branch in Jerusalem was accompanied by the exercise of economic pressure, such as the threat to cut off financial support by the world organization. The clouded atmosphere also called into question the unity of the organization. From the standpoint of Jerusalem, the establishment of schools that would not be under the supervision of the local leadership and diverge from the established educational model would be a cause for a split. In its view such an act would destroy the legitimacy of the movement.<sup>42</sup>

In 1934 the German Haredim opened the Horev school in Jerusalem for their children. Its curriculum included not only Torah studies but also general subjects. Classes in the lower grades were mixed, and in the higher grades, though boys and girls studied separately, the classrooms were in the same building and they shared a playing field. The reaction was soon to come: broadsides fulminating against the sins of the German innovators, curses and bans coursed through Jerusalem homes.

After World War I the development of the renewed Hebrew education continued in the institutes of Ezra (founder of Hovevei Zion in Berlin) and in teachers' seminaries. Outside the walls of Old Jerusalem new educational institutes were founded. These attracted many Sephardi youngsters who had grown up in the alleys of the Old City and the old neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Sephardi and Eastern teachers were trained in these institutes and many began to teach in the new educational system that was gaining a foothold. The first graduates of the

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41 Only after a struggle did the Haredim agree to the compromise devised by Rabbi Sonenfeld for the Tel Aviv talmud torah: he agreed to teaching English outside the walls of the school so as not to violate the sacred principle of not having religious and secular studies under one roof. However, notwithstanding the compromise reached in Tel Aviv, the rabbis pronounced a ban on the study of English everywhere in the country to prevent the precedent from being adopted.

42 Friedman, *ibid.*, p. 264.

Sephardi seminaries quietly began to introduce the new educational methods into the traditional schools of the Sephardi community and thus a new direction was given to Sephardi schoolchildren. The Sephardi rabbis found it difficult to contend with such young teachers as Yehudah Burla, David Agababa (Avishar), and others. These young teachers were called by the talmud torah pupils “*los maestros francos*” – the European teachers.<sup>43</sup>

These teachers created a “revolution”, but did not abandon tradition entirely, for they were themselves religious. The Sephardis were educated in the spirit of the general sciences and modern Hebrew while preserving religion and tradition in a liberal and not overzealous spirit. The synthesis of sacred and profane studies also received the blessing of R. Benzion Meir Hai Ouziel, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and future Sephardi Chief Rabbi (Rishon le-Zion).

The World Zionist Organization also acted to develop Hebrew education, with the aim of using it as a springboard for integrating the Sephardis into the new Jewish Yishuv striking roots in the Land of Israel. Many vocational schools were also established to train youngsters from poor families. The Sephardis placed a special value on vocational training, declaring so openly. In their eyes learning a trade would enable them not only to become part of the practical and economic life of the Yishuv but also advance their social and cultural integration.<sup>44</sup>

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43 Yehoshua, Ya'akov (1982). “The Transition from Talmud Torah Schools to Hebrew Schools”, *Ba-Ma'arekhet – Journal of the Sephardi and Eastern Community*, p. 48.

44 Alboher, Shlomo (2002). *Identification, Acclimatization and Reservations – the Sephardi Jews in Eretz Israel and the Zionist Movement under British Rule, 1918-1948*. Jerusalem: Zionist Library, pp. 139-154.

## 4 THE SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL

### **The Return to the Yeshivas**

The return to the yeshivas was a process that gained momentum from the beginning of Israel's statehood. Menachem Friedman analyzes the process from the standpoint of its ideological elements and economic rationale and defines it as the transformation of Haredi society into a “society of scholars”.<sup>45</sup> In Eastern Europe the flight from the yeshivas was a product of the rejection of the religious way of life and the wretchedness of the Jewish shtetl. In the State of Israel the return to the yeshivas represented youthful rebellion against the parental generation, which wished to become part of the new state and Western society. This rebellion was a significant social phenomenon as it involved radical changes in styles of life: the youngsters shook off the burden of earning a livelihood with the aim of devoting themselves heart and soul to Torah study.

The tension between the sacred and the profane and the urge toward total immersion in Torah study had always existed, but in the past the tension had produced a compromise based on a division of labor between scholars and breadwinners. The livelihoods of Torah students were tied to a group of “heads of households” who supported them economically. But in the State of Israel, Haredi leaders rejected this solution for a number of reasons:

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45 Friedman, *ibid.*, 55-56.



- 1) First, the Holocaust radicalized positions in the Haredi community. Over and above the ideological and social reasons for allowing only sacred studies, there is a psychological factor: the trauma of the destruction of the yeshivas of Europe in the Holocaust.<sup>46</sup> The desire to rebuild the Torah world bore fruit in the creation of the yeshiva world in the State of Israel, and the adherence to religious studies alone also shaped the character of the society of scholars in Israel.<sup>47</sup> The generation living in Israel today is considered the generation “after the Flood”, and therefore the responsibility for rebuilding the Torah world belongs to every individual in the community. All males in the Haredi community have a historic role – to save in this way the Jewish people. In the eyes of Haredi leaders, salvation will come through the mobilization of all the males in the community for Torah study alone, for from among them will emerge great Torah sages who will save the entire nation. The responsibility is everyone’s, since the great Torah sages of the generation can only emerge after a process of selection.

This approach is based on the saying: “A thousand go in – one comes out”, meaning that in accordance with the pyramidal structure of Haredi society, “a thousand” (meaning everyone) enter the *bet midrash* and among them 900 are suited to study the Bible, 100 the Mishnah, ten the Talmud, and just one becomes a great sage and halakhic authority. In order for this one special individual to emerge all males dedicate their lives to a prolonged process of study and “meditative separation”. This separation involves fierce opposition to the secular world, which is seen as a threat to the sacred.<sup>48</sup> This obligation – to save the Jewish people by dedication to Torah study – justified the new division of labor in the

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46 Mirsky Katz, Shmuel (1956). *The Creation and Destruction of European Institutes*. New York, Ogen.

47 Friedman, Menachem (1991). *Haredi Society*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.

48 Shtadler, Nurit (2001). Chapters on “Meditational Separation” In: *Sacred and Profane in the Attitude to Work: the Case of Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel*. Ph.D thesis. Jerusalem, Hebrew University, pp. 120-164.

family where the wife concerns herself with earning a living and the husband devotes himself exclusively to study. The new division of roles reflected a basic shift in values compared with the past.

- 2) Another reason for the “Torah alone” approach is the danger posed by the secular-Zionist State of Israel. The state is perceived as a hostile force seeking to root out the Torah from among its people. The return to the yeshivas was thus at the heart of the process of rehabilitation of Haredi Judaism, which sought to promote an alternative cultural ideal in the face of a secular Zionism that had adopted a decadent Western culture. Yeshivas with a unique tradition of learning, like Ponevezh, Mir, Kaminitz, Slobodka, Pressburg, and others were reopened in the State of Israel.

## **The Growing Dependence on Public Support**

The break of yeshiva students, who isolated themselves in the Torah world, with the surrounding society, modern life, and technological progress prevented a young Haredi from participating in society and the economy. Without a general education or a trade this was impossible. Under these circumstances, the economic dependence of the young Haredi on his parents was unavoidable.

When the parents were no longer able to support their sons (generally being themselves in strained circumstances), the yeshivas took over the task. In the 1950s they were able to raise large amounts of money among Jews around the world and particularly among Jews in the United States. Many European and American Jews developed feelings of nostalgia for the religious world, perceived by them as rapidly vanishing. The yeshivas were seen as kinds of museums preserving the Jewish heritage. American tax laws facilitating contributions to religious institutions also helped fund-raising for the yeshivas. But over the years this source began to run dry as with all the fund-raising operations in the Diaspora.

These difficulties forced the yeshivas to seek new sources of income – and such a source was indeed found among Israeli taxpayers: the large the society of

scholars grew, the greater was its dependence on the public coffers. Beginning in the 1970s, Agudat Israel became part of the ruling establishment, and in 1977, with the political upset that brought the right wing to power, Agudat Israel joined Menachem Begin's coalition government. Agudat Israel could no longer isolate itself from Israeli society and the political arena, because the existence and welfare of the society of scholars made it imperative to join forces with the ruling powers. Agudat Israel made the gesture of not becoming a full member of the government but only a member of the coalition, while occupying key positions in the government, like chairmanship of the finance and the labor and welfare committees of the Knesset. These positions gave it power and influence in the disbursement of funds and social legislation, and its MKs operated in these areas with the aim of satisfying the needs of the society of scholars.

Maintenance of a society of scholars is different from ordinary economic support. It involves a well-defined welfare system that developed over the years and accompanies the young Haredi in every facet of his life: marriage, housing, avoidance of army service, and support of the family he raises. Over the years this welfare system won recognition from the state, through national insurance laws and other arrangements, even when not explicitly stated in the language of laws and regulations.

## **State Support of Kolel Students**

The kolel is the framework that enables the young married Haredi to continue studying and avoid working. This is a framework where the young married man continues to study after he completes his studies in a big yeshiva. The students study all day but eat and sleep in their own homes. The kolel student receives a stipend from the kolel for his subsistence along with a minimum wage allowance (if he has no additional income) and a child allowance according to the number of children he has. The total income of the young married student and father of a number of children gives him a reasonable though modest standard of living in Israeli terms.

The State of Israel also helps the society of scholars in other ways, by allowing students to defer their army service, on the condition that they remain “profes-

sional religious scholars”. This condition has far-reaching consequences for Haredi society: most become yeshiva students even if they are not suited. Most continue their studies until they reach the age of 41, when they get a general exemption from army service. Even the Tal Law passed in 2002, which permits the student a “year of decision” at 22,<sup>49</sup> leaves the decision in the hands of the student. It is reasonable to assume that most yeshiva students will decide to return to the yeshiva, because of their faith, because they cannot fit in the modern job market or do the work generally performed by foreign workers.

As mentioned, with the evolution of the society of scholars there also occurred a change with regard to women going out to work: the wives of the yeshiva students became responsible for supporting the family while their husbands devoted themselves to Torah study. The typical occupations of the women are generally teaching, bookkeeping, and clerical work, mostly within the community. Despite having children to look after, most of them go out to work willingly out of deep inner conviction born of their basic outlook and education.<sup>50</sup>

In the wake of these structural changes in the society of scholars, a personal economic interest also crystallized among yeshiva students. Schematically, it may be represented as follows: to marry as young as possible, to have two children (which gets the father an army exemption), to study in a kolel and raise a big family, and after a few years to get a job in the Haredi educational or religious-services system.<sup>51,52</sup> The society of scholars has created a whole economic sector in the Haredi community connected to study and education, from

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49 At this age the yeshiva student is permitted to work or study outside the yeshiva without being liable for the draft. At the end of the year of decision he can choose from among three possibilities: to remain in the yeshiva, to go to work and serve in the army, or to opt for a year and a half of national service.

50 Friedman, Menachem (1988). *The Haredi Woman*. Study Pages No. 4. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.

51 Friedman, Menachem (1991). *Haredi Society*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.

52 It should not be concluded from this that these are the only considerations leading the yeshiva student to marry and have a lot of children. The rationale represented here is exclusively economic.

which thousands of families earn a living, from yeshiva heads, supervisors, and teachers down to the students themselves and other Haredim employed in additional services related to education. Despite the traditional bans against using the Torah to earn a living, many do so, mainly with the aid of government funds. The world view evolved by the community has provided the rationale for this.

A yeshiva student or a young married kollel student and father of children is entirely dependent economically on the community system in which he lives, and this system, as stated, is dependent on the state budget. Moreover, the student's parents are also dependent on government support. A young couple requires to be "set up", that is, with an apartment, furniture, and appliances. An acknowledged prodigy requires a "full set-up" and an ordinary student a "half set-up". The "set-up" is generally the responsibility of the bride's parents. Assuming that in most families there are both boys and girls, the burden of the "set-up" basically falls on everyone. In any case, a big financial burden is involved which not everyone can bear. Some of the parents are themselves former yeshiva students whose financial situation does not permit the outlay of such large sums of money, and if there are many children in the family, many "set-ups" will be required during a lifetime. As a consequence the dependence of parents on the community has also increased. However, the society of scholars has grown and expanded and requires resources that the community alone cannot provide. Therefore the community seeks to gain political power to get access to government funds.

## **The Addition of Eastern Jews to the Society of Scholars**

The entry of young Eastern men into the Lithuanian yeshiva world brought about far-reaching changes. They wholeheartedly adopted the way of life characteristic of the yeshivas, the manner of dress and deportment of the Ashkenazim, and the style of raising a family prevalent among the society of scholars. The young Easterners also adapted to the socio-economic structure of the soci-

ety of scholars and today their numbers in the yeshivas are greater than those of the young Ashkenazis.<sup>53</sup>

From a historical perspective, these changes should be seen in the context of the absorption of the big waves of immigration from Islamic lands in the early years of statehood.<sup>54</sup> Political and social hegemony in this period was in the hands of Jews from Eastern and Central Europe – the “Ashkenazis”. The politicization of the economic, welfare, and educational systems did not spare the immigrants camps. They became an arena for the struggle between the various political movements looking to win the immigrants over. The parties demanded political support in exchange for promised assistance in getting work, housing, or health care.

The penetration of secular Israeli culture into immigrant centers was perceived by the Haredim as a threat to the Jewishness of the immigrants. At the time they even accused Mapai of undermining their faith and not observing the Sabbath and dietary laws in labor movement schools and institutions. In the 1950s many yeshiva students were mobilized for the struggle to win the souls of the immigrants, mainly the so-called “band of activists” of the Torah camp. Students from the Hebron, Mir, and Ponevezh yeshivas set themselves a goal: to rescue the immigrant children from the secular Zionist left as well as from degeneration and crime. The yeshiva students frequented the camps and worked to get children out of secular educational frameworks and into yeshivas. For them this was a matter of life and death. Later, the young Haredim began giving Torah lessons in immigrant moshavim. The immigrants who were persuaded to join the Haredi ranks had to accede to the isolation of the Torah world and an end to general studies.

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53 List of Institutes by Symbol of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, dating from 27 August 1999. The estimate of the greater number of Eastern students in the society of scholars was communicated to me by Mr. Ephraim Vinogod, director of the Yeshiva Department at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, on 27 September 2000.

54 Lupu, Jacob (2003). “Shas – the Historical Depth”, In: *Shas – Cultural and Intellectual Aspects*, A. Ravitzky (ed.). Tel Aviv: Rabin Center for Israel Studies.

Going to the camps and fighting for the soul of every child served to create a heroic Haredi ethos that came to be emblazoned in the collective Haredi memory under such banners as “rescue”, “self-sacrifice”, and uncompromising battle against “the Zionist enemy”. The struggle was undertaken in an atmosphere of crisis and religious heat and won the admiration not only of the Haredi public but also of the rabbis. Thus, for example, it received the blessing of the Hazon Ish, Avraham R. Yeshayahu Karelitz, the most respected rabbinical figure in the Haredi community at the time.<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Eastern Haredim too bought the idea of having been saved from atheism and apostasy, and were grateful to their saviors. The language they used to describe their “rescue” bound together an entire range of “enemies”: the Haskalah, the Alliance, French culture, modernity, Zionism, secular life, the left, and the State of Israel. The idea of the “rescue” of the Easterners makes no distinction between what happened to them “over there” – in the grips of the Alliance and their efforts to spread French culture – and what was happening to them here, in the grip of Zionism and the state.<sup>56</sup>

Over the years Torah institutes were established in the provinces. Yeshivas were set up in the Negev, Beersheba, Ofakim, Netivot, Be'er Ya'akov, Ashdod, Hadera, etc. Eastern graduates of the small yeshivas aspired to continue their studies in the great yeshivas like other scholarly youth, but with the exception of the Porat Yosef yeshiva there was no network of big Sephardi yeshivas, and even Porat Yosef was too small to meet the demand.<sup>57</sup> Neither did the Hasidic yeshivas offer a suitable solution as they represented a particularistic tradition that demanded complete abandonment of the Eastern identity. On the other

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55 Horowitz, Neri (2003). “Shas and Zionism – An Historical Analysis”, *New Directions*. World Zionist Organization. Jerusalem.

56 *Yated Ne'eman*. 14 May 1998. (Editorial.)

57 The Porat Yosef yeshiva expanded, and in the 1960s split into two institutes, with one continuing the Sephardi system of study and the other operating as a big Lithuanian yeshiva. In the latter the system of study, regimen, outward appearance, and religious devotion of the big Lithuanian yeshiva was adopted.

hand, the Lithuanian yeshivas represented Haredi ecumenism, and were relatively tolerant toward the Eastern identity.<sup>58</sup>

Yeshivas in the State of Israel thus began to open their gates to scholarly Easterners, while observing a quota system for them. This policy reflected concern for the prestige and position of the yeshiva – yeshiva heads were afraid that the enrollment of too many Eastern students would lower standards. The tone and direction was given by the Ponevezh yeshiva under its founder, R. Joseph Kahaneman, and his successor, Rabbi Eleazar Menahem Shach, the leader of the Lithuanians.

The achievements of the Eastern yeshiva students and their adaptation to the yeshiva style of life created a dynamic whereby Easterners flocked to the prestigious Lithuanian yeshivas. Aside from these youngsters, the yeshivas absorbed many graduates of the Lithuanian yeshivas of Europe who had immigrated to Israel via France. These young men arrived mainly after the Six-Day War and in the early 1970s. Another group included rabbis and students from the Tangiers yeshiva in Morocco. They arrived and joined Haredi society after the yeshiva was closed down following the Yom Kippur War.

