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Ultra-Orthodoxy in Urban Governance in Israel

Yosseph Shilhav

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About the Research

The Religion, Society, and State project at the Floersheimer Institute devotes special attention to the Haredi (ultra-orthodox) community. This community tends to congregate in areas where Haredi culture is dominant. The political empowerment of the Haredi community is having an impact on a range of institutions, including local authorities.

Haredi municipal rule poses two principal problems, which serve as the focus of this research. The first: How does the Haredi community deal with the onus involved in managing a municipal system? The second: How does a Haredi administration relate to non-Haredi groups within its jurisdiction and sphere of responsibility? Since the phenomenon of Haredi municipalities is increasing in Israel, great importance is attached to these questions in an attempt to understand the future relationship of religion, society, and state in Israel.

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Introduction

The status of the Haredi (ultra-orthodox) community in Israel underwent radical change in the 1980s and 1990s. This has attracted a great deal of academic and public attention, as it is perceived as the focus of conflict between the orthodox and secular communities in Israel.

The “orthodox” and “secular” can be distinguished as those who see themselves committed to a lifestyle dictated by the principles of *halacha* (Jewish law) — the orthodox, and those who do not believe in a commitment to uphold those principles — the secular. This distinction is categorical and a wide range of approaches to religion can be found within the two.

The orthodox public can itself be divided into two — Haredi orthodox and modern orthodox. Modern orthodoxy is characterized by a commitment to *halacha* accompanied by an openness to the modern world and its values, associating with both religious values and those of modern Western society. Haredi orthodoxy is more difficult to define. It is, of course, committed to *halacha*, but at the same time demonstrates an allegiance to the strict observance of tradition and customs that developed in the Jewish communities of eighteenth and nineteenth century Eastern Europe, with a tendency to prefer the stricter options of *halachic* rule.

The religious-cultural and social background of Haredi orthodoxy warrants clarification as it can elucidate the complex relations between the Haredi community and the modern city. *Halacha* developed as a system of precedents: rabbinical responses to questions that arose in the orthodox community were written down as precedents and later used as *halachic* principles. For every thousand questions of *halacha* put to rabbis, there are some 900 ready responses. In other words, it is possible to immediately point to the relevant article in the accepted literature as the authoritative response. Ninety-nine other questions will require a new initiative, a literal interpretation, or a comparison of different existing decisions. One in a thousand questions has no precedent on which to rely and will require the creation of a new *halachic* “enactment.” This “enactment,” once devised, will be included in the large

collection of *halachic* precedents and serve as the basis for additional development.¹

Halachic questions of the type that require special treatment are most abundant during turning points in history. These questions commonly touch matters at the heart of public acts and consciousness. Extraordinary intellectual flexibility and a strong sense of reality are required to produce creative *halachic* thought that covers a wide range of matters.² The emergence of what we know as Haredi orthodoxy itself represents a turning point in human history: the Enlightenment and Emancipation that came in the wake of the scientific revolution, the rise of nationalism, urbanization and industrialization, the exodus of Jews from the ghetto and their integration into scientific and economic life — all these raised questions for rabbis that required *halachic* enactments. Unfortunately, the questions came faster than the solutions, resulting in a crisis situation.

One of the consequences of this crisis was the secularization of the Jewish people: without satisfactory answers, the younger generation stopped posing questions and liberated itself from the burden of *halacha*. The emergence of Haredi orthodoxy was a kind of religious response to this process — a protective retreat into Eastern European religious tradition with an allegiance to strict written *halachic* decisions and an avoidance of conflict between *halacha* and “life” — i.e., reality as it developed outside the *halachic* world. Secularization was perceived as a historic trauma; added to this was the trauma of the rise of Jewish nationalism — Zionism — as a liberation movement steering toward political independence in the Land of Israel, not as a utopian vision but as a political effort to effect reality. The Haredi leadership viewed Zionism as dangerous to the religious infrastructure underlying the existence of the Jewish people, and therefore most Haredi leaders opposed Zionism. The Holocaust and the destruction of Judaism and Torah study centers in Europe, combined with the success of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, added to the consciousness of historic trauma of Haredi orthodoxy.