At the same time as the need arose to create Eastern yeshivas the need was also felt for educational institutions for Eastern Haredi girls. Special institutes were set up, like the Beth Jacob seminary in Be'er Ya'akov, the Or Hayyim institute in Bene Beraq, the Haredi girls' seminary in Netivot, the Keren ha-Yeled institutes in Jerusalem.

Educational institutions, girls' seminaries, yeshivas, and kolels became community centers. In the first half of the 1970s an “Eastern society of scholars” began to flourish in the margins of Haredi society in Jerusalem and Bene Beraq. At the same time, the families of yeshiva students began moving to the development towns, partly because it was hard to find cheap housing in the center of the country. Similarly, Haredi women found it difficult to find work in the Haredi population centers of the big cities. The most prominent Eastern society of

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58 Friedman, Menachem (1991). *Haredi Society*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, p. 178.



scholars developed in the town of Netivot. Its characteristics are fairly similar to those of the Lithuanian society of scholars – both in external appearance and in a world view and way of life that rejects totally all secular studies. Many Eastern rabbis declared openly that they had adopted the Lithuanian system of study and the strict Haredi way of life. This “doctrine” is significant in the debate surrounding the shaping of an Eastern/Lithuanian identity in Eastern Haredi society.

The yeshiva world today numbers around 2,000 institutions.<sup>59</sup> The distribution according to the different types is as follows: one-third Lithuanian, slightly less than a third defined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as Sephardi, and the rest connected to Hasidic courts and religious Zionism.<sup>60</sup> In all Israel yeshivas (aside from three), whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi, there are no secular studies – the ruling doctrine is “Torah alone”.

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59 There are various lists with different numbers in the reports of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. State Comptroller's Report (1998). Ministry of Religious Affairs Report of 27 August 1999 and Ministry of Religious Affairs Report of 2 August 2000. The average comes to around 2,000 institutions.

60 Ministry of Religious Affairs list of Yeshivas from 27 August 1999.

## 5 THE POSITION OF THE HAREDI LEADERSHIP

As can be seen from the previous chapters the institution of secular studies alongside religious studies is a complicated matter lacking a clearcut halakhic ruling. During the course of history, opinion has been divided not only among the different schools of Judaism, but also within the Haredi camp itself. Therefore, in every generation the particular religious leader has had a decisive influence on the attitude of his community in this matter. In the 1950s, it was the Hazon Ish who determined the nature of the society of scholars and fortified the yeshiva world. In the last generation the figure of Rabbi Eleazar Menahem Shach (1894-2001), one of the great Torah sages of the 20th century, has stood out. Rabbi Shach vehemently opposed the introduction of secular studies into the yeshivas and he carried with him the Hasidic courts and the Sephardi yeshivas. However, toward the end of his days, he allowed a certain change of direction to occur after taking a sober look at the situation. The attitude of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef comes close to the “Torah and Worldliness” approach, but until the change of direction he had to “go along” with the Lithuanian leadership for many years. Subsequently he allowed wide-ranging efforts to combine secular and religious studies. This chapter describes the positions of both these leaders.

### **The Position of Rabbi Shach**

The development of the yeshiva world in the State of Israel and the shaping of the minds of scholarly Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews is connected with the activities of Rabbi Eleazar Menahem Shach, the leader of the Lithuanians in the

last generation. Rabbi Shach controlled a big group of yeshivas, the most prominent of which were the Ponevezh, Grodno, Hebron, Ateret Yisrael, Kol Torah, and Mir yeshivas along with hundreds of other small yeshivas. He also controlled many Sephardi yeshivas, like Or Barukh in Jerusalem, She'arit Yosef in Be'er Ya'akov, Or Torah in Bene Beraq, and many of the smaller, less well-known Sephardi yeshivas. Rabbi Shach was also the leader of the Eastern rabbis affiliated to the Marbitzei Torah organization and comprising the leading figures in the Sephardi yeshiva world. It may therefore be said that he was the leader of Haredi Judaism in the present generation. Rabbi Shach was recognized among Haredim as the greatest Torah sage of the generation and a personality cult developed around his figure. After his death, the *Yated Ne'eman* newspaper compared him with Moses, and for his students and followers his stature rivals that of the Gaon of Vilna.<sup>61</sup> There is no precedent for such exaltation in the rabbinical history of the 20th century, and the influence of Rabbi Shach transcended the bounds of Haredi Judaism and sometimes even cast its spell on the political leadership of the country.

The attitude of Rabbi Shach to secular studies was unequivocal: an absolute rejection of general studies in the small and big yeshivas and the kolels. This position has been decisive in the yeshiva world in the last generation.

For many years Rabbi Shach was also opposed to secular studies even when it was a matter of livelihood. He expressed this view orally but it is also reflected in his replies to letters from rabbis and students. In one of these letters he was asked for an opinion by students from abroad whose yeshiva head objected to their studying in universities. Their question was whether it was permissible for yeshiva students to devote a small part of their time to university courses. The students argued that their intentions were sacred, as an academic degree would make it easier for them to get a profession in the future and in this way continue to study Torah a few hours a day as they would have an assured income. Rabbi Shach rejected this approach out of hand. He emphasized that Torah study is all, and that anyone seeking worldly wisdom runs the risk of apostasy. Worldly wisdom he characterized as “poisoning everything” and a danger to the exis-

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61 *Yated Ne'eman*, Memorial Supplement, (9 September 2001), pp. 3-4.

tence of Judaism: “Therefore you should be grateful to the head of the yeshiva, who came to strengthen and fortify, and you must abide by his ruling...”<sup>62</sup>

Rabbi Shach made a similar reply to Sephardi yeshiva heads in the provinces when they queried him on the subject:

Concerning what I was asked about establishing rabbinical colleges in a few towns, including Ashdod, with a curriculum that will include general studies as well, it is my unequivocal opinion that no other studies should be introduced in the colleges, for experience shows that with the help of God those colleges that are run purely succeed, and no foreign element should be introduced in the colleges, particularly in Ashdod, and therefore I encourage and strengthen your hand to stand in the breach and prevent this from occurring.<sup>63</sup>

Rabbi Shach was very fearful of the harmful influence of the universities, and mainly of contact with non-Jewish students. This for him was a quick road to assimilation and loss of identity. This apprehension even led him to have reservations about making peace with the Arabs, for the reason that peace could increase assimilation:

And I will reveal to you what is in my heart, though all of us want peace with our neighbors in order to stop the shedding of blood in the absence of peace. But I am very, very much afraid of this peace, because today we can be certain that our young people will not go to Beirut and Cairo to study in the universities and that young people from Egypt and the Arab countries do not come to Jerusalem to study in the university, and this prevents assimilation, but when there is peace with our neighbors, young people in Israel will certainly go to Beirut and Cairo to study and they will come from there to study in the university in Jerusalem, and what will prevent assimilation, will it be nationalism?...<sup>64</sup>

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62 *From Ponevezh to Yad Eliyahu* – Rabbi E. M. Shach. Collection of sources edited by Aviad Cohen and published in honor of a day of study on the first anniversary of Rabbi Shach's death in Jerusalem on 21 October 2002. Middat – Information Center of Mosaica – Center for the Study of Religion, Society and State.

63 *Ibid.*, letter from Friday, 15 November 1974.

64 *Ibid.*, letter from Thursday, 9 July 1977

The same motif repeats itself in a letter written after one of the visits of the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, in Israel: “And fear came upon me, because right away students in Jerusalem called to students in Cairo to meet with them, and woe to such a meeting of minds, how much assimilation can be caused by it...”<sup>65</sup>

Despite his vehement ideological position against secular studies, there was apparently a hidden, pragmatic side to Rabbi Shach's leadership. Alongside his unequivocal public posture, which reflected his educational position on the question of what was permissible and forbidden, he displayed a certain understanding when it came to the problems of individuals. Among his intimates there is talk of “two rabbis” – the vehement Rabbi Shach, ever watchful, and Rabbi “Lazer” (a nickname for Eleazar), helpful, understanding, and permissive. This was the Rabbi's way of leading the public and asserting his authority.

The change of direction with regard to those unable to continue studying, starting in 1996, also came to pass only after the Rabbi gave his consent behind closed doors and after he consulted through his intimates with ten yeshiva heads as well as younger rabbis. Another example is the story of the establishment of the Ma'arava Haredi high school in Hashmonaim, where students were prepared for matriculation exams. Given the open opposition of Rabbi Shach to the establishment of the institute, and the vehement propaganda campaign launched in the Haredi press against Rabbi Tzeit, the founder of the yeshiva, the yeshiva's rabbi-teachers asked Rabbi Shach if they should resign. The answer was no, and the reason: if the yeshiva closes, its students will leave the community.

In his old age, with his health failing, the Rabbi gradually gave up the leadership of the Haredi public. The vacuum was filled by other leaders, like Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliashiv and Rabbi Aryeh Leib Steinman. These rabbis are less charismatic than Rabbi Shach in terms of their standing in the community, but their positions tend to be more pragmatic.

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65 Ibid., letter from Thursday, 1 December 1977.

## The Position of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef

The most prominent and best-known Sephardi sage of the last generation is Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. For most of his life he was engaged in study and teaching, in writing and spiritual matters. After Shas was founded he also took a hand in public and political affairs and is the leader of the Eastern Haredi community in every sense – spiritual, halakhic, and political. Hundreds of thousands of Shas voters are among his followers along with many Eastern Jews who vote for other parties but accept his halakhic and religious authority.

The religious and halakhic position of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef can be summed up in the call: “Restore the old glory”.<sup>66</sup> What is the attitude of the Rabbi to the mixing of sacred and profane studies? And what is the attitude of the other rabbis in Shas?

To answer these questions we must distinguish between the different circles and elements in Shas and among its sages. These are distinct groups whose positions were forged through the different kinds of experiences they encountered.

The first circle consists mainly of yeshiva students who completely internalized the way of life of the Lithuanian yeshivas. Joining these youngsters are students from abroad who underwent a process of bonding with the Lithuanian Torah world in Europe, the United States, and Morocco after the Holocaust as well as students who underwent such a process in the State of Israel after the big waves of immigration from Islamic countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Though these yeshiva students were inclined, as mentioned, to adopt the strict approach of the Lithuanians, many who are today rabbis studied nonreligious subjects as youngsters in Moroccan Torah institutes: French, mathematics, geography, music, and physical education. Their teachers for these subjects were from the Alliance schools who joined hands with the rabbis despite their different outlooks. Some of the students continued with their secular studies in various places together

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66 Lau, Benjamin (2002) “*Restore the Old Glory*” – *Studies in the Halakhic Philosophy of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef*. Ph.D thesis. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, Talmud Department. See also: Zohar, Zvi (2001). *Light the Eastern Skies*. Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad.

with their Torah studies: at the Hakhmei Tzarfat yeshivas in Aix-les-Bains in France and the Etz Hayyim yeshiva in Tangiers, secular studies were combined with religious studies. Some continued their studies in the Lithuanian yeshivas in Israel, where there were only Torah studies. Also at the Or Yosef yeshiva in France, Torat Emet and Gateshead in Britain, and Mir in the United States, Torah study alone was the rule. Those who were forged in the Lithuanian melting pot developed an ideological opposition to mixing sacred and profane studies.<sup>67</sup>

The second circle includes Easterners whose tie to Judaism is not through learning but emotional and immediate. Traditions from the parental home and memories of the old country play a major part in their bond to religion. These memories are linked to Torah studies in talmud torah schools but also to secular studies, mainly in the Alliance schools, which constituted the most extensive Jewish educational system in Islamic countries.

Two distinct attitudes can be discerned in Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, each influenced by a different “circle”:

- 1) One is the ideological stance identical to that of the Lithuanian school, which rejects general education and demands engagement with the sacred alone. The Rabbi gave expression to this position in his book *Words of Wisdom* (Part 5, Sect. 56) in answer to the following question: “A student who yearns for the Torah and wishes to transfer from a school to a sacred yeshiva where they study Torah all day long, and his parents insist that he transfer to a high school yeshiva – must he obey his parents because of the commandment to honor one's father and mother?” In his detailed answer the Rabbi ruled: “Therefore the son should not obey his parents in this matter, for the commandment to study Torah is greater than the commandment to honor one's father and

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<sup>67</sup> Lupu, Jacob (2002). *La Metamorphose Ultra Orthodoxe des Jeuns Juifs du Maroc*. Ph.D thesis. Paris 10: Sociology Dept. See also Lupu, Jacob (1999). “The Rescue of Moroccan Jewry for the Torah – Removal of Students from Morocco to the Lithuanian Yeshivas after the Holocaust, *Pa'amim* (80). Jerusalem: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Institute.

mother”. He goes on to explain why it is not permissible to mix sacred and profane studies: “When he gives up Torah study and mixes the sacred and profane he forgets the sacred ... and all the more so if he starts off by studying both together”.

When it comes to the society of scholars, the Rabbi takes the Lithuanian position permitting Torah study alone. As an authority he quotes Rabbi Moses Feinstein, who argued that there is little need to set up yeshiva high schools because most go to yeshivas where Torah alone is studied. In his view it is forbidden to start high school yeshivas even if there are a few students who wish to study there. In the view of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, in the aftermath of the Holocaust every scholarly person in this generation must devote himself to Torah study alone and aspire to excel in it.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, he indeed takes the unequivocal position of the Lithuanians.

- 2) At the same time, it should be remembered that in his youth Rabbi Yosef was also exposed to secular studies when he was at the Porat Yosef yeshiva at the age of 14. He learned arithmetic and Hebrew – subjects studied with the consent of the heads of the yeshiva at the time, Rabbis Attia and Hadas. As opposed to the uniform view of the Lithuanian community in Israel, the Rabbi makes a clear distinction between a scholarly person who devotes himself heart and soul to the Torah and “ordinary people”. Ordinary people, in his view, if not engaged in worldly pursuits will eventually turn away from the Torah as well ... “and Torah without a trade must fail in the end and become the cause of sin.”. Therefore the pursuit of worldliness must apply. The Rabbi recognizes the fact that many of the young are not scholarly, aspiring to a life of “Torah and Worldliness”, which will allow them to support themselves in dignity.

This pragmatic approach of the Rabbi's also has additional sources. In his book *Words of Praise*, he gives a reply that underscores the impor-

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68 Yosef, Ovadiah (1983). *Words of Wisdom*, Sect. 56, p. 251.



tance of general education as a preparation for life. This is directed especially to youngsters from impoverished homes, as getting an education can improve their economic circumstances. In his notes to R. Benzion Abba Shaul's book *Light of Zion*, R. Yosef repeats his dispensation to study arithmetic and writing in talmud torah schools.<sup>69</sup>

The answer composed by R. Yosef in reply to R. Yitzhak Moshe, Chief Rabbi and president of the Rabbinical Court of Buenos Aires, Argentina, shows a similar approach. Eighty of Rabbi Moshe's students at the Beit David yeshiva in Buenos Aires were sent to learn English at “alien schools” on the initiative of their parents. Rabbi Moshe was afraid of the meeting with “all kinds of foreign men and women” in these schools. According to him, he considered hiring an English teacher to teach inside the yeshiva, but this step was opposed because it was halakhically forbidden, opponents citing the book *Ben Ish Hai* ( a halakhic work by the sage R. Yosef Hayyim), which banned the teaching of foreign languages in the yeshiva. On the other hand, R. Moshe argued that if English were taught in the yeshiva it would not be at the expense of Torah studies. Moreover, the introduction of English courses in the yeshiva would encourage other parents to send their children there, “seeing that studying Torah goes very well with worldly pursuits”. Among other things, the Rabbi mentioned that he himself had studied French at a yeshiva in Aleppo, Syria, and there was no problem with it. He asked Rabbi Yosef for his advice in the matter. Rabbi Yosef's reply was long and detailed: “Indeed the study of writing and arithmetic and whatever else will help in earning a livelihood is permissible”, he wrote, and went on to permit the study of English in the yeshiva for the following reasons:

If we do not teach them the English language in the talmud torah and yeshiva they will necessarily go to secular schools for this purpose and will have to leave their sacred studies in the middle and leave for these schools early in order to get there on time, and there is no greater waste of Torah time, and this

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<sup>69</sup> Lau, Binyamin. *Ibid.*, p. 21, notes 8, 9.

aside from the impropriety of studying together with foreign men and women, for an open door invites the thief...”.<sup>70</sup>

The case described below also underscores the pragmatic approach of Rabbi Yosef. On 27 June 1979 an agreement was signed between the Committee of Sephardi and Eastern Communities in Jerusalem and the World Sephardi Federation and Bar-Ilan University with regard to establishing a seminary for rabbis and religious judges. The following are its main points:<sup>71</sup>

- The Committee will establish a seminary in Jerusalem called Seminary for Training Rabbis and Counselors for Rabbinical and Leadership Positions in the Community.
- The Rishon le-Zion, R. Ovadiah Yosef, will serve as honorary president of the Seminary..
- The Sage Dr. Shlomo Gaon, spiritual leader of the world Sephardi communities and chairman of the Education Committee of the World Sephardi Federation, will serve as director of the Seminary.
- Torah studies will be in accordance with the curriculum determined by the Rishon le-Zion and the Sage Dr. Shlomo Gaon
- Studies at the college will commence in the 1979/80 school year.
- The University will apply to the Council for Higher Education for approval of a special general program ... under the auspices of the Faculties of Humanities and Jewish Studies toward the degree of B.A.
- The condition for the admission of students to this B.A. program is presentation of a matriculation certificate and/or other criteria which will be determined by Bar-Ilan University in cooperation with the college board.