This trauma consciousness molded the suspicious and reserved approach of Haredi orthodoxy to anything modern. In it, the secular Western city exemplifies the dangerous modern world, from which one must be protected. But Haredi rejection of the modern world is not total or absolute; it is differential. Haredim reject the values and cultural dimensions of the modern world but are willing, and want, to accept its instrumental aspects. Thus, they forbid televi-

¹ Eliezer Goldman, *Halacha and the State* (Tel Aviv: Religious Kibbutz Publishing, n.d.), p. 14 (Hebrew).

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

sion, branding it an agent for the transferal of cultural substance, but use computers, which they regard as culturally neutral. Haredim believe that in this way it is possible to distinguish between modernity's cultural and instrumental aspects, rejecting some and accepting others, without one pervading the other.

This outlook leads to a paradoxical situation: the modern secular city, with its various fashions for entertainment and society, symbolizes all that is abhorrent to Haredim; but it also offers all the conveniences and amenities they wish for. Therefore, Haredim concentrate in cities where they can benefit from a range of technological achievements that are culturally neutral. They solve the problem of rejection of the urban culture by creating a Haredi "holy space," in which they manage their community life through cultural dominance which serves to protect them from negative urban influences. In this way, Haredim believe they can isolate themselves from the dangerous urban culture, which they cannot legitimize, while benefiting from the technical and economic advantages that the modern city in a welfare state can provide.³

Over an extended urban-geographic process, two spatial foci for the Haredi community have been created in Israel: one in the northern neighborhoods of Jerusalem and the other in Bene Beraq, a city on the outskirts of Tel Aviv (Maps 1 and 2). These two zones have developed along parallel processes — (a) continual penetration of the Haredi population into secular and mixed secular-orthodox neighborhoods in a process of urban "invasion and succession"; and (b) construction aimed specifically at the Haredi community, which began in 1962 close to the cease-fire lines that divided Jerusalem between 1949 and 1967. The expansion of Haredi residential areas into large urban concentrations was obstructed by numerous urban factors: land use in ways that contradicted the nature of Haredi space, population groups that were difficult to penetrate, land values, and urban planning. Use of the remaining available land for the Haredi population led to a parallel steep increase in housing prices, which led many Haredi families to leave the large established

³ Yosseph Shilhav, "Communal Conflict in Jerusalem — The Spread of Ultra-Orthodox Neighborhoods," in N. Kliot and S. Waterman, eds., *Pluralism and Political Geography — People, Territory and State* (London: Croom-Helm, 1983), pp. 100-113; Yosseph Shilhav, "Spatial Strategies of the Haredi Population in Jerusalem," *Socio-Economic Planning Science*, 18:6(1984):411-418; Lewis Glinert and Yosseph Shilhav, "Holy Land, Holy Language — A Study of an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Ideology," *Language in Society*, 20(1991):59-86; Yosseph Shilhav, "The Haredi Ghet-to: The Theology Behind the Geography," *Contemporary Jewry*, 10:2(1989):51-64.

**Map 1: The Haredi Population in Jerusalem, Indicated by Votes
for Ashkenazi Haredi Parties**

Map 2: Bene Beraq in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area

concentrations in Jerusalem and Bene Beraq. With time, this emigration took the form of different developmental models.⁴

The first stage saw the development of Haredi neighborhoods in a small number of well-established, medium-size cities. The absorption capacity of such neighborhoods was limited and the costs relatively high. The second stage was the building of Haredi quarters in development towns. Most development towns in Israel have a concentration of Haredim — often small but sometimes rather large. These neighborhoods, of various sizes, were met with ambivalence: on the one hand, they raised expectations of improved stability for the population in small towns, while, on the other hand, they raised fears of conflict over religious issues. With time it became apparent that the Haredi quarters in small cities were a stage preceding independent Haredi communities.

The independent Haredi community has a number of obvious advantages, but not a few difficulties as well. The advantages lie in the possibility of segregating the community culturally and preventing contact that would inevitably lead to conflict, as well as limiting relationships with the secular population to instrumental fields that are essential for the existence and development of any community. The disadvantages stem from the community's need to operate and maintain its own services independently.

The recent dramatic change in the status of Haredim in Israel is based on several factors. The community's high fertility, coupled with political developments that split the Israeli population into two main political camps of equal size, have given Haredim a position of political strength which exceeds their electoral weight. From a small and esoteric community, Haredim now represent a large public with the power to tip the scales of Israeli politics. The system of direct election of the prime minister, which first came into practice in Israel in the 1996 general elections, further increased Haredi strength by giving them the ability to determine who would be elected prime minister. While the main thrust of this change is in the national arena, the tendency of the Haredi population to concentrate in specific geographic areas leads to changes in the local arena as well. Haredim are well aware of their new-found power: from being a defensive community, they have emerged as an offensive group, striving to spread their message and impose their values wherever possible.