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<sup>70</sup> Yosef, Ovadiah (1993). *Words of Praise*, Part 7, Sect. 21, p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> The text of the agreement and a description of the signing ceremony appear in Ba-Ma'arahkah, the journal of Sephardi and Eastern communities, July 1979, No. 223.

The agreement was signed in a festive ceremony in the presence of the following personalities: R. Ovadiah Yosef, R. Shalom Mashash, the heads of the Sephardi Federation in Israel – David Siton and Eliahu Elishar – the heads of the World Sephardi Federation – Nissim Gaon and Leon Taman, the Sage Dr. Shlomo Gaon of England, designated director of the Seminary – the president of Bar-Ilan University – R. Prof. Emanuel Rackman – the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University – Felix Stolman – and its general-director – Matityahu Adler.

The body that initiated the agreement was the Sephardi Committee in Jerusalem, which many years before, in cooperation with R. Yosef, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, had opened a seminary for rabbis and religious judges in R. Yosef's home in Jerusalem. This seminary produced dozens of rabbis and religious judges serving in Israel and abroad. The Sephardi Committee decided to renew the activities of the institute, including a program of general and language studies alongside the extensive Torah curriculum. Committee members made contact with Bar-Ilan University and received the advice and guidance of the Rishon le-Zion, R. Ovadiah Yosef. Thus it was decided to found a new seminary for rabbis and religious judges in cooperation with Bar-Ilan University.

The first to speak was the president of the seminary and college, R. Ovadiah Yosef, who said, among other things: “Happy is Israel, what nation is redeemed eternally by the Lord like you ... I consent to the program and pray that we will succeed in training rabbis to be sent to the Diaspora – be strong and of good faith and may the Lord bless you”.<sup>72</sup>

Unfortunately, this educational project never came to fruition. Extremist circles in the Haredi community subjected R. Yosef to a vehement campaign of pressure and threats with the aim of canceling it. Just two weeks after the signing ceremony the following article appeared in the newspaper *Hamodi'a* under the headline: SAGE RABBI OVADIAH OPPOSES YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IN ISRAEL:

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72 Ibid., p. 24.

The Rishon le-Zion, the Sage R. Ovadiah Yosef, yesterday published a vehement denial of the story published in the secular press suggesting that he would serve as president of a yeshiva university slated to be opened soon near Jerusalem on the initiative of the Sephardi Committee. This is an institute of the kind already operating in the United States, whose establishment in Jerusalem could serve as a dangerous precedent for pure-hearted Torah studies, introducing the despicable Haskalah within the walls of the sacred yeshivas. According to the published story the Sephardi Committee, aided by Mr. Nissim Gaon of Geneva, plans to set up an adjunct to Bar-Ilan University's Jerusalem branch, with religious studies during the first half of the day. This was justified by the argument that it is necessary to train rabbis to serve in the Diaspora, where there is serious spiritual decline and a danger of assimilation. They do not think it is enough to teach a foreign language and intend to open in Jerusalem a yeshiva university where during the second half of the day the students will hear lectures from professors and engage in secular studies. The stories further stated that R. Ovadiah Yosef will serve as president of the institute, but as mentioned there is no truth to these stories. In the statement published yesterday, the Sage Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef said among other things: "I hereby declare to one and all concerning the rumors certain circles are spreading that I am about to open an institute like the yeshiva university in the United States here in the holy city of Jerusalem and that I will serve as its president, that there is not a shred of truth to these rumors and God willing I will continue to spread the pure Torah, to learn and teach, to preserve and protect, to magnify and exalt the Torah. 'And the earth filled with knowledge of the Lord as water fills the sea' ".<sup>73</sup>

There is a clear contradiction between the initial position of R. Yosef and the position expressed in *Hamodi'a*, which is the result of the pressure exerted by extremist circles in the Haredi community and their threat of a ban of R. Yosef. In the face of all this the Rabbi beat a strategic retreat.

In recent years R. Yosef has supported the activities of the "Go and Learn" organization, which encouraged Shas activists to sign up for academic studies at Touro College. The Rabbi also supports the activities of the Haredi college that gives academic degrees to women. The head of this college is the Rabbi's daughter, Mrs. Adina Bar Shalom, who acts under the supervision and full

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<sup>73</sup> *Hamodi'a*, July 10, 1979.

support of the Council of Torah Sages. Mrs. Bar Shalom received her father's blessing to introduce into the college in the near future academic studies for men in addition to the current program for women only.

Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Lau, who wrote his Ph.D thesis on R. Yosef, asserts that the Rabbi's actions show that his pragmatic side gets the upper hand in practical matters. In the light of this assessment it can therefore be said that Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef's position comes close to the "Torah and Worldliness" or "Torah and Science" approach, as in the philosophy of Maimonides.

## **6 THE TURNING POINT: THE BEGINNINGS OF VOCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC TRAINING IN HAREDI SOCIETY**

### **Background and Causes**

In the framework of this study I had conversations with key figures involved with the issue of academic studies and vocational training in the Haredi sector. From these conversations I understood that the year 1996 is seen as a turning point, for it was then that openness to general studies began to be felt. This openness increased in the following years for a wide variety of social, economic, and political reasons which I shall describe in this chapter.

In the second half of the 1990s the Haredi sector achieved its greatest political and economic power since the establishment of the State. Two decades after joining the Begin government the Haredim – Sephardis and Ashkenazis – had positioned themselves at the center of political action and influence in Israel. For example, in the elections to the 14th Knesset in 1996, which produced the coalition headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, Shas received ten seats, and four years later, in the 1999 elections, it received 17, thus becoming the third largest party in Israel.

Another big gain among the Haredim was in winning a majority on the Jerusalem municipal council and seeing Ehud Olmert elected mayor. This paid off later when Uri Lupolianski became mayor of Jerusalem after Olmert joined the Sharon government.

But the most striking expression of growing Haredi strength was the numerical increase in the society of scholars in the past two decades: tens of thousands of students entered the yeshivas and kolels.

At the same time as these developments occurred, strengthening the hand of the Haredim, a parallel, dialectical process unfolded: in a certain sense, the increase in power of the Haredi sector contained the seeds of its erosion, threatening its inner strength. The expansion and rapid growth of the society of scholars paradoxically caused fissures in the unity of the Haredi community in general and of the society of scholars in particular.

- Tens of thousands of students who are not qualified and/or do not wish to study Torah alone joined the society of scholars. These students see the yeshiva as a shelter from army service and the need to earn a living. In other words, quantity was achieved at the expense of quality. Against this background there appeared pockets of “troublemakers” who hurt the reputation of the Torah scholars.<sup>74</sup> To combat this phenomenon, special yeshivas (big and small) were set up with a regimen suited to Haredi youngsters who had lost the motivation to study Torah and had become juvenile delinquents. These yeshivas only provided a partial solution to the problem: here too students dropped out and roamed the streets without working, and some of them even took to crime. But the problem of students incapable of bearing the “burden” of Torah study went far beyond the appearance of “troublemakers”, for such students are also found in ordinary families (Ashkenazi or Sephardi) as well as well-to-do and well-connected families.

In view of this situation many Haredi leaders recognized the fact that it is preferable to direct such youngsters to vocational education, realizing that the increasing weakness of the society of scholars had also begun to threaten the position of the pure Torah elite.

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<sup>74</sup> Things went so far that in certain streets (like Hashomer and Kahaneman Streets in Bene Beraq) it became impossible to walk at night because of Haredi rowdies. In many places where such juvenile delinquents liked to hang out, a watch was maintained to ensure security and order.

- The demand on taxpayers to finance a nonproductive sector of society kept on growing, leading many to vilify the Haredim. Criticism was all the more severe because of the exemption from army service given to Torah scholars, freeing them from the burden of defending the country. Public criticism increased with revelations of corruption in a number of Haredi strongholds.
- Criticism did not only come from the nonreligious. The growing power of the media in society as a whole led to the development of an independent Haredi press, including publications like *The Family* and *In the Community*, which are run by young entrepreneurs who have absorbed Israeli culture and speak fluent Hebrew. Their correspondents also began to cover internal problems that preoccupy Haredi society, problems kept quiet for years by the old-guard spiritual leadership. The Haredi press has turned to self-criticism, giving vent to the feelings of the Haredi public. This has put pressure on the rabbis, causing a certain change of direction in their positions on various subjects, such as instituting general studies or using computers.
- In recent years there has also been a deepening economic recession and decline of economic growth. Economic indicators (like the growing balance-of-payments deficit, the drop in exports, the cutback in jobs in many sectors, etc.) presage a gloomy future for the economy. Signs of the recession began to be seen already in 1996-1997, and there is no question that it is at its peak today and directly affects the allocation of funds to Haredi educational institutes and child allowances.

The implications of the recession for Haredi society are far-reaching and play a significant part in the changing attitude of the Haredi leadership toward general studies.

- Haredi Knesset members sent a clear message to the Torah sages regarding the increasing difficulty of getting government funding for the Haredi educational system.
- The recession also causes a drastic cutback in the teaching jobs available to Haredi women, and even when they were able to get such jobs,



the pay was very low. Since in the society of scholars the women are the breadwinners, many Haredi families were affected. At the same time, the needs of the families actually grew with the rise in standards of living. All these factors produced economic hardship alongside severe mental stress, significantly undermining the idea of “voluntary poverty”.

- On the heels of the recession, many outstanding Torah scholars experienced economic hardship. It was clear to the rabbis that these students would not avail themselves of vocational training, as they saw themselves (and rightfully) as an intellectual elite. The danger was that they would try to find prestigious and challenging professions that would require academic studies.
- This fear was accentuated by the changing values of society as a whole: greater emphasis on achievement, material things, and technological progress. At the end of the 1990s there was an upsurge in the field of hi-tech, with the accelerated growth of start-up companies, some of which scored tremendous economic successes. The feeling in the Haredi sector was that yeshiva boys too, and especially the best and the brightest among them, could hop on the technological bandwagon: they had sharp analytical minds honed in yeshiva studies and would not have to change their way of life because they could work on their computers without leaving their homes. What is more, they could learn hi-tech skills without the formal prior education required in such fields as medicine, accounting, or law.<sup>75</sup> The rabbis were afraid that some of these best and brightest would move in this direction, abandoning the yeshiva. These developments too were therefore part of the setting for the change of heart.

At the beginning of 1996 Rabbi Shach was stricken with a severe case of pneumonia – he slept most of the day and the rest of the time could barely communicate. At around the time of the elections on 18 June 1996, he revived, but

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<sup>75</sup> Not by chance was the Haredi Center for Technological Studies in effect a Computer Center then.

afterwards fell into a protracted coma and was out of touch with the public as a leader. When he had been up and around, the rabbis did not dare try and change his unequivocal ban against combining secular and religious studies, so that there are those who say that it was his withdrawal from public life that removed the last obstacle to introducing general and academic studies into Haredi society.

Others, however, say the opposite, namely that it was Rabbi Shach who was the first to agree to the establishment of the Haredi Center for Technological Studies. They say that when it became apparent that vocational training should be offered to those not suited to Torah study, it also became necessary to get the idea accepted in Haredi society before starting to implement the program. Thus the mayor of Bene Beraq, R. Yerahmiel Breuer, asked R. Shach for his advice. The Rabbi sent him to ten yeshiva heads for consultations, and when R. Breuer came back to R. Shach with their positive responses, R. Shach gave his approval.

## **Manifestations of the Change**

### **The Ashkenazi Sector**

All the factors described above worked together to exercise their influence on the new leadership that came into being after the death of R. Shach. These new leaders, either on their own initiative or because of the pressure exerted on them, began to adopt new policies, opening the door to change in the face of the old position that vehemently rejected general studies. The rabbis sought solutions that would allow the institution of such studies without undermining values that were sacred to them. Such a solution, for example, was to permit the study only of such subjects whose basic premises did not challenge the Torah or faith. As mentioned in the previous chapter, even Rabbi Shach, whose position on the question was the most extreme of the last generation, allowed for some change in his latter days.

In effect, the change of direction manifested itself in a change of attitude toward youngsters who did not wish to or were unable to devote themselves to a life in Torah alone. Concerning such students, the rabbis came to realize that it was better for them to learn a profession, through vocational training or in an academic framework. With this recognition came the change: the opening (albeit cautious and gradual) of vocational training courses and selective academic programs in the Haredi sector. The rabbis do not actually encourage people to learn a trade or enroll in universities but they also do not place obstacles in their way.

The change in direction was mainly felt among men, for women, as the family breadwinners, already had permission to study general subjects, even when it was not allowed among men. Such subjects were taken together with religious studies in the Beth Jacob seminaries. Among women the change manifested itself mainly in their being able to learn a trade and/or study academically outside the Beth Jacob seminary. Likewise, the variety of subjects they were permitted to study was expanded in order to make it easier for them to find jobs, mainly because of the serious lack of work in teaching.

It should be emphasized that basic values did not change: a Torah scholar was still seen as superior to an ignorant high priest.<sup>76</sup> Even at a time when poverty became a serious problem and a reason for change, the status of those who “made an effort” (i.e., worked for a living) – even if rich and successful – was inferior to the status of the devoted student. This hierarchy is nowhere disputed in Haredi society. Despite the relative tolerance shown recently toward those learning a trade in order to earn a living, students abandoning their studies still feel “ashamed” and do it quietly, in keeping with the advice of R. Eliahu Dessler in his book *Letter from Eliahu* (Part 3).

The reconciliation of Haredi rabbis to the need for change was accompanied by serious apprehensions. They were afraid, and still are, of a significant erosion of values in Haredi society. Behind the upbeat catch phrases like “kosher academy”, “Haredi universities”, or even “a decent living”, there lies the danger of

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76 “If a bastard (*mamzer*) is a Torah scholar and the High Priest an ignoramus, the *mamzer* takes precedence” (Hor. 13a).

basic changes in the values upon which the society of scholars is founded. Drawing Torah students into the job market could create a dynamic that will end in a complete rupture.

These apprehensions are dealt with in a number of ways:

First, the various projects are closely supervised. The Haredi youngster who wishes to study is not permitted to study anything he likes but only “instrumental” trades. Traditionally such trades were termed “spicing, baking, cooking”, and in the modern era the parallels are computers, economics, management, law, accounting, etc. The central supervisory body is the Spiritual Committee (see below). Whoever wishes to enroll for vocational or academic training has to submit an authorization from a rabbinical authority. In addition, permission is granted to those who have completed at least ten years of religious studies from the age of 13 and who are at least 23 years old<sup>77</sup> and married with children.

The Committee also keeps an eye on how the institutes and vocational-training courses advertise, weeding out prominent advertisements in the Haredi media. The idea is that it is preferable to proceed as quietly as possible in this direction.<sup>78</sup>

Second, together with its close supervision, the leadership conducts a propaganda campaign deriding the professions considered prestigious (because of the high level of intellect demanded), trying to diminish their aura. An effort is made to represent these professions as parallels to the traditional crafts (like tailoring or shoemaking) in order to make them as unattractive as possible to young Haredim, particularly the intellectuals among them.

An example of such “putdown” propaganda can be found in an article by Ze'ev Grossman (the senior correspondent of *Yated Ne'eman*):

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77 There are students who also receive permission from their yeshiva heads to go out to study at an earlier age, but generally not before 22 or 23.

78 In actuality it is forbidden to study anything in the humanities or social sciences, or any subject that might lead to loss of faith.

The believing Jew does not attach “importance” to this or that trade. There is no ideal here but at the most a way of getting something unkosher into the house for someone who has not succeeded in devoting all his days and hours to Torah study – which for us is the only ideal considered to have value in itself. It is unnecessary to say that the desire to earn a living specifically in a so-called “high-prestige profession” – an absurd and twisted idea – does not mean exceeding bounds and looking for academic degrees. If, once, a Jew who wanted to learn tailoring or shoemaking had to go to the local tailor or shoemaker to teach him the trade, today those who wish to make a living in computers go to those who have the experience to teach them the trade – and nothing more...”<sup>79</sup>

The first harbinger of change was the establishment of the Haredi Center for Technological Studies in 1996. The aims of the institute were defined in terms of vocational training for the purpose of earning a livelihood and easing economic hardship. In the first stage only family men were allowed to study there. A decision was also made to have a spiritual committee oversee activities. The founders of the committee were Rabbi Sh. Z. Auerbach and Rabbi Shalom Eliashiv. The chairman was Rabbi Yosef Israelsohn, head of the Rehovot kolel, and two rabbis representing different factions worked with him: Rabbi Sh. A. Stern, representing the Hungarian faction and head of the Hatam Sofer yeshiva, and Rabbi. M. Sh. Steinmetz, representing the Vizhnitz Hasidic faction and head of the Vizhnitz kolel in Bene Beraq.

The Spiritual Committee, founded to supervise the Haredi Center for Technological Studies, was later also authorized to guide and supervise the Haredi College in Bene Beraq, which was founded on the same organizational principles as the Haredi Center for Technological Studies. All courses and activities at the College were conducted under the authority and supervision of the Spiritual Committee, including advertising.

After the deaths of Rabbi Shach and Rabbi Sh. Z. Auerbach, Rabbis Eliashiv and Steinman became the leaders of the Lithuanian faction and the yeshiva world. Rabbi Steinman was considered a leader who was also guided by prag-

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<sup>79</sup> *Yated Ne'eman* (February 25, 2000). Weekly Column, the Seeing Eye/Grossman, Natan Ze'ev: Historic Turning Point with Far-Reaching Social Consequences”.

matic considerations. After Rabbi Eliashiv joined him in the initiative to allow vocational-training courses under the supervision of the Spiritual Committee, the Haredi establishment took another step forward. On June 7, 1999 the three rabbis serving on the Spiritual Committee published a letter in the name of the three great sages of the generation – R. Yosef Shalom Eliashiv, R. Shmuel Vozner, and Rabbi Aryeh Leib Steinman. The letter authorized studies for a B.A. degree for men on the approval of the Council for Higher Education. The authorization was given only for certain fields: computer science, accounting, and management. The letter emphasized that the humanities were strictly forbidden: “There will be no studies in Thought, Philosophy, Literature or anything encouraging lack of belief, God forbid.. We hereby strengthen your hand in the sacred work you are engaged in to help people who wish to or have to learn a profession at a high level and in a Haredi atmosphere ...”

Prior to the start of academic activities at the Haredi College in Bene Beraq there had been an effort to institute social work studies for Haredim through Bar-Ilan University. In an article appearing in *Ha'aretz* it was reported that 17 Haredi students had been studying social work at Bar-Ilan University since 1998. The courses were given in a special program approved by the rabbis, who also allowed it to be advertised.<sup>80</sup> The program had been initiated by Haredi parties who understood the importance of training social workers attuned to the special needs of the Haredim. Dealing with such problems as children at risk, domestic harmony, guardianship, etc., had been in the hands of professionals foreign to the Haredi community and its guiding values, and the courts tended to make their rulings on the basis of the reports and recommendations. submitted by these people. The Bene Beraq Ways of the World Organization, aided by Bar-Ilan University, initiated the mobilization and selection of candidates for the social work course. In all, 180 candidates applied, but only 23 were chosen, of whom 14 completed the course.

This course too operated under the supervision of a spiritual committee, comprised of three rabbis (R. Sillman, R. Stein, and R. Shefran). These rabbis in fact represented the leadership that had authorized the project. Graduates of the

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80 *Ha'aretz* (March 10, 2000). Sa'ar, Rali, “17 Haredim Regular Students at Bar-Ilan”.

course are today employed in the community and their work is greatly appreciated both by professionals and the community. At this stage additional men have not been signed up for a new class but there are courses for women at the Bene Beraq and Jerusalem Haredi Colleges (see below). Was this a one-time course for men to solve an urgent community problem, or will additional courses be organized in the future, presaging a new direction? Only time will tell.

### **The Sephardi-Eastern Sector**

Back in the 1970s, Dr. Lander, a modern Haredi Jew in the American mold, understood that a good part of the Haredi community in New York was put off by the idea of studying at Yeshiva University because secular studies were offered there in addition to religious studies. Also the mixing of the sexes at Brooklyn and Queens Colleges was unacceptable to this population. On the other hand, he identified among the Haredim a potential readiness to get an education for the purpose of earning a livelihood. Subsequently Lander founded an educational institution in New York called the Machon L'Parnassa (Institute for Professional Studies) and afterwards he established the Touro College system in the United States. This was a revolutionary step at the time and provoked angry outcries and the threat of excommunication.

Dr. Lander identified the same need in Israel of part of the Haredi population to get a higher education and with this aim in mind he opened the Israeli branch of Touro College in Jerusalem in 1987. During its first years all its attempts to gain a foothold in the Ashkenazi sector failed. In 1992-1993 Dr. Lander tried to get the help of Haredi politicians from the Ashkenazi sector – Menahem Porush and his son Meir Porush. It is reasonable to assume that he spoke to them with the consent of a rabbinical authority. Nevertheless, there was no breakthrough, out of fear of the reaction of Haredi extremists.

In 1994 an attempt was made to set up a model course at Touro College, but this too was nipped in the bud, for it was impossible even to reach agreement on the rabbis who would serve on the supervisory spiritual committee. Dozens of meetings were in fact held with Lithuanian rabbis and representatives of the Hasidic courts but at the moment of decision they always beat a hasty retreat.

The situation was completely different when it came to the attitude of Shas and its Sephardi supporters. After the Lithuanian rabbis consented in principle to vocational and academic training for Haredim, Shas activists enthusiastically turned their eyes to Touro College.

This positive response had a number of reasons:

1. First, as already pointed out, among Eastern Jews – both from Islamic countries and the Old Yishuv – there had never been a total rejection of general studies. Oldtime Shas rabbis who had studied in the Otzar Torah system in Morocco had already been exposed to secular studies (including French) alongside religious studies. Some of them even continued them when they went on to study at the big Lithuanian yeshivas in Europe (like the Hakhmei Tzarfat yeshiva in Aix-les-Bains or the Etz Hayyim yeshiva in Tangiers). There were of course yeshivas like those in the Or Yosef system of France or the Torat Emet yeshiva in London and Mir in the United States where a Torah only regimen was maintained, but this was against the wishes of the parents. Already back in North Africa these parents had internalized the idea that a general education was essential for earning a livelihood. Many of the students at these yeshivas admit today (though not openly) that this was not how they saw their futures when they went to study at the Lithuanian yeshivas.
2. Against this background the ready consent of the Sephardi Council of Torah Sages (following the agreement of the Lithuanians) reflects a kind of liberation from the shackles that had weighed heavily on the Sephardis for many years without their being able to vent their feelings publicly out of fear of Haredi extremists.
3. The success of Shas in elections to the Knesset and the local councils in 1996 and 1999 gave party activists access to a large variety of jobs in the public sector. For many of these jobs, an academic degree was required according to the Civil Service Regulations. Shas did not lack candidates, but few had academic degrees. Moreover, even in jobs where academic degrees were not required, those who had them got



higher pay. Awareness of this state of affairs became all the more acute when Akiva Aton, one of the leaders of the Party's young guard, was turned down for the post of chairman of the Bezek Telephone Co. because he lacked the required education. Shas's rabbis and party bosses understood that if their people got government jobs fairly, that is, because they had the requisite degrees and ability, and not because of their political affiliation, it would legitimize them in the eyes of the public.

4. The Ma'ayan ha-Hinukh ha-Torani school system also expanded considerably and Shas now required professional, trained manpower as administrators and supervisors.
5. The political ambitions of Shas leader Aryeh Deri also played a part in getting Shas activists interested in pursuing an academic education. Deri aimed at opening the party to new and better-educated constituencies for electoral purposes. This aim led him to inaugurate a caucus for academicians before the 1996 elections. He was also under pressure from educated circles among the Jews of France, who wished to see Shas more liberal and less Haredi.

For all these reasons Shas was moved to enter into discussions with representatives of the Hebrew University with the goal of starting up a course for social workers and with the Lev Institute (at the School for Higher Technological Studies) with the aim of starting up courses in computers and management. Given the complexities of organizing such courses, things dragged on, and in the end Shas decided to seek out a third party that could organize the courses more quickly. Against this background it turned to the Israel branch of Touro College.

Touro College immediately agreed and was able to meet the special conditions required by the Haredi population: separation of the sexes, female teachers for female students and male teachers for male students, equal credit for yeshiva studies, and no less important – evening classes during the “Third Order” that

would allow yeshiva students to maintain their “professional religious scholar” status.<sup>81</sup>

With this arrangement, Shas began looking for students for Touro College. The moving spirit was Avi Butbul, head of the Go and Learn organization. With the support of Aryeh Deri he became the driving force in Shas to open the Haredi sector to academic studies. Activists were helped by the Rashi Fund in France to raise money and the Ministry of Education also got involved.

Thus a training program for educational administrators was opened in the 1996 school year, with 40 teachers and administrators enrolled. The course of studies ran three years and upon graduation a B.A. degree was awarded. These were the first students from the Haredi world who studied as an organized, approved group with the consent of the leadership. Studies got under way with much enthusiasm and an awareness that they were for the good of the Sephardi/Eastern community. A positive response also came from Shas's spiritual leadership despite the bitter opposition of extremist circles among the Ashkenazi Haredim. Encouragement of the students spread to the party bosses, senior officials in the local councils, etc.

In 1998 a group of 80 students began studying business administration. A few students of Ashkenazi origin were also part of the group. This breakthrough by Shas led to certain changes among Ashkenazi party officials, who began to look for candidates among their own. Mixed groups began to form – Ashkenazis, Sephardis, religious nationalists, students from the Merkaz ha-Rav yeshiva and the settlements in the territories, and groups defined as “Torah-bound”.<sup>82</sup> Touro College began to organize separate refresher courses for the various groups.

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81 The Third Order is at night. The yeshiva schedule runs as follows: 7:00 a.m. - morning prayer; 9:00 a.m.-1 p.m. – First Order (study, including a classroom lesson); 3:30-7:00 p.m. – Second Order (“expertise”), followed by *musar* (ethics) and evening prayer; 9:00 p.m. on – Third Order (free study).

82 This distinction is accepted today among religious people. Those defined as Torah-bound are close to the Haredim as far as strictness is concerned but do not live in frameworks under the sway of rabbinical authority. They are defined in this way already in the kindergartens of the state-religious system.

During the same period a program was also opened to train women for administrative work, with 45 enrolling from Shas circles, mostly married. These women were the family breadwinners and were looking for advancement in their jobs and better pay. In all, Touro College had an enrollment of 300 male and female students, many of them very active in Shas and some of them senior officials in the civil service.

The growing importance of the media in modern society was also perceived among the Haredim and voices were heard calling for the creation of an academy of communications for them. A special academic program was devised for elected officials in the local councils in cooperation with the following bodies: the Ministry of the Interior, the Political Science Department of Bar-Ilan University, which organized the program via the University's Journalism and Communications Unit, and the Institute for Local Government. The program was intended to include three courses of study, leading, respectively, to a certificate, a B.A. degree, and an M.A.

Though it was not explicitly stated that the program was intended for Shas activists, in effect the Ministry of the Interior was under Minister Suissa of Shas, and therefore the Ministry encouraged the local councils to send their workers to these courses of study and even promised to help with the financing. Moreover, the person who negotiated with Bar-Ilan University on behalf of the Ministry was Gabi Abutbul, the head of Shas's Go and Learn organization. The program was never implemented, but its consideration and the preparations made via a government ministry, a recognized university, and a Haredi organization are a sure sign of the change in the Sephardi Haredi sector at the time. The outpouring of enthusiasm led the Shas people to step up their activities and aim at creating a Sephardi Haredi College with the consent of the Council of Torah Sages.

When the green light was given to vocational and academic training for Ashkenazi yeshiva students (in the letter from the Lithuanian Torah sages mentioned above), Shas's Council of Torah Sages decided to permit the creation of a Sephardi Haredi College (the only reservation was voiced by R. Shalom Cohen, and this too was not directed at studies as such but addressed itself to the possibility that Haredi girls would leave the framework of the home and community

and be exposed to negative influences). Philosophy and art history were of course not included in the list of subjects approved by the Council, but aside from the areas of knowledge mentioned in the letter of the Ashkenazi rabbis, the Sephardi rabbis, with R. Ovadiah Yosef at their head, also permitted such subjects as social work, paramedical training, electro-optics, and even psychology. This list underscores the relative openness of the Sephardi Haredi leadership.

The Council for Higher Education (for a discussion of the policy of the Council see Chapter 7) wished to unite the two planned institutes. However, the Lithuanian rabbis objected, arguing that the commitment of the Sephardis to Haredi values was not strong enough, and their supervision weak. In their view, the approvals for higher education given by R. Ovadiah Yosef, either explicitly or by turning a blind eye, were too broad.

Following the publication of the letter on behalf of the Council of Lithuanian Torah Sages, Shas widely advertised its program. Big newspaper headlines proclaimed that the goal was to establish within a few years an institute for higher education that would accommodate between 15,000 and 20,000 Haredi students in Jerusalem and Bene Beraq, and in the longer term a Haredi university that would offer recognized degrees and include research facilities – the aim being to promote the integration of Haredim in Israeli society.<sup>83</sup> These headlines were far from the truth, to put it mildly. The efforts of Shas activists to work together with the Hebrew University to set up a Haredi college did not come off, and the desired cooperation did not occur.

It should be noted that Touro College as well, during its peak activity, never had more than 300 Shas activists enrolled. Today it no longer has any Haredi students, for a variety of reasons. First, the institute is a branch of a foreign university and the Council for Higher Education hardened its attitude toward such branches. The Council accredited only Israeli institutes. Consequently, students abandoned Touro College and others like it whose degrees were not recognized in Israel. Second, recognized academic frameworks were established that were suitable for Haredi students. Those who left Touro therefore had another alter-

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83 *Ha'aretz* (February 18, 2000), *Yediot Ahronot* (February 25, 2000).

native. Finally, the uproar in the media caused by university circles hailing the success of Touro College and the rosy future of higher education for Haredim elicited, as mentioned, a negative response: it cast the good faith of the institute into doubt and caused it long-term damage. The Haredi backlash was not long in coming.

## **The Haredi Backlash**

As stated, the atmosphere created by the news media around the future Haredi university and the exaggerated and false publicization of a change of direction in Haredi society in general and in the field of higher education in particular created in the Ashkenazi sector of Haredi society a feeling that a dam had been burst. The sense of threat increased after a Supreme Court ruling at the time (December 1998) that the arrangement permitting draft deferments for yeshiva students was illegal. and that the Knesset must rectify it through the appropriate legislation within a year. To this end a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of retired judge Zvi Tal and in June 2002 the Tal Law was passed, arousing vehement opposition, mainly among Haredi zealots. Certain Haredi circles saw these events as a revolution threatening to put an end to the Torah world. They declared war on general studies, resorting to broadsides, bans, threats, and violence.

The broadsides that were circulated tied together the two nemeses – the idea of general studies and the Tal Law – which in combination could be expected “to bring about assimilation in a degenerate and decadent society with its sterile strain of Zionist nationalism and the spirit of the Haskalah”. Threats too made their way into these broadsides: “And if our call is not heard we will have to take up the sword against those who lend a hand to this revolution and disaster for the Jewish people...”. Rabbi Steinman was identified as one of the supporters of these programs, mainly the plan for a Haredi army pioneer group. He was warned to give up his dangerous and destructive ways “lest we be forced to go out against him the way the first rabbis went out like angels against those who crossed the bounds and sought to bring innovations to the Jewish people.

In addition to circulating broadsides, stormy demonstrations were held outside the houses of those who supported the Tal Law, especially against Rabbi Efrati (Rabbi Eliashiv's right hand), who had been identified as an enthusiastic supporter of the Law. The demonstrations did not even spare the homes of the leading rabbis of the Yahadut ha-Torah Party – Rabbi Eliashiv and Rabbi Steinman, and they even received threats to their lives and the lives of their families. Fistfights broke out between students of the rabbis and the demonstrators.

The manifestation of heavy-handed opposition came mostly from “Brisker” circles – a group of Haredi extremists whose status derived from the prestige of their rabbi – Yitzhak Ze'ev Soloveichik (“the Brisker Rabbi”). Their leaders were his son-in-law, R. Yehiel Mikhal Feinstein, and his son Meshullam David. The opposition was aided in their struggle by the Hasidic Satmar sect in New York, which also staged demonstrations and rallies and circulated broadsides.

In the face of the vehement reaction, rabbis representing the Yahadut ha-Torah establishment were forced to back away from their initial support for general studies and the Tal Law, a position demonstrating pragmatism and moderation. They did not recant unequivocally but both R. Steinman and R. Eliashiv “lowered their profile”, and today both refrain from associating their names with the issue of vocational training and higher education for Haredim. To the extent that they favor arrangements of any kind in this spirit, their support is “ad hoc” and they do not grant blanket or publicized consent. Also the bodies active in the fields of vocational and academic training try to stay out of the limelight, doing their work as quietly as possible.

This situation naturally affected the development of study programs and the ability to enroll students in them. After the first rush to register and the inauguration of new courses, the situation has become fairly frozen. Probably all the factors combined led to this - not just the extreme reactions of opponents of change but also the effort to control manifestations of change from within so that they would not get out of hand, objective difficulties in implementing the programs given the strict academic requirements, the problem of finding suitable candidates for vocational and academic training, the cutback in available jobs, etc.

## **7 PUBLIC AND STATE INVOLVEMENT**

Since the commencement of the change, projects for vocational and academic training have been taking shape in cooperation with government and public bodies. For vocational training these were the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Joint. For academic studies it was the Council for Higher Education. It is quite interesting to examine how policy in these bodies evolved and how they geared up for operations in the Haredi sector, for they had to operate on two discordant fronts: on the one hand, they had to adapt all aspects of the programs to the prohibitions of the spiritual leaders of the students; on the other hand, they had to operate according to the mandatory criteria of the civil service.

Gradually there evolved patterns of action and joint efforts between the government and public bodies and the parties involved in the Haredi sector. This cooperation evolved through a process of trial and error, until the right “mix” was found.