The Haredi community, which just 30 years ago focused on the family and the local community, protecting themselves from an aggressive secular culture

⁴ Yosseph Shilhav, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodox Neighborhoods in Israeli Urban Centers," in E. Ben-Zadok, ed., *Local Communities and the Israeli Polity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 157-187.

and stemming the drift of their children toward that culture, now finds itself in the corridors of power, politics, and bureaucracy. An upper echelon of Haredi decision-makers has developed both in the central government and the local authorities. This new situation has opened up positions of authority for Haredim and given them access to resources and decision-making.

Similar to Haredi residential areas, local authorities with Haredi dominance are also developing along two tracks: one is a slow, continual process in which the demographic gap and internal emigration work to the benefit of the local Haredi population, to the extent that Haredim become the largest population group in the city. In municipal elections this majority is best reflected in the council and choice of mayor. The second track is the new phase of dispersal of the Haredi population — the phenomenon of building new towns and suburbs specifically designed for Haredim. Since Haredi institutions are responsible for populating these towns, they ensure a religious tone from the outset. In the early stages of the town's development it is managed by a founding committee, and later by an appointed council and council head. Eventually, elections are held for the council and its chairman and elected institutions manage the town. Haredim become involved at all levels of management, and the council, by nature, is all-Haredi.

In both the above cases, responsibility for management, maintenance, and development of municipal services lies solely with Haredim. This new situation raises a fundamental question: to what extent is a community which is characterized by its rejection of modern urban culture and values capable of planning, managing, maintaining, and developing a modern city?

This issue can be divided into three levels: technical and economic, social, and ideological. The technical level is simple — the time devoted to Haredi education and its content, which concentrates almost exclusively on religious studies, does not leave room for professional and academic studies at a high level, especially for men. This creates a difficulty in recruiting professional and experienced personnel for local administrative, technical, and planning posts. Low involvement of Haredim in the labor force also causes an economic problem manifested in the local authority's very low tax base.

The social level is more complex. The Haredi community began — and still functions — as an interest group. This, combined with its traditional nature, is expressed in an overemphasis of the community's particularistic interests, parallel with a constant struggle for self-preservation. The traditional foundations of the community mold particularistic social relations. By contrast, municipal rule and management require a wide universal perspective and func-

tioning ability — in other words, an ability to set policy and implement it from a practical view of the whole system's functioning and its range of needs, not only according to the particularistic requirements and preferences of the group.

The ideological level is linked to the religious perception of the community under discussion. Although there is significant overlap between the ideological and social levels, they nevertheless differ. In a town, and even more so in a large city, the population comprises different cultural groups. Coexistence and the operation of social and cultural services in a city with diverse cultures necessitate a pluralistic approach that the Haredi community, by its own ideological and religious definition, cannot adopt. Social groups in the city are of course expressed by different cultures, customs and demands, as people wish to uphold their beliefs and way of life. Pluralism — unlike heterogeneity — means giving legitimacy to what is different. However, when the range of beliefs and opinions does not win legitimacy, and supporting it requires resources, then a serious problem arises: how will a Haredi administration deal with educational and cultural needs it believes are not legitimate but which are demanded by non-Haredi groups living within Haredi jurisdiction? Haredi orthodoxy does not tolerate cultures and education which it deems illegitimate, so how will those in charge overcome such a proscription?

The problem at the ideological level is even greater than at the social level. The move from “particularism” to “universalism” occurred in various strata of Israeli society. It is also likely to appear increasingly among Haredim as a result of the forces to which they will be exposed as their political, bureaucratic, and social involvement grows. However, the limitations posed by orthodox ideology are great enough to possibly retard development of this community's integration into Israeli society.

Problems of control and management that are derived from the three levels noted above may appear in various forms — depending on the nature of the city, development of the Haredi local authority, and the various facets of the municipality's operation of its services. Haredi management of its own systems and administration is, as noted, a relatively new phenomenon. There are thus few examples available for research and analysis. Two Israeli localities that do offer examples of Haredi rule are Bene Beraq and Betar Illit. Some independent Haredi communities can be found elsewhere, particularly in New York State, in the U.S.