### **The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare – First Steps**

The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare also sees the year 1996 as representing a turning point. From its standpoint, the term of Eli Yishai as minister on behalf of Shas accelerated the process, for he was strongly motivated to help the Haredi population enter the job market. The Ministry systematically operates an

entire range of vocational training and retraining courses via its vocational training section. These course are aimed at a broad clientele.<sup>84</sup>

Until 1996 the courses offered by the vocational training section to the Haredi population were limited, being mostly related to religion: for scribes, mikveh attendants, ritual slaughterers, etc. Minister Yishai wished to expand vocational training for Haredim to include general occupations, in order to increase their incomes and get them out of the cycle of poverty.

Nevertheless, despite good intentions, the efforts and frameworks of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare were not suited for dealing with the Haredi population. The Ministry is not set up to deal with “professional religious scholars” on an individual basis. It focuses on people already in the labor system and interested in vocational training or retraining, as well as unemployed people who want to find jobs. “Professional religious scholars” are not part of this cycle and therefore do not come into contact with the Ministry. According to National Insurance Institute regulations, an unemployed person has the right to receive unemployment insurance, and if he is sent to a course by the Employment Bureau while still eligible to receive payments, he will receive them until he finishes the course. “Professional religious scholars” are not eligible for unemployment insurance, so they lack the motivation to enroll in such courses. Moreover, enrollment in regular studies and loss of their status as “professional religious scholars” make them liable for the draft.

After the first attempts failed, Ministry officials learned how to get the proper mix and offer programs suitable for Haredim. Thus, for example, it became clear that the morning courses intended for unemployed people receiving unemployment insurance were not suitable for yeshiva students and their attendance was negligible. Also when the Ministry published tenders in 1997 for the organization of vocational training courses for Haredim (alongside regular ten-

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84 Various entrepreneurs organize courses of this kind in the private sector as well. In 1996 there was a significant rise in the number of these private parties. Some of the courses they offered were conducted under government supervision with final examinations to qualify for a government certificate. Other courses were entirely private, without outside supervision.



ders), there was little success, as the institutes that applied were the same ones that applied for the regular tenders and had not done any preparatory work to adapt themselves to Haredi needs. The Ministry began to understand that it was important to solve a number of basic problems in order to get the yeshiva students into the Ministry's courses. First, the course had to allow the yeshiva student to maintain his status as a “professional religious scholar” (which among other things gets him a draft deferment); second, vocational training institutes had to be found that were specifically suitable for Haredim; third, an information campaign was required to pave the way, since vocational training had not yet achieved widespread legitimacy in the Haredi public.

When another batch of tenders was published in 1999, the institutes were ready to absorb Haredim according to their requirements: separation of the sexes and suitable teaching staffs in a variety of subjects: computers, computer graphics, management, medical secretarial work, architectural drafting, and land assessment.

Nonetheless, enrollment in these courses among “professional religious scholars” was lower than expected, while on the other hand many (non-Haredi) unemployed people signed up for them. Apparently yeshiva students did not wish to take morning vocational training courses, since they would have had to change their way of life radically, that is, leave the kollel and lose their status as “professional religious scholars”.

The Ministry of Labor sought an alternative vocational training route for yeshiva students that would not interfere with their way of life and status as “professional religious scholars”. Such an arrangement was evening classes during the Third Order. Evening classes would not significantly change the student's daily regimen, which was devoted primarily to Torah study. In this way those taking the courses could continue studying Torah and at the same time learn a profession and retain their draft deferments.

With this new approach the Ministry of Labor succeeded in organizing two successive classes of “professional religious scholars”, numbering 1,000 students. This arrangement won the approval of the rabbis because it did not re-

duce the number of those studying Torah, the kolels were not affected, and the way of life of the students was not especially altered.

The Joint was enlisted to help organize the project because of its experience of many years working in this sector. Before it came on board few Haredim signed up for the regular vocational training offered by the Ministry. Cooperation with the Joint started in the year 2000 and has been crowned with success. The framework of the project has been defined as training yeshiva students for occupations in demand in the job market while they are in the kolel. To forestall the ideological opposition of the Haredi leadership, the project was limited to students at least 23 years old. Most are married at this age and forced by circumstance to concern themselves with supporting their families.

Through its professional staff the Ministry of Labor makes sure that the courses meet the requirements of the job market, but also take into account the special needs of the students. Thus, for example, conditions of admission are relaxed and matriculation certificates are not required. Likewise, the Ministry allows them to take preparatory courses in English, mathematics, and language at the Government Institute for Technological and Scientific Training.<sup>85</sup> These courses are taken during the first year so that studies will not be protracted beyond five years. In addition, the Ministry gives the students many hours of additional study – beyond the 2,200 hours required for a degree.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare also came up with a new approach for Haredi women. Given the big drop in available teaching positions, the Ministry looked to create new employment routes. Courses were started in the Beth Jacob seminaries for technical degrees in the fields of computers, architecture, and interior design. The courses were taken simultaneously with the regular teaching studies at the seminary.

In recent years there has been a change of direction in the ratio of men to women enrolled in courses at the Government Institute for Technological and Scientific Training. Up until 1997 women were in a clear majority. In 1998 the

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85 To get their degrees the students are required to pass matriculation examinations at the level of at least three study units.

ratio was 34% men to 66% women. In 1999 it was 54% men to 46% women, as in the following year. In 2001 there was a slight drop among the men, reversing the previous year's ratio. There was also a significant rise in absolute numbers: in technical studies, from 113 in the special colleges, representing 0.05% of total students, to 1,184, or 4%. The principal fields of study were electronics and computers for the men and software, industry, and management for the women.<sup>86</sup> This figure is indicative of a significant change of direction in Haredi society insofar as vocational training for men is concerned.

The feeling in the Ministry of Labor is that it will be harder to enroll yeshiva students in the future because of the lack of jobs in the market. The fear is that in view of this situation many of the men will again cloister themselves in the Torah world. However, where there are concentrations of Haredi populations there is still a demand for professionals and therefore it is still possible to enroll Haredi students for suitable vocational training.

## **Activities of the Joint**

As mentioned above, the Joint has been involved in vocational training for Haredim since 1996.<sup>87</sup> The Joint has much experience with the yeshiva world and the Haredi sector, both in Israel and abroad. Moreover, it became clear that the government alone was incapable of dealing with the special needs of the Haredi population and the Joint succeeded in filling the vacuum.

The Joint set up a task force for the project, which was named “A Decent Living”. The task force includes coordinators who are themselves part of the Haredi community and help disseminate information and find applicants. The

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86 Data of the Government Institute for Technological and Scientific Training – The Haredi Sector at Colleges under the Supervision of the Government Institute for Technological and Scientific Training, March 2003.

87 The Joint is also very active on behalf of the Haredim through the Center for Entrepreneurship, where a large variety of courses are offered to men and women thinking of starting businesses and interested in obtaining the requisite know-how and tools.

Joint also set up a spiritual committee from among community leaders, whose members are regularly consulted.

At the start, the Joint worked alone, at the same time trying to get government bodies interested in the project. The Ministry of Finance responded favorably, and on its heels the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The division of labor between the Joint and the Ministry of Labor was as follows: the Joint would concentrate on getting students and running the project while the actual vocational training would be in the hands of the Ministry and professional staff. An agreement was accordingly signed between the Joint and the Ministry of Labor, called the Ne'eman Agreement because of the involvement of the minister of finance at the time, Ya'akov Ne'eman. The agreement explains the background of the joint effort:

Increasing Haredi participation in the employment cycle is a primary national goal today and one of the important challenges in utilizing Israel's human resources. Correspondingly, a willingness was found in this sector to receive vocational training in suitable frameworks. The first efforts in this direction were made directly by the Ministry, but given the fact that the vocational training section of the Ministry is not geared up today to implement a total marketing effort based on familiarity with the different camps in the Haredi sector, the need was seen to enlist the aid of an intermediary party with the requisite knowledge and experience, in order to penetrate this sector. The status of the Joint as a worldwide, extra-governmental body makes it suitable to organize vocational training that is appropriate for this sector. In addition the Joint has undertaken to finance 25% of the total cost of the project and itself has an interest in advancing the subject.<sup>88</sup>

With the change in policy commencing in 2002, the Joint withdrew its across-the-board support of private institutes and focused on financing the development of study programs and the operation of vocational training courses meeting defined criteria and published in tenders. All private and nonprofit vocational training institutes could participate in the tenders on the condition that they met the following conditions:

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88 From the one-year agreement signed between the Ministry of Labor and Welfare and the Joint on September 19, 2002.

1. Approval of a Haredi religious authority accepted, in the opinion of the Joint, by the Haredi sector or part of it. This approval would specify, among other things, that study conditions in the institute meet the requirements of the Haredi sector.
2. Proven ability to find and enroll students.
3. Administrative and pedagogical experience in the specific field of training.
4. Trained teaching staff and facilities suited to a Haredi population.
5. Ability to find suitable jobs for graduates.
6. Readiness to give the courses both in the morning and in the afternoon and evening, under conditions suitable for the students.
7. Submission of a detailed study program in the specific field.

As mentioned, from the end of 2000 the object population was defined as kolel students who were “professional religious scholars”. From among these students about 1,000 signed up for the first classes who finished their training (or are close to finishing). Most of the studies are carried out in cooperation with the Haredi Center (55%), some with the Naveh Institute at the School of Higher Technological Studies, and some with private bodies experienced in giving such courses, like the College of the South in Ashdod.

## **Activities of the Council for Higher Education**

In March 1998 a meeting was held in the office of Prime Minister Netanyahu in the presence of Prof. Nehemia Lev Zion, chairman of the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education, and Zohar Zuessapfel, chairman of the Electronics Industry Union. During the discussion, data were presented pointing to the expected shortage of technological personnel. Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister wrote the following memo to the Planning and Budgeting Committee:

I expect that the Planning and Budgeting Committee will plan and finance institutes of higher education to ensure that the number of graduates in the elite technological professions will meet expected demand. In your recommendations please relate also to the advancement of studies in these elite technological professions in two areas:

1. Training of manpower in these professions among the Haredi population, including women.
2. Decentralization of these studies to include Jerusalem, the Negev, and Galilee.

I request that these recommendations be submitted within 60 days, in coordination with the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance.<sup>89</sup>

This was the first step in the government to try to channel the Haredi population toward technological studies.

The change of policy in the Council for Higher Education toward the Haredi sector began to be felt only in 1999, during the term of Yossi Sarid as minister of education and head of the Council. In September 1999, the Go and Learn organization asked him for help in setting up the Haredi College. The minister was sympathetic to initiatives coming out of the Haredi community and expressed his willingness to assist in the effort to provide Haredim with an academic education. His sympathetic attitude caused the Council to change its policy, recognizing that exposing the Haredi population to a higher education could be a good way to get them involved in Israeli society and the economy.

In the same year the Council had before it figures on poverty that showed its widespread occurrence in the Haredi sector. Moreover the Council was cognizant of the signs of openness to change that began to be felt there (previously the Council had not been amenable to the idea of setting up special study frameworks for special sectors).

The attitude of Prof. Nehemia Lev Zion, chairman of the Planning and Budgeting Committee, was indicative of the new spirit, and in cooperation with Prof.

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<sup>89</sup> Memo from prime minister to chairman of the Planning and Budgeting Committee from March 27, 1998, Prime Minister's Office, Doc. 023-Current 11.

Yehezkel Teller (chairman of the Special Committee for Academic Studies for Haredim) and others a new era began: “The entry of the Haredi population into academic studies, and afterwards into the labor system, is a historic turning point with far-reaching social and economic implications for the Haredi public and Israeli society”.<sup>90</sup> So began the document composed by Prof. Lev Zion on the eve of the first meeting of the Council on the subject in 1999. Off-campus academic studies demanded modifications in accordance with Haredi norms, such as: separation of men and women, special kashrut observance, evening classes, the need to offset differences in basic education between men and women as a result of studying in different educational frameworks, etc.

In practical terms the new spirit expressed itself in a policy that encouraged initiatives within the community but at the same time made certain that a recognized academic institute would guarantee the academic level of the study program. The strategic solution that made the breakthrough possible was the following mix: the framework of studies would be Haredi and the responsibility of the initiators, who would concern themselves with enrolling students, adapting the institute to the Haredi way of life, getting the approval of the rabbis, “pacifying” the community, etc. The job of the Council would be to approve these initiatives. Correspondingly, the programs were to be purely academic and satisfy the criteria of institutes of higher education. If the courses were given on an academic campus, the latter would be sovereign in its decisions, the program being the responsibility of the institute and the institute being the one to implement it. If the course were given off-campus, the Council would be required to approve its academic level and the Planning and Budgeting Committee would be required to approve its budget.

This policy enabled the initiating body to decide, in accordance with its world view, that certain subjects or areas of knowledge would not be included in the course of studies. On the other hand, subjects approved as suitable had to satisfy academic criteria and instruction had to be in the hands of a recognized academic body. For example, studies in the Social Work Department at the Haredi

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90 Council for Higher Education. Memo from Nehemia Lev Zion to Prof. Zvi Weinberg from July 8, 1999.

College in Bene Beraq or Jerusalem are carried out in a Haredi framework adapted to Haredi values and the Haredi way of life., but the study program belongs to Bar-Ilan University and Haredi participants are Bar-Ilan students in every sense. If in the future Haredi institutes were to ask to develop their own, independent study programs, they would have to submit them to the Council for Higher Education, and only if the program satisfied academic criteria would it be approved. However, until the time that a Haredi college is established whose level is high enough to award degrees, the Council enables Haredi students to get their academic degrees through the existing recognized institutes.

The Council for Higher Education set up a special committee to deal with the various aspects of studies in the Haredi sector. This committee oversees admissions and concerns itself with the suitability of the academic staff, the institute's library, and implementation of the study program. After the policy guidelines were set, operative decisions were also made, and in the end the special frameworks for Haredi units were created as described above.

At this stage, the involvement of two recognized institutes is what is most noteworthy: the Center for Higher Technological Studies and Bar-Ilan University. The fact that both of them maintain a religious atmosphere explains why they are in demand in the Haredi sector as facilities for academic studies.

In the opinion of the Council for Higher Education the agreements signed between the Haredi College of Bene Beraq and the School of Higher Technological Studies and Bar-Ilan University limit the desired variety of academic institutes and curtail competition between them in devising programs suitable for Haredim. The Council would prefer to see the project opened to additional bodies, as in the example of the B.A. programs for speech-language therapy jointly devised by the Haredi College in Jerusalem and Hadassah College.

Tough questions are already being asked which could curtail or delay the establishment of recognized academic institutes adapted to the Haredi sector. For example, the wavering of the Haredi community on the question of higher education makes long-term planning impossible, which is essential in developing an academic program. Likewise, it is not clear what the scope of the pool of candidates is. The Torah sages do not have a clearcut position and the interpre-



tation of their attitudes in the community is not uniform or clear. Other problems are the absence of an unequivocal definition of the range of permitted subjects (it is more clear what the forbidden subjects are) and the lack of motivation of students and of certain sections of the Haredi community concerning higher education.

In view of this situation, it may be assumed that the solution offered by the Council for Higher Education will be the optimal one for the foreseeable future, namely a positive response, insofar as possible, to specific initiatives coming out of the community. It can be assumed that in the future as well the Council will find an academic “subcontractor” to implement the project and that activity will continue to be sporadic. Long-term planning will not be possible because of the instability of all the factors involved, starting with the mood of the community and the desire of yeshiva students “to get out in the world” and down to the situation in the job market and the extent to which the Tal Law or government regulations sidestepping it are implemented, a situation creating confusion and uncertainty about government policy.<sup>91</sup>

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91 The Plan for Rehabilitating the Israeli Economy issued by the Ministry of Finance on March 24, 2003, in the section on getting yeshiva students into the job market, includes a regulation allowing them to do so without losing their benefits as “professional religious scholars”. It exempts them from military service to the age of 27.

## 8 THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### General Features

The institutes of higher education today including special frameworks for Haredi students are the following: the School for Higher Technological Studies via the Tal Institute and the Lustig Institute (for women); Bar-Ilan University via the Haredi College of Bene Beraq (for both men and women) and the Haredi College of Jerusalem (at this stage for women only); the Kiryat Ono Academic Center (for men and women); Hadassah Academic College via the Haredi College of Jerusalem, Sha'arei Mishpat College (for men and women). In addition, one should mention the institutes for vocational training: the Haredi Center; the Naveh Institute; the College of the South in Ashdod; etc.

An examination of the institutes established in the Haredi sector to meet the demand for vocational and academic training shows that this is a heterogeneous population.<sup>92</sup> Haredim are not of a piece – they fall into groups with different ways of life, and these differences also determine the kind of study frameworks they prefer.

For example, yeshiva students who see themselves bound to rabbinical authority and do not wish to engage in unsupervised study will not go to the School for Higher Technological Studies. This institution is indeed meant for the Haredi population but is not bound to the supervisory committee of Torah sages. Such students will prefer the Haredi Center for Technological Studies and the Haredi

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<sup>92</sup> The figures in this chapter are for the year 2002.

College of Bene Beraq, which are under the control of the supervisory committee. Another example: Not every Haredi student who seeks a law degree will dare to enroll in the Sha'arei Mishpat law school, because despite the fact that Haredim study there, the institute does not have a Haredi character.

The institutes that absorbed students from the Haredi sector therefore had to adapt themselves to the special needs of all kinds of students, as well as to the demands of the vocational training section of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare or the academic requirements of the Council for Higher Education. The different mixes produced a variety of frameworks to satisfy a variety of demands.

Generally speaking, these institutes have a number of things in common:

First, in all of them there is a separation of the sexes. Men and women study in different buildings or on different days.

Second, in all of them there is strict observance of rules of proper behavior and dress and times of prayer.

Third, among men there is no mixing of secular and religious studies. Therefore they study in the evening instead of the Third Order of the yeshivas. Another solution is to have them engage in secular studies one day a week, from morning to evening; this arrangement is apparently acceptable to some of the Haredim as one that does not mix sacred and profane studies.

Fourth, all the institutes have relaxed their requirements for admission for Haredi students. This applies mainly to men and to the vocational training courses of the vocational training section of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare as well as the frameworks operated by the Joint.

As a rule there are more frameworks for academic studies and vocational training courses for women than for men, and their numbers in these frameworks are greater than of men. Women's vocational training is also offered in Beth Jacob institutions alongside their regular teacher training.

## **Institutions for Haredim Only**

Aside from the training offered in the Beth Jacob seminaries, the only Haredi institutes that have studies for the Haredi population only are the Haredi Center for Technological Studies and its academic branches – the Haredi Colleges of Bene Beraq and Jerusalem. These institutes operate under rabbinical authority. The Haredi Center and the Haredi College of Bene Beraq are responsible to the supervisory committee (spiritual committee) under the auspices of the Torah sages R. Steinman and R. Eliashiv and the Haredi College of Jerusalem (where only women presently study) operate under the supervision of R. Ovadiah Yosef.

These institutes operate organizationally in a Haredi atmosphere, but their study program was devised by recognized professional and/or academic bodies, at Bar-Ilan University, Hadassah College, and the Open University. When they complete their studies, students will receive their degrees from the recognized academic institutes.

Bar-Ilan University does not initiate activities but responds to requests from the community. This policy derives from the desire of the University to render assistance to the Haredi sector where it is wanted. The University sees this work as a contribution to society.

The subjects studied by Haredi students at Bar-Ilan University are social work, economics, and computers. Since opening courses to the Haredi sector the University has enrolled 216 Haredi men and women. Admission standards have been relaxed but while studying they must meet the same demands as other students.

## **Haredi Frameworks in Religious Institutions**

The School for Higher Technological Studies with its various frameworks is a recognized academic institute operating in a religious atmosphere but, as mentioned, it is not bound to a supervisory body under rabbinical authority. The institute has frameworks for Haredi men and women pursuing various courses

of study according to their needs. At the Lev and Tal Institutes, Haredi men and women study with other students, but at the Naveh and Lustig Institutes only Haredim are enrolled.

Most of the Haredi men and women at the institutes of the School for Higher Technological Studies are there with the consent of a rabbinical authority, but the institute is not under religious supervision. The Sha'arei Mishpat College is also an academic institute where the atmosphere is religious rather than Haredi, yet Haredim still study there – some with rabbinical consent, others on their own decision. This institute is not suitable for all Haredi students but for special groups among them.

## **Haredi Frameworks in General Institutions**

The Kiryat Ono Academic Center and the College of the South in Ashdod are general institutes with frameworks of study for Haredim.

The Academic Center (formerly a branch of Manchester College) offers academic degrees in fields approved by the Council for Higher Education. It created a special framework for Haredim (on a separate campus) where they study apart from the rest of the students.

The College of the South in Ashdod is a private institute open to the general public and specializing in certain fields, such as accounting, tax consulting, and land assessment. The College met the criteria published in the tenders of the Ministry of Labor and the Joint and within this framework holds separate courses for Haredi students.

While these institutes are not bound to a rabbinical supervisory committee, Haredi students enrolled there only after receiving rabbinical consent, so that in this sense they are under personal supervision.

Below is a brief survey of the various institutes, including a short social profile of the institute, the history of its establishment, and the courses offered. This survey can

enlighten us as to the heterogeneity of the community, its typical problems, and the special solutions offered by the institute in accordance with the needs of the students and professional or academic criteria.

## **Institutes for Vocational Studies**

### **Institutes for Haredim Only**

#### **1. HAREDI CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES**

*History of the Institute.* The Haredi Center for Technological Studies, founded in 1996, is the first Haredi institute for vocational training, with branches in Jerusalem, Bene Beraq, Ashdod, and Kiryat Sefer.

The initiator of the project was Dr. Abraham Foss, an American Jew who was the first to invest money in it. He enlisted Rabbi Zvi Weinberger, former president of the Lev Institute.<sup>93</sup> At first, two vocational training programs were offered – one in Bene Beraq and one in Jerusalem, with the professional involvement of the Lev Institute in Jerusalem. This connection did not last very long, as the administration of the Lev Institute refused to submit itself to the supervision of the spiritual committee under rabbinical authority. The Lev Institute combines religious and secular studies (half a day each) in the tradition of “Torah and Worldliness” characterizing Haredim of German origin, so that the atmosphere there did not suit Haredim under rabbinical authority.

For the work of setting up and running the Center, Rabbi Yehezkel Fogel was enlisted, a graduate of Israeli yeshivas with a congregation in the United States and a chaplain in the U.S. Army. R. Fogel also had experience in educational

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93 For the events in the Haredi sector and the involvement of R. Shach that brought about the creation of the Haredi Center, see Chapter 6.

administration in high school yeshivas, at a girls' school, and at an institute for higher Torah studies, as well as in research publications.

*Basic Principles.* The Haredi Center for Technological Studies was founded on the basis of the following principles:

- Separation of religious and secular studies.
- Separation of men and women.
- Minimum age of 23, except in special cases.
- Evening classes instead of the Third Order in the yeshiva.
- Maintenance of a Haredi atmosphere at the Institute.
- Complete submission to a spiritual committee and rabbinical authority.

*Students and Admission Requirements.* The Center offers most of the jointly devised courses of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Joint intended for “professional religious scholars”. In addition, it offers courses for Haredi men and women interested in learning a profession. In effect, the Center accepts anyone wishing to learn a profession and not wanting or not able to continue with religious studies alone. Admission exams and computerized classification are administered by an external professional body. Since students lack matriculation certificates and previous knowledge, the examinations do not test their level of knowledge as in the usual way of assessing candidates at a university but are broader, searching out skills and potential. The examinations are not the only means of selection; additional characteristics are checked, such as sociability, independence, type of yeshiva studied at, etc.

Student preferences are not a significant factor in directing students to a particular profession, since they themselves find it difficult to define their predilections. They arrive at a relatively late age and generally look for guidance. Therefore the choice of subjects and direction of study is made by the administration.

Tuition is subsidized for most of the courses and is low in comparison with other courses. In addition, the student can get a loan or assistance from the Institute's scholarship fund.

*Academic Year.* The academic year consists of two semesters – summer and winter. The summer semester begins after Passover and runs to the eve of Yom Kippur. The winter semester begins after Sukkot and continues to just before Passover.

*Courses Offered.* The Center offers a wide variety of courses. Emphasis is on vocational training that will facilitate entering the job market. The aim is to enable graduates to pass the examinations given by the Ministry of Labor or other government offices and get a certificate and/or professional classification. Since most of the students lack a general education, the Center offers preparatory courses in mathematics, English, Hebrew, and computer skills. The Center also offers advanced courses to help students specialize and find work.

The various frameworks of the Center provide a wide range of courses:

1. Computers – six programs of specialization.
2. Graphics and multimedia – two programs
3. Accounting – three programs up to Grade 3 bookkeeping
4. Tax consulting – five programs
5. Technical studies – five courses in practical electrical work and architectural drafting.
6. Courses in real estate – management, organization, and marketing.

The courses are given in cooperation with the External Studies Division of Bar-Ilan University, which oversees the program of study, approving it and issuing diplomas together with the Center to those who successfully complete their studies. According to the administration, since its doors were opened in 1996 around 1,500 men and women have graduated from the Center and around 900 have found jobs.<sup>94</sup>

*Organization.* Organizationally the Center is divided into two frameworks – the Technical School and the School for Higher Vocational Studies for women.

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94 As of September 2002.



**Messila – Technical School.** Approved by the Technicians' Council to give courses to prepare students for government examinations and for professional degrees and registration in the Register of Technicians. Messila offers courses for technical degrees in the fields of computer electronics, software, architecture and interior design, construction and industry, and marketing administration. The length of studies is three years. Students who scored high on the admission exam and can meet requirements are accepted. For those lacking a matriculation certificate the Center offers a pre-tech program where mathematics, English, and Hebrew are taught at the level of three high school study units. The program is aimed at enabling students subsequently to move up to higher vocational studies.

**Magen Institute for Women.** The Magen Institute is defined as an institute for higher vocational studies for women. Classes are conducted in the buildings, classrooms, and laboratories of the Haredi Center, usually in the morning. The criteria for admitting the women are more flexible than for men. Women aged 20 or over (above the seminary age) are interviewed by a rabbi's wife and/or admissions committee, while girls between the ages of 18 and 20 are only admitted if they simultaneously study at a Torah institute. Here too tuition is subsidized and students have the possibility of receiving scholarships and assistance.

The courses are similar to the ones offered to the men, with minor changes. The computer, graphics and multimedia, and accounting programs are identical. The management program includes courses aimed at women, such as executive secretarial work, medical secretarial work, computerized offices, alongside general administration and marketing, which are also offered to men. Likewise additional courses are offered to women only: licensed clerical services (travel agent), commercial English, and technical writing.

## **2. VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN BETH JACOB SEMINARIES**

To understand the change in women's study programs we shall first describe the regular course of studies followed by women for teaching degrees in the not so distant past.

*Regular Study Program.* After completing their primary schooling, girls enter high school, where general and religious studies continue to be combined. About a third of the high schools have seminaries attached where the girls can continue their education. These are all called Beth Jacob Seminaries, but there are also other frameworks. High school studies last four years, and afterwards the girls take final examinations under the auspices of the Szold Institute which are parallel to matriculation examinations.<sup>95</sup> Passing the tests allows the girls to study for an additional two years<sup>96</sup> in the seminary and get a degree as a licensed teacher.

The study program included sacred and secular subjects, with the religious studies given priority in terms both of the value attached to them and the number of hours of instruction. The areas of general study can be divided into two types: language skills and general knowledge. Subjects in the former include reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary, oral expression, and literature.<sup>97</sup> General knowledge includes arithmetic and geometry, English, science, computer skills, civics, geography, history (from the standpoint of the special nature of their Haredi sector), physical education, music, and art.

As many of the girls marry and have children at this stage in their lives, which takes them temporarily out of the educational and occupational systems, they are given the opportunity to study for an additional year after a break in order to get their teaching degrees. (In effect, the girls accumulate around 450 additional hours in their first two years, which makes it possible to finish the teaching studies in half the time.) A smaller percentage of the girls take the extra year at some future stage in their lives in order to get a degree comparable to the B.Ed. given at regular teachers seminaries after four years of study. This comparable degree is not recognized academically, but it is recognized at the Ministry of Education as a salary grade. The Ministry of Education allows seminary stu-

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95 Passing the examinations makes it possible to continue with teaching studies at Beth Jacob only; it does not grant admission to a university,

96 High schools with attached seminaries spread their studies over six years; such schools are located mainly in Bene Beraq and Jerusalem.

97 In literature a very careful selection of writers is made, in accordance with the views and values of Haredi society.

dents who marry during their studies to take a break at an intermediate stage while keeping their rights as regular students.

In about half the schools, mostly outside Jerusalem and Bene Beraq, the girls take regular matriculation exams (for example, at the Haifa seminary). This is a result of a different kind of historical development in these institutes: they are the product of Haredim of German origin who identify with the “Torah and Worldliness” approach of R. Samson Raphael Hirsch. Girls taking only some of the exams sometimes complete the work necessary for a matriculation certificate independently. Of those who meet the requirements for a certificate, only a few go on to institutes of higher education; most continue in teacher training at the Beth Jacob seminaries. This system could have become an academic one but remained as it was out of ideological choice.

*New Horizons.* With the cutback in teaching jobs, many of the girls at the seminaries began taking an interest in other occupations – in both vocational training institutes and institutes of higher education suitable for Haredi girls. To keep them from slipping away to institutes that are “out of bounds” and unsupervised – and at the same time to deal with the lack of teaching jobs – parallel vocational training programs were set up at the Beth Jacob and other schools. Vocational training does in fact prepare the girls to teach the subjects they study, but beyond this it gives them the opportunity to take certification exams at the Ministry of Labor or at the Technicians’ Council for technical degrees. The Beth Jacob seminaries do not allow girls to pursue vocational studies alone, but only as a minor, complementary study course. This is because the aim of the seminaries is to train the girls in general teaching. The vocational framework gives them the opportunity to learn an additional profession, such as computerized office work, bookkeeping, architectural drafting, interior design, etc. – professions that are today more attractive than teaching.

The additional vocational study course in the Beth Jacob seminaries solves a number of problems: first, it gives the girls greater employment possibilities, and sometimes at higher pay; second, the girls remain inside the community and do not have to deal with a learning environment that does not suit their upbringing; third, it gives them a head start – it is easier to take the additional study course during their regular studies than at a later age when they are married and

with children; fourthly, their chances for making a good match are not affected, as in the marriage market a Beth Jacob graduate ranks higher than someone who has only learned a profession, even if it pays more than teaching.

Despite the difficulty Beth Jacob graduates have getting teaching jobs, and despite the varied and attractive alternatives, the Haredi world gives priority to the profession of teaching, for two main reasons: 1) it is convenient work for a wife and mother; it is difficult to find professional employment in the Haredi community, and outside it the Haredi woman must contend with many limitations.

### 3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR EASTERN GIRLS

Officially the seminaries make no distinction between Eastern and Ashkenazi girls, but in reality these institutes are fairly homogeneous. For a number of years now the Beth Jacob seminaries too have been divided according to the divisions of the Haredi camp into Lithuanian, Hasidic, and Sephardi. The big Hasidic sects – Gur, Vizhnitz, and Belz – have their own seminaries alongside the Lithuanian ones. Generally speaking, it is difficult for Eastern girls to get accepted in the best seminaries. This problem of getting into the Lithuanian seminaries and the shortage of teaching jobs led to the creation of a separate school system, specializing in training Eastern girls for technological professions.

Atid – a countrywide, privately operated scientific and technological education system – has study programs in 15 schools.<sup>98</sup> These programs are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and are intended for both the Arab and Haredi sectors.

In the Haredi sector the network operates three girls' schools, in Jerusalem, Bene Beraq, and Beersheba. These schools combine academic and technological studies with religious studies. Religious studies occupy 12-15 hours a week while academic and vocational studies are given 28-30 hours. Some of the

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98 The project started in 1998-1999 with the initiative of Mrs. Zipporah Yishai, wife of Eli Yishai, the former minister of labor and social welfare.

students take the matriculation exams and some take the seminary exams given at the Szold Institute. The technological occupations taught are computer graphics, product design, accounting (grade 1 and 2 bookkeeping), and management. In addition, all girls learn how to use the computer and various programs, but are not allowed to use the Internet. At the end of the 12th grade the girls get a vocational classification and graduation certificate comparable to licensing certificates of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

In each of the schools there are 70-150 girls in grades 9-12. Most are from the lower socio-economic stratum and many have returned to the faith.

## **Haredi Frameworks in Religious Institutions**

### **NAVEH INSTITUTE (AT THE SCHOOL FOR HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES)**

*History of the Institute.* The Naveh Institute was founded in 1998 as part of the School for Higher Technological Studies in Jerusalem with a single course of studies in computer science. Its aim was to answer the needs of Haredim who could not study at the Lev Institute. The School for Higher Technological Studies was aware of the changes taking place in the Haredi sector with regard to general studies for the purpose of earning a livelihood. At the same time, it was clear to the heads of the School that the Lev Institute (the School's original institute which was not bound to rabbinical authority), was not suitable for most Haredi candidates. Thanks to the window of opportunity opened in the community for academic studies, the School founded the Naveh Institute, which offers Haredi students programs in the fields of technology and management. Classes are held in the evening, enabling students to attend them instead of the Third Order at the yeshivas. Thus they preserve the way of life they are accustomed to and their status as “professional religious scholars”.

In 1999, the Naveh Institute opened two branches, one in Jerusalem and one in Gush Dan (at the facilities of the Bene Beraq Haredi Center). The Bene Beraq branch operated in cooperation with the Haredi Center during the first year, until their ways parted.

*Courses Offered.* The programs offered at the Naveh Institute are accounting and information systems, management and marketing, technology and computers.

*Students.* The students come from all circles: the Hasidic courts, like Gur, Vizhnitz, and Chabad, some Lithuanian, some “Torah-bound”. Most of the students are of Ashkenazi origin with a minority Sephardi. There is no clear explanation for this. The head of the Institute believes it may be connected with the level of the yeshivas and/or kolels, the assumption being that the level is higher in the Ashkenazi sector. The average age of students is 30, and most are married and have children.

*Arrangements for Haredim.* In its four years of existence until today, the Institute has had around 250 Haredi students. On the whole, fewer are enrolled there than anticipated. At the Institute it is believed that the reason was that suitable arrangements were not made at an earlier stage. For example, in the beginning classes were held in the morning, which was not suitable for Haredim, so that many did not sign up. When the problem was identified, the hours were changed, and today evening classes are held four times a week.

The administration of the School for Higher Technological Studies decided to make both organizational and substantive changes in order to adapt the Naveh Institute to Haredi requirements. Accordingly, in 2003 a pre-academic study program will be opened at the School offering vocational training (in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare) as well as academic courses for yeshiva students. The idea is to set up “stations” on the learning route, so that even if students drop out they will have an occupation and a recognized professional certificate which will open up possibilities of earning a livelihood. If the yeshiva student continues with his studies with the aim of obtaining an academic degree, he will get credit for some of the courses he took in the pre-academic program. The idea is to make the pre-academic institute more attractive to the Haredi populace.