Bene Beraq is a large, well-established city in metropolitan Tel Aviv and one of the two largest Haredi concentrations in Israel (the other is in Jerusalem). It

is an example of demographic development in which the Haredi population grew to become a majority and won a dominant position in the city's rule. By contrast, Betar Illit is a new town, intended from its inception to house a Haredi population, and thus Haredi hegemony was established from its first days. With the exception of Emanuel (a Haredi town in Samaria which was founded by a private company that went bankrupt in the process), Betar Illit was the first urban settlement to be constructed within the framework of public housing for the Haredi population, with every stage in its establishment and growth publicly supervised and directed. This research examines questions related to the functioning of the Haredi community which holds the municipal reins in both Bene Beraq and Betar Illit.

In the Israeli public image, the Haredi political tradition is regarded as having a clear particularistic approach: Haredim use politics as a tool in the struggle for resources for their own communities. Haredi ideology is indifferent to the spectrum of Zionist ideologies and to the political differences between them. This gives the Haredi parties maximum freedom in their maneuvering between the large political blocs in Israel. Because the basic Haredi attitude is not Zionist, even on matters that are essential to Israel's existence and welfare, their stance is determined by the narrow perspective of their community's exclusive interests.

As a social group, this community is not based on democratic values. If the soul of democracy is a culture of tolerance for different opinions and includes support for freedom of argument and equal opportunity to try to convince the other, the Haredi community lacks these characteristics. Moreover, this is an authoritarian community in which a tradition of discipline and obedience to the religious leadership prevails and which refuses permission to contradict or raise different views. The growing weight of the Haredi public and the aggressiveness of its leadership in territory where it holds sway, the involvement of Haredi parties in national and local politics, their political power which far exceeds their electoral strength, and their readiness to use this power freely, raise profound concerns in other streams of Israeli society. The tipping of the scales attributed to the Haredi public in Jerusalem's mayoral elections in 1993 and the key positions occupied by Haredi politicians in the municipality, as well as their part in the direct election of the prime minister in 1996, have added to the fears of many Israelis, as expressed in numerous arenas.⁵

⁵ A clear example of this kind of expression can be found in Shlomo Hasson, *The Cultural Struggle Over Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1996). Concern over this uncertainty is also expressed in Emmanuel Guttman, "The Religious Split," in M. Lissak and B. Knei-Paz, eds., *Israel Towards the Year 2000 — Society, Politics and Culture* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), pp.

This Haredi cultural tradition and background, which is well known from research done on the community, raises doubts as to the community's ability to run political systems and bureaucracies with a willingness to adopt a universal approach alongside its particularistic traditional approach. The organizational and political behavior of Haredim in a situation of growing involvement and possible dominance in local authorities are also open to conjecture. Since the process of Haredi integration into state and municipal governing systems in Israel was identified, the belief also arose that this process would lead Haredim from "particularism" to "universalism."⁶ It was assumed that Haredi integration into key positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy would expose its leadership to new horizons and force them to participate in a wide range of decision-making processes, including on matters not directly related to the needs of the Haredi community. In other words, some believed that when Haredim had to deal with subjects in which they had no direct interest, they would nevertheless learn to mold policy out of practical considerations that stemmed from a comprehensive view of the needs of Israeli society.

Even if the theoretical basis of this assumption is logical, the question remains open of how long such a development could take. The ability and willingness of Haredi politicians and administrators to mold policy beyond their own group's needs require an internalization of new norms, some of which are still foreign to Haredi social culture. The Haredi administration, as a new and developing phenomenon in the urban municipal context in Israel, is the subject of this report.

61-73 (Hebrew). An examination of the conflict from a secular perspective was carried out in Avraham Farber, "Patterns of Haredi Offence Against Non-Haredi Residents in North-West Jerusalem as Tactics of Spatial Competition," Masters Thesis, Institute of Criminology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987 (Hebrew).

⁶ A discussion of such processes can be found in Menachem Friedman, *The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Society — Sources, Trends and Processes* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991 (Hebrew)). A similar possibility is also found in Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Expected and the Permitted," in A. Hareven, ed., *Towards the 21st Century — Targets for Israel* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Foundation, 1984), pp. 135-198 (Hebrew).