## **Haredi Frameworks in General Institutions**

### **COLLEGE OF THE SOUTH**

*History of the Institute.* The College of the South in Ashdod has been operating since 1996. The connection of the College with the Ministry of Labor and Welfare and the Joint has its origins in a tender published by the Ministry of Labor in July 2000. The College was awarded the contract and opened a course in land assessment in accordance with the criteria established by the Ministry of Labor and the Joint for the enrollment of students from the Haredi sector. Haredi students were accorded lower admission standards: 12 years of yeshiva study sufficed to get them accepted. In addition they were given extra hours to make up for the education gap – above and beyond the number of hours fixed for nonreligious students.

*Courses Offered.* The College today offers a number of courses for “professional religious scholars” within the framework of the joint project of the Ministry of Labor and the Joint:

1. Land assessment, four semesters, evening classes. Practically speaking, the course runs two years and on completion students take the certification exam of the Ministry of Justice.
2. Tax consulting, time frame as for Land Assessment. On completion of the course, students take the certification exam of the Ministry of Finance and the Income Tax Bureau. Haredi family men working as accountants also take the course on their own, with the idea of moving into tax consulting work.
3. Property management and marketing, one year. Admission requirements are even lower and studies less demanding. On completion, graduates take the sales management exam of the Ministry of Labor.
4. Accounting, seven semesters, evening classes. Practically speaking, the course runs four and a half years, including specialization. On completion, graduates take the certification exam of the Accountants Bureau.

The training courses in which the College of the South specializes are quite expensive because of their length and the special organization of studies. Most of the costs are covered by the Ministry of Labor and the Joint, with the yeshiva student required to pay in the neighborhood of \$700 a year (a quarter of the cost).

## **Institutes for Academic Studies**

### **Institutes for Haredim Only**

#### **1. HAREDI COLLEGE OF BENE BERAQ**

*History of the Institute.* The College was established on the organizational foundations of the Haredi Center for Technological Studies in accordance with a decision of the Council for Higher Education of July 27, 1999. The aim was to create a Haredi college in Gush Dan for the advancement of academic education in the Haredi sector: “The Council approves in principle the idea of establishing a Haredi academic college in Gush Dan which will follow the regulations set forth in the Council for Higher Education Law and will be financed by the Planning and Budgeting Committee according to accepted criteria. The new college will be established as a separate corporation, independent of any existing organization, with its regulations and administrative bodies approved by the Council for Higher Education”.

The creation of the Haredi College became possible after the Torah sages gave their consent, subject to the restrictions specified in their letter of June 7, 1999. (see p. 70) The Spiritual Committee that had previously been created to supervise the Haredi Center for Technological Studies was authorized to supervise the Bene Beraq College as well.

The College was founded by the same nonprofit organization that had founded the Haredi Center for Technological Studies, headed by Dr. Abraham Foss. Members of the founding organization included academic figures like Prof.



Hillel Fuerstenberg of the Hebrew University, Prof. Ya'akov Schweik of Bar-Ilan University, and Prof. Moshe Trop of Ben-Gurion University; people from the world of business and technology like Shlomo Ariel, deputy director of Nes Technologies, Shlomo Unger, director of Technological Thinking, Attorney Shimshon Halperin, and Ya'akov Vint, former deputy director of the First International Bank; and people from the Haredi community like R. Yosef Reichman, R. Yehezkel Fogel, etc.

The choice for first president of the College was Prof. Meir Brookheimer, a Haredi mathematician who had won international recognition and was one of the founders of the Open University in Britain and Israel. Prof. Brookheimer had previously served as head of the Science Teaching Department at the Weizmann Institute, leaving this position when he was appointed president of the College. Two years later the presidency went to Prof. Michael Shiber, a Haredi physicist from the Department of Applied Sciences at the Hebrew University.

*Aims of the Institute.* The principal aim of the Haredi College of Bene Beraq is to train academic personnel in various professional fields who will then be able to occupy senior positions in the Israeli economy. This aim was to be achieved by turning the College into an independent academic institute working in cooperation with other academic institutes in Israel and maintaining close ties to public institutions and bodies connected to higher education, employment, and technology.

*Organization.* Until it receives the status of an independent academic institute the College relies administratively on the experience of the Haredi Center for Technological Studies while its undergraduate programs have been fixed, from the year 2000 on, by Bar-Ilan University. Students at the College are considered students of the University in every sense and are bound by its academic and administrative regulations. The teaching staff is part of the University teaching staff and directly responsible to the departments of the University. The College operates a pre-academic course of studies for its students. The academic year is divided into three trimesters.

## 2. HAREDI COLLEGE OF JERUSALEM

*History of the Institute.* The Haredi College of Jerusalem was established on the basis of a decision of the Council for Higher Education from November 28, 2000. The Council approved the operation of an academic and pre-academic study program in Jerusalem for the Haredi sector by recognized institutes of higher education, beginning in the 2000 academic year. At the same time the Council broadened the powers of the committee accompanying the Haredi College of Bene Beraq to direct the activities of the Haredi College of Jerusalem as well.

The initiative for the establishment of the Haredi College came from the head of the Shas-associated Go and Learn organization, Gabi Butbul. He asked Mrs. Adina Bar-Shalom (the daughter of R. Ovadiah Yosef) to head the College. The founders wished to create a university from the outset, that is, a permanent institution, and not just an additional college where studies are based on the lifespan of courses. However, given the objective difficulties and the complexity of the subject and the enormous distance between the starting point and the far-reaching ambitions of the founders, they finally had to settle for a kind of Haredi hostel for academic studies.

The College was set up under the supervision of rabbis, members of the high religious court of the Council of Torah Sages headed by R. Ovadiah Yosef. Later on, rabbis with educational experience joined the project, guiding the Haredi College on its road to academic studies.

Before the College was opened along its present lines, there was a period of negotiations (lasting a year and a half) with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. On the eve of the opening, negotiations reached an impasse owing to the difference in outlooks. The admissions process was then in full swing, and though candidates had already been selected, studies were postponed. According to the administration, this hurt the reputation of the College and affected its ability to attract students.

After the failure of the negotiations with the Hebrew University, the Haredi College asked Bar-Ilan University to take it under its academic wing. The Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education had to

change its regulations, which meant in effect changing its policy, and allowed Bar-Ilan University to inaugurate a course of academic studies for the Haredi sector in Jerusalem. From this point on the organization process proceeded quickly and efficiently and 23 Haredi students were able to start pre-academic studies.

*Organization.* The College combines a Haredi framework and academic programs and students. “I decided that instead of going to the academy we’ll bring the academy to us and on our conditions, without compromising, while standing on our principles and way of life”. That was how it was put by Mrs. Bar-Shalom, the head of the College.

The Haredi College emphasizes that it was founded without any political or ethnic ties and that the Haredi girls studying there are from all circles of the Haredi population in Israel.

*Students.* At this stage the College is for girls only. In 2002, around 130 girls were enrolled in pre-academic and regular courses. The first class is due to complete its first year of studies in social work. Some of the girls completed the pre-academic course and some are graduates of the Naveh school in Jerusalem (not to be identified with the Naveh Institute of the School for Higher Technological Studies), which offers a degree in social work from Thomas Edison University in the United States (a degree not recognized in Israel).

In the future, with the blessing of R. Ovadiah Yosef, Mrs. Bar-Shalom intends to invite yeshiva students to enroll in courses that will be opened for them when conditions permit.

*Courses Offered.* The Haredi College offers courses in the following fields: social work, laboratory sciences through Hadassah College (recognized by the Council for Higher Education), economics, and management, through the Open University.

In 2003 it planned to offer additional courses: computers, accounting, and another course that will furnish an academic bachelor's degree (in educational administration) to teachers from the Beth Jacob seminary.

The possibility is still being considered of starting a program for speech-language therapy via Hadassah College. This college was approved by the Council of Higher Education to award an academic degree in speech-language therapy and to give a comparable course to Haredi students at the Haredi College of Jerusalem as well.

## **Haredi Frameworks in Religious Institutions**

### **1. SCHOOL FOR HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES IN JERUSALEM**

*Organization.* The School is an academic institute run in a religious atmosphere, that is, it is not an institute for Haredim only. It is authorized to award the following degrees:

1. Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science in its Physics and Electro-Optics Department. Qualifies to be registered in the Register of Engineers and Architects.
2. Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science in its Electronics Engineering Department. Qualifies to be registered in the Register of Engineers and Architects.
3. Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science in its Computer Sciences Department.
4. Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science in its Computer Engineering/Software and Communications Department. Qualifies to be registered in the Register of Engineers and Architects.
5. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in its Applied Physics/Medical Engineering Department. Qualifies to be registered in the Register of Engineers and Architects.
6. Bachelor of Administrative Accounting and Information Systems in the Administrative Accounting and Information Systems Program.

7. Bachelor of Technology Management and Marketing
8. Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science in its Industrial Engineering and Management Department.

In most departments the students can combine professional training with studies for a university teaching certificate. This certificate qualifies them to teach mathematics, physics, and computer science in secondary schools.

The School for Higher Technological Studies is divided into four institutes:

- Lev Institute in Jerusalem – combining religious studies (morning) with secular studies (evening).
- Lustig Institute – for women, in Ramat Gan (mainly for Haredi women).
- Tal Institute – for women, in Jerusalem (Haredi women study there too).
- Naveh Institute – for men, in Jerusalem, with evening classes for Haredi students in the fields of management and engineering.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to its activities at the Institutes, the School operated a vocational training program in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor.

#### LEV INSTITUTE

*History of the Institute and Courses Offered.* The School for Higher Technological Studies in Jerusalem was founded in 1969 by Prof. Ze'ev Lev. It already became recognized as an institute of higher education in 1977. In the first 30 years of its existence it was also known as the Lev Institute after Prof. Lev. and was for men only. Its program combines religious and secular studies. The aim of its founders was to create an academic institute with emphasis on the practical, keeping abreast of world developments in industry within a Torah framework. The dream of Prof. Lev was to train observant engineers and managers who would work in Israeli industry. Three suitable fields were chosen: electro-

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<sup>99</sup> For a description of the Naveh Institute, see p. 101

optics, computer science, and electronics. Over the years additional fields were added: computer engineering, medical engineering, administrative accounting and information systems, technology management and marketing, industrial engineering and management, bio-informatics.

*Students.* The student body at the Lev Institute is very heterogeneous. It includes a high percentage of army veterans, Hesder yeshiva graduates, “external students”, immigrants from Russia, France, Ethiopia, and North Africa, and even Haredim who arrive individually. Religiously, the atmosphere is not strict enough to suit the taste of some of the Haredim, though it is hard to distinguish between them and those defined by teachers and administrators as “Torah-bound” (strict in fulfilling the religious commandments but not part of the Haredi world). The study framework at the Lev Institute is too “bold” from the standpoint of many Haredim, as it departs from their way of life. Specifically, it combines sacred and secular studies and entails loss of the status of “professional religious scholar”. Therefore the School set up a framework geared to Haredim – the Naveh Institute. Thus the Naveh Institute is more suited to absorb Haredi students.

#### **LUSTIG INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN**

*Character of the Institute.* Lustig High School, belonging to the Beth Jacob educational system, has been in existence for 55 years. It was founded in 1948 and is considered a prestigious school, attracting students from the upper strata of Haredi society. In its outlook it is closer than other schools in the system to the “Torah and Worldliness” approach (its clientele was identified in the past with the Poalei Agudat Israel Party). For 35 years the school has been developing in a Haredi direction under the leadership of Rabbi Yona Metzger, but it has retained its high level of studies, preparing students for full matriculation. The ambition of graduates is to marry a yeshiva student.

*History of the Institute.* The demand to continue their studies came from the graduates. The Beth Jacob seminaries offered teaching as almost the only possi-

bility of learning a profession, the only alternative being accounting.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, teachers' salaries are relatively low. Since the women are the breadwinners in Haredi families, and most families have many children, the girls felt that they would have to learn a profession that paid better than teaching.

Already in the 1984 school year an attempt was made to start a computer studies program at the Lustig school, but it failed because conditions were not yet ripe. In 1996, which, as will be remembered, was a boom year for the hi-tech industry, steps were taken to introduce an academic program into the school. Rabbi Zvi Ilani, an educator and computer specialist with academic experience, was approached to head the program. The first overtures were made to the Technical Department of the External Studies Division of the Technion, but only in 1999 did the opportunity arise to implement the idea, when the right circumstances came together: there was at the time a positive attitude toward academic studies in the Haredi sector and a further boost was given by the Council for Higher Education decision of July 27, 1999. As will be remembered, this decision approved academic studies in the Haredi sector and in principle gave consent to the creation of a Haredi academic college in Bene Beraq. The decision was accompanied by an operative one by the Planning and Budgeting Committee which enabled the School for Higher Technological Studies to start an academic program for women at the Lustig school. This authorization was given on the condition that the program would serve as a stage in the establishment of a Haredi college and would be fully integrated into this Haredi college when it came into being.

*Students.* This decision made it possible to begin organizing. In the 1999 school year 20 girls began their studies in the computer program. In the 2003 school year there were 230 students at the Lustig Institute, 40% of them high school graduates and 60% from Beth Jacob seminaries all around the country. Most of the girls come from ultra-Orthodox Haredi homes but there are also among

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<sup>100</sup> Thirty years ago a private institute called the Institute for Higher Accounting Studies offered courses to Haredi girls, preparing them for the examinations of the Accountants' Bureau. Hundreds took them and many are employed as accountants, but their degree is not recognized as an academic one.

them those who have returned to the faith, girls after regular army service, girls who went into the academic program after a year at a Beth Jacob seminary. In 2003, 76 new students were enrolled.

*Courses and Degrees.* Today the Lustig Institute offers a bachelor's degree in computers called Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science. This degree qualifies graduates for registration in the Register of Engineers. All graduates of the first class of the computer program who passed their final examinations found work. The possibility of awarding a master's degree in computers is in the process of being approved by the Council for Higher Education.

In addition, the Institute started an accounting and information systems program leading to a Bachelor of Administrative Accounting and Information Systems degree. It should be pointed out that graduates are exempt from 12 of the 15 examinations given by the Accountants' Bureau. The administration of the Ludwig Institute plans to add programs in nursing and medical administration.

On the eve of the 2000 school year the Haredi College of Bene Beraq requested to end its ties with the School for Higher Technological Studies in Jerusalem because of conflicting ideological views. At the same time, the Council for Higher Education authorized Bar-Ilan University (in its decision of November 7, 2000) to offer academic programs within the framework of the Haredi College of Bene Beraq. It is clear that the decision of the Council for Higher Education to allow the School for Higher Technological Studies to develop study programs and help set up the Haredi College of Bene Beraq, while undertaking to cease its teaching activity in Bene Beraq after the Haredi college was recognized by the Council, will not stand the test of reality. The Lustig Institute has become an integral part of the School for Higher Technological Studies and it cannot be expected that it will become part of the Haredi College of Bene Beraq.

#### **TAL INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN**

*Establishment of the Institute.* The Tal Institute was founded in the settlement of Bet El in 1999. It was established by the School of Higher Technological Studies under the authorization of the Council for Higher Education and was recognized as an academic institute. It was set up without religious or ideological



guidance and does not belong to any political movement. The Council demanded that it be transferred to Jerusalem to serve the Haredi population as well.

*Character of the Institute.* The Tal Institute is open to all the movements in religious Judaism and Haredi girls study there too. It defines itself first and foremost as an academic institute and is accordingly not bound to any rabbinical body or spiritual committee. Religious studies are pursued alongside secular studies, but the atmosphere at the Institute is quite religious.

The aims of the Institute have been formulated as follows: to educate students for a life combining “Torah and Worldliness”; to train religious engineers and managers for the hi-tech industries and Israel's administrative systems; to enable those interested in education and teaching to get a university teaching certificate.

*Students.* Most of the Haredi girls studying at the Institute arrived there individually and by personal choice, with only a minority arriving with the consent of a rabbinical authority.

*Courses Offered.* The following are the study programs offered:

1. Computer Science – for a Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science degree in computer science
2. Computer Engineering/Software and Communications – for a Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science degree and registration in the Register of Engineers.
3. Applied Physics/Electro-Optical Engineering – for a Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science degree and registration in the Register of Engineers.
4. Applied Physics/Medical Engineering for a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree (in the final stages of approval by the Council for Higher Education) and registration in the Register of Engineers.

5. Administrative Accounting and Information Systems for a Bachelor of Administrative Accounting and Information Systems degree.
6. Industrial Engineering and Management (not yet approved by the Council for Higher Education) – for a Bachelor of Technology and Applied Science degree.
7. Technology Management and Marketing – for a Bachelor of Technology Management and Marketing degree.

### *Department of Science and Technology Teaching*

In most of the Tal Institute's departments students have the possibility to combine professional studies with studies toward a university teaching certificate. This certificate qualifies them to teach mathematics, physics, and computers in secondary schools. In addition to the regular studies the Tal Institute has a School for Spiritual Studies.

*Students.* The student population is quite heterogeneous, including graduates of ulpanot and religious secondary schools, tourists, immigrants, and also Haredi women. In this context it should be pointed out that in addition to its assistance to students through scholarships, loans, etc., the Tal Institute also operates a day care center for infants to meet the special needs of student mothers.