1 Development of Haredi Municipal Rule

From a Minority to a Ruling Majority — The Example of Bene Beraq

As noted above, Haredi management of a local authority is likely to raise interest for two reasons: it would demonstrate (a) the ability of the Haredi community to independently operate municipal services; and (b) the dominance of the Haredi community in a city in which part of the population is not Haredi, i.e., Haredi responsibility toward the needs of “others.” The most prominent, and perhaps the only available, example of Haredi rule in a city that also has a secular public is Bene Beraq, on the periphery of Tel Aviv. Haredim hold a majority on the city council which gives them the ability, as far as municipal authority extends, to determine the face of the city and influence the life of its residents as they see fit.

Bene Beraq’s unique Haredi nature was forged many years ago. Founded in 1924 by a group of Hassidic Jews from Poland who formed Hevrat Bayit Venahala (House and Property Company), the city has since had a strong orthodox and Haredi core population. Renowned Torah scholars settled there and well-known yeshivas (schools of Jewish learning and rabbinical colleges) were established, molding the city into a focus of attraction for Haredi institutions and people. Among the most prominent figures in this process were Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz, known as the “Hazon Ish” after the title of his famous book, who immigrated in 1933 and settled in Bene Beraq after a brief stint in Tel Aviv, and, a decade later, Rabbi Yosef Kahanman of the Lithuanian town of Ponevezh, who escaped the Holocaust and immigrated in 1943, reestablishing the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bene Beraq.⁷ By then, the city had become a drawing card for the orthodox, and the Haredi population there has been growing consistently ever since.

⁷ On the unique development of Bene Beraq, see Alexander Cohen, “The Emergence of Bene Beraq as a Special Satellite Town,” M.Sc. Thesis, Technion, Haifa, 1968 (Hebrew). On the development of Haredi institutions in Bene Beraq, see Menachem Friedman, *The Haredi Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-48.

Since the mid-1970s, or more precisely since the 1978 municipal elections, Haredim have enjoyed a large majority on the local council. Since the 1993 local elections, Haredi representatives hold 21 out of the 25 city council seats. They represent the various ultra-orthodox groups (Hassidim, Lithuanian Jews, etc.), with each group having at least one of its own representatives on the council. These individuals see themselves first and foremost as representatives of their own particular group, and defending the interests of that group is their primary obligation, even if it is to the detriment of the Haredi community as a whole, as will be seen below.

The demographic and socioeconomic structure of Bene Beraq's residents create special difficulties for the municipality. While the other cities in metropolitan Tel Aviv are demographically stable, Bene Beraq's population grows at a rate of 4 percent per year (mostly natural growth), compared to 2.7 percent for Israel as a whole. Figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics show that the birth rate in Bene Beraq in 1992-93 was 27.2 for every 1,000 residents — one of the highest among the country's Jewish population, compared to 14.8 for every 1,000 residents in the whole of Israel for the same period.⁸ Furthermore, 48 percent of Bene Beraq's population are under the age of 18 and 11 percent are elderly. In other words, the number of those dependent on the city is high. (Comparable figures for all of Israel for 1995 are: 38.6 percent under the age of 19 and 9.5 percent over 65, according to CBS data.)

Moreover, Bene Beraq is one of the poorest cities in the country. The mayor claims that "60 percent cost us money, bringing us no income." Only 30 percent of residents pay city taxes.⁹ Another indication of the socioeconomic situation can be found in the number of vehicles in Bene Beraq: in 1994 there were 95.4 private vehicles per 1,000 residents, compared to 187.6 in the whole country and 305.7 in Tel Aviv, 293.9 in Givatayim, 254.7 in Ramat Gan, 230.0 in Holon, and 181.4 in Bat Yam (other municipalities in metropolitan Tel Aviv). Even if family size is not included as a factor in this calculation but the number of vehicles per 1,000 households is measured, Bene Beraq still lags behind the neighboring cities with 381 vehicles, compared to 733 in Tel Aviv and 695 in Givatayim.¹⁰

⁸ Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Interior, *Local Authorities in Israel 1993 — Physical Data*, Special Series No. 992, Jerusalem, 1995, Table 14.

⁹ These figures were also given by the mayor as part of his testimony before the investigating committee on the functioning of the municipality.

¹⁰ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Local Authorities in Israel*, Table 42. Household data calculated from CBS, *Population and Households — Provisional Results*, Census of Population and Housing, Publication No. 1, Jerusalem, 1996.

Water