In the past four years, 300 students have studied at the Institute. In the last year (the 2003 school year), 100 girls have been admitted instead of the 25 of the first years. Most applicants are from the national-religious movement, graduates of ulpana schools (some call them “nationalist Haredim). Those from the Haredi sector arrive mostly from the Beth Jacob seminaries, but there is also among them a very large group from Chabad. There are almost no girls from the Gur or Belz Hasidic courts, but there is a special group of 25 girls from the Karlin sect (immigrants from the former Soviet Union who began their training abroad). In all, Haredi girls make up 25-30% of the student body.

Most of the girls are aged 20-24, with a marginal group aged 18. Students in the “nationalist religious” group arrive at the age of 20, after two years of national service.

About half the students are of Eastern origin and about half Ashkenazi. Among the Haredi girls the percentage of Ashkenazis is particularly high. This may be related to the excellent training they received at the top-level Beth Jacob schools. Some of the girls left teachers seminaries in order to study at the Tal Institute. More and more girls in this group are apparently commencing academic studies at the Institute, both because of the shortage of teaching jobs in the Haredi sector and because they are interested in better-paying jobs as family breadwinners.

## **2. SHA'AREI MISHPAT LAW SCHOOL**

*History of the Institute.* The college law school is not a Haredi academic institute, nor does it contain a special enclave where academic studies are offered to Haredim. Nonetheless it has a unique atmosphere which enables Haredi students to find a place there.

Sha'arei Mishpat was founded in 1985 by a nonprofit organization whose members were public and religious figures in the fields of law, economics, and scholarship. Initially the college was located on the campus of Bar-Ilan University, but later it was privatized and became independent.

The college was recognized by the committee of authorization of the Israel Bar Association. After clerking and passing the bar exams of the association, graduates receive their licenses to practice law like other graduates of law faculties and colleges in Israel. The college is also recognized by the Council for Higher Education as an institute of higher education, and as such is authorized to award the bachelor's degree in law.

Students in the first three classes completed their clerkship, passed the bar exams of the Lawyers Association, and received their licenses to practice law. In all, since its inception, around 2,000 students have completed their studies at the college. The number of students admitted each year is 300-400.

*Admission Requirements.* Admission to the college requires a matriculation certificate with a weighted average of 85, but in certain cases a special committee approves students with a lower average. There is no requirement for a psychometric test and preference is given to students with a background in Jewish

studies. Older students are admitted without a matriculation certificate – a policy applied mostly when it comes to Haredi candidates.

*Courses of Study.* Studies at the college are divided into two programs according to the student's choice – day studies and evening studies. The length of studies is seven semesters and students must complete them in four years. Older students generally choose the evening program. Students with degrees who concentrate their studies into a day and a half a week (20 weekly hours) take a combined day and evening program.

*Students.* The student body represents variegated social groups. Many were not accepted by the law faculties of the universities. Some of these are business people or well-to-do individuals who desire to get a law degree but for whom the doors of the universities are closed.

Among the students are those who were sent to study at the college by their places of work, people with degrees in various fields looking to get a law degree as well, working people who want a law degree to improve their chances for advancement and higher pay, educated and older Haredi women seeking new challenges (mostly Eastern in origin), etc. Many students come from the public sector: mayors, people from the defense establishment, administrators.

Haredi students at the college comprise 5-8% of the student body in each class. This is a fairly prominent group, and given their special needs they have even been given a coordinator. They study with the rest of the students in mixed classes, without separation of men and women. The only privilege they have is a certain relaxation of admission requirements: they are accepted without matriculation certificates. This privilege was given to them both because of their relatively advanced age and their professional ability. This mainly applies to pleaders in rabbinical courts. Many such pleaders apply each year with the aim of getting a law degree and a license to practice that will enable them to represent clients in Israel's general courts as well.

The question may be asked why these students chose to study at the Sha'arei Mishpat College. The reason probably lies in the unique character of the college. Great emphasis is placed on Jewish law and the atmosphere is religious. In addition, as mentioned above, Haredi students have easier admission require-

ments. Haredi students at Sha'arei Mishpat preferred it over the Manchester College branch (the Kiryat Ono Academic Center) because they did not wish to study in a separate Haredi framework catering only to Haredim. On the other hand, these students did not wish to study at the Ramat Gan or Netanya colleges because they were liable to be isolated there and without a suitable religious atmosphere.<sup>101</sup>

Haredim who chose to study at Sha'arei Mishpat certainly took a bold step from their point of view, making a kind of breakthrough, though “hedged”. The college enables these students to open themselves to an outer circle, outside the social milieu and world of values they are accustomed to, and thus to broaden their circle of acquaintances. At the same time, they do not feel isolated – prayer times, proper dress, fast days, and a religious atmosphere are strictly observed. Since most of the students are from well-to-do families, they can afford to be “exceptions” to a certain extent, and their freedom from economic dependence allows them to study at an institute that is not purely Haredi in character.

## **Haredi Frameworks in General Institutions**

### **KIRYAT ONO ACADEMIC CENTER**

*Character of the Institute.* The Kiryat Ono Academic Center operates as a branch of Manchester University in Israel.. According to the administration the Center wishes to open its doors to all strata of the population, offering special arrangements to different groups and giving them access to higher academic studies and the chance to be active in the job market as a result.

Given this policy, the Center emphasizes the variegated social composition of the student body. It includes immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, students from the provincial towns and slums, Haredim and people from the defense establishment. The college is open to everyone and gives everyone the chance to find his place there, exercising maximal organizational and aca-

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101 These are law schools for the nonreligious population.

ademic flexibility but at the same time maintaining its academic content and standards.

*History of the Institute.* The person who worked to get Haredim into the Center was Shas activist and Go and Learn founder Gabi Butbul. The idea began to take wing when the institute took it upon itself to come up with suitable organizational arrangements to meet the requirements of Haredi students.

Initially students were offered a bachelor's program in business administration under the auspices of Manchester University. At that stage the Academic Center operated as a branch of the University. The first business administration course was opened in 2001. In 2002, Manchester University became the Kiryat Ono Academic Center with authorization from the Council of Higher Education to teach courses for the bachelor's degree. Students who began their studies in the previous framework and wish to continue in the Israeli program have to make up courses in accordance with conditions that will be determined.

Studies at the Academic Center are not under the supervision of a spiritual committee but every Haredi student is there with the personal consent of his own rabbi.

*Adaption to Haredi Requirements.* The administration of the institute had to solve a series of problems unique to this sector, such as non-uniform and insufficient levels of education, lack of matriculation certificates, separation of men and women, dietary laws, opposition in the Haredi community, etc.

Numerous solutions were offered for these problems. Thus, for example, Haredi students do not have to present a matriculation certificate to be admitted. The Society for the Advancement of Education at the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Council for Higher Education, makes it possible for students to enroll in a pre-academic program and by passing an examination on its conclusion to get around the need for the matriculation certificate. In this context it was taken into account that the course of studies, including the pre-academic program and remedial classes, is spread over four years.

As for the problem of mixing between men and women and Haredim and nonreligious students, it was solved by creating a separate campus for Haredim only

where men and women study in separate classes (each sex on separate days). In addition, lecturers in the men's classes are men only, and for the women, women only. In the rare cases where, for example, a male teacher lectures in a women's class, he must be married and a father. A solution was also found for kashrut: eating facilities at the Haredi campus are glatt kosher.

Schedules are also arranged in accordance with the Haredi way of life, including summer studies "between periods".<sup>102</sup> Thanks to this arrangement both men and women are not cut off from their way of life and the men do not have to neglect their Torah studies. In effect, there is no mixing of sacred and secular studies, as studies at the college are concentrated on one day a week. This arrangement satisfies broad Haredi circles and avoids violating the prohibition against mixing religious and secular studies. Moreover, the fact that general studies only get one day a week gives them an inferior status *vis-à-vis* religious studies and does not interfere with the ordinary life of the students.

*Courses Offered.* The Academic Center offers bachelor programs in business administration and law, to both men and women.

In 2004 the administration plans to offer additional courses in the field of health – speech-language therapy and occupational therapy.

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<sup>102</sup> "Between periods" refers to the three vacations given in yeshivas: 1. from 9 Av to 1 Elul (about three weeks in the summer); 2. from the end of Yom Kippur to 1 Heshvan (three weeks in the fall); during the month of Nisan (end of the winter).

## 9 CONCLUSIONS AND FORECAST

It may be asked to what extent the beginnings described in this book have a chance of amounting to something significant in the future. Has a new era really commenced in the Haredi sector with regard to the attitude toward higher education and vocational training? What are the conclusions that may be drawn in the light of current experience?

Prof. Mannes, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Bar-Ilan University, is responsible on the University's behalf for Haredi studies. In his opinion, there has indeed been a radical change in this sector in everything that pertains to external studies and higher education, but he is convinced that the process of change will be a long, drawn-out affair. Shortcuts will not work. He takes as an example the process of choosing candidates.<sup>103</sup> According to him there is a substantial difference in readiness for higher studies between men and women. Women arrive from established educational systems after years of study at Beth Jacob institutes and sometimes are even equipped with matriculation certificates. They are admitted after passing psychometric tests (with a score of 550 required). On the other hand, men do not have a background of regular studies. After a year of preparatory studies they are given two interviews where their suitability is examined. These interviews are not considered reliable selection tools, and in fact no effective selection process has been devised for men. Those in effect today are experimental, and only after a few classes graduate will it be

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103 The selection stage is critical, because it is important to keep students who are not suited for higher studies from wasting their time and financial resources. The University must therefore exercise great caution in the admissions process.



possible to elaborate effective selection processes and admission requirements. This example underscores Prof. Mannes's argument that much time will be needed before arrangements suited to the needs and characteristics of the Haredim will be found.<sup>104</sup>

According to Dr. Dov Levitan, Bar-Ilan's coordinator for Haredim, during regular studies (i.e., after the preparatory year), with the exception of some difficulty learning English, Haredi students do not have special problems and their achievements do not fall short of those of the other students.<sup>105</sup>

In the view of Prof. Teller, chairman of the special committee of the Council for Higher Education, a critical mass of Haredi students has not yet been reached, making it difficult to assess their integration from a reasonable perspective, as the phenomenon is a new one.

In its plan to rehabilitate the economy, announced in summer 2003, the government emphasized the encouragement of employment. This policy aimed to get the unemployed into the job market by cutting back the supports that reduce the motivation to work: child allowances, minimum wage supplements, and various funds allocated to yeshivas to assist “professional religious scholars”.

However, this policy also strikes hard at the Haredi sector and yeshiva world as a system, while it is doubtful whether it can bring about a significant change in the attitude toward work. First, the Israeli economy is today (2003-2004) in the throes of a deep recession and there is a serious shortage of jobs. This problem was brought to the fore in all its gravity in the protests of single-parent mothers,<sup>106</sup> and there can be no doubt that it will become even more serious if part of the Haredi population begins looking for work. Second, this policy depends on the strength of the government and on legislation, and is liable to arouse opposi-

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104 Author's interview with Prof. Mannes in January 2003 at Bar-Ilan University.

105 Author's interview with Dr. Dov Levitan in January 2003 at Bar-Ilan University.

106 Ha'aretz, July 15, 2003. Liss, Yonatan and Bassuk, Motti, “Netanyahu: We'll Promote Jobs for Single Parents, We Won't Bring Back Allowances”. *Ha'aretz*, July 18, 2003. Ben Simon, Daniel, “Mother vs. Netanyahu”.

tion among the Haredim, who will see it as a “blow” leveled against them by the government.<sup>107</sup>

It is therefore necessary to take an entire series of complementary steps, with maximum cooperation with Haredi circles, in order to bring about a change in the Haredi attitude to general studies and vocational training. Below some possible steps are described:

## **Respecting the Haredi Outlook**

No economic plan should be implemented, explicitly or implicitly, with elements in conflict with the Haredi outlook. It should be made very clear that the steps are aimed to give those who want to work a better chance to earn a living. The supreme value of absolute dedication to Torah study will continue to guide the socialization process among young men in Haredi society, and this will not be changed through administrative or economic measures. Likewise, despite the sense of urgency deriving from the difficult economic situation, changes should not be made too quickly: everything should be done gradually and an effort should be made to get the cooperation of Haredi circles who show a readiness to cooperate.

## **Developing Special Haredi Frameworks**

A complementary program of vocational and academic training should be developed to operate alongside religious studies. It is important to emphasize that such a program is not a substitute but a supplement, intended for whoever is not capable or willing to devote himself to Torah study alone. It is important to work in cooperation with academic institutes who today are not part of the

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107 Broadsides in this spirit have been appearing on billboards in Haredi neighborhoods since the government announced its economic policy.

effort<sup>108</sup> and to get such frameworks under the supervision of the Council for Higher Education.

These frameworks will be specially devised for Haredim and adapted to their ways in the following areas:

1. Separation of men and women.
2. Evening classes for men so as not to disturb the way of life of yeshiva students (studies can be concentrated in one day a week, an arrangement that is acceptable to the Haredim).
3. The study program will not include philosophy, literature, or any area of knowledge that clashes with the world view of the Haredim. The focus should be on subjects accepted in the community, like mathematics, Hebrew, English.
4. Maintenance of a religious atmosphere, dietary laws, and a suitable teaching staff.
5. Easing of admission exams for male candidates.

## **Strengthening Existing Institutes**

Existing institutes providing vocational training and academic studies to Haredim should continue to be strengthened: the Haredi Center for Technological Studies, the Haredi College of Bene Beraq, the Haredi College of Jerusalem, the Naveh Institute, the Lustig Institute, the Tal Institute (under the auspices of the School for Higher Technological Studies), and the Kiryat Ono Academic Center. It is important to respond to requests and initiatives coming from the community (such as relaxation of admission requirements, assistance in finding funding sources, etc.)

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<sup>108</sup> The Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, Ben-Gurion University, Haifa University, and the Technion are not part of the effort.

## **Increasing High-Level Vocational Training**

High-level vocational training courses should be bolstered, such as those operated jointly by the Ministry of Labor and the Joint. The study period should be lengthened and the level raised so that graduates will be able to pass the examinations of the Government Institute for Scientific and Technological Training and get a technical degree. Given the situation in the job market, priority should be given to high-level training. An economy in the throes of a recession and seeking to renew economic growth should invest in upgrading the work force so that it will be able to function efficiently in the future, during better days. The existence of a recession in any case naturally filters out job seekers, so that those with low-level training are apt to find it hard to get work, and it would be a shame to invest resources in such courses. It is therefore worth investing the money in high-level training, even if it costs more in the short term.

## **Getting Ready – Early Vocational Training for Men**

Training should be promoted among yeshiva students parallel to Torah studies. Studies in these programs will not be conducted in the yeshivas themselves in order to avoid mixing religious and secular studies, and evening studies can be instituted as well. Both the place of study and the teaching staff must be acceptable to the Haredim. The program can be implemented in two stages:

1. In the first stage vocational training will be given at an early age (to students at small yeshivas who are not meant to be Torah sages and study Torah alone). This training will be given parallel to Torah studies. The students will have a good chance of being absorbed at the local level into the network of crafts and vocations that always requires and seeks working hands.
2. In the second stage training will be given to older students (at the higher yeshivas and kolels) who are not going to study Torah alone. The subjects taught can include mathematics, Hebrew, English, and

Eretz Israel studies.<sup>109</sup> At the end of studies students who wish to do so can take examinations paralleling matriculation exams. This preparation will increase their chances of getting jobs in the future or getting accepted in vocational training programs or academic frameworks.<sup>110</sup>

## Upgrading “Heads of Households”

All the programs described above will have a greater chance of succeeding if the status of “head of household” is upgraded in Haredi society. During the “golden age” of Lithuanian yeshivas (mid-19th century), when the overwhelming majority of the men studied in yeshivas (though only some of them engaged exclusively in Torah study), they were supported economically by “heads of households”.<sup>111</sup> These were relatively well-to-do Jews who had regular jobs and devoted only their evenings to Torah study. This status was slowly eroded in the State of Israel and its image became tarnished as the society of scholars expanded. It would be desirable for Haredi society to rehabilitate the status of “head of household”, for if it becomes esteemed and respected it could strengthen the resolve of yeshiva students to work for a living and not limit themselves to the four pillars of the Torah.

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109 Eretz Israel studies can include geography and also teach about society and government in Israel. Opposition can be expected from the Haredim with regard to certain aspects of the subject, but through cooperation with them it is possible to develop an agreed-upon program of studies.

110 In the Jewish community in France, in all small Haredi yeshivas (which are under the administrative supervision of the French Ministry of Education and funded by it), it is compulsory to have 28 hours of secular studies a week and all students take the matriculation exams. In the United States too there are such programs in Haredi communities. See Gonen, Amiram (2001), *From Yeshiva to Work – the American Experience and Lessons for Israel*, Jerusalem, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies. (English version.)

111 What are called “days”: yeshiva students were in the habit of being hosted and dining in the homes of “heads of households”.

If the steps proposed above are taken, a real change may gradually come about in the Haredi attitude to vocational training and academic studies. This change will be welcome from many standpoints – it could reduce the poverty in Haredi families, contribute to the country's economy, lessen the tensions in Haredi-secular relations, and promote the integration of the Haredi community in society and the economy while preserving the uniqueness and outlooks of its world.

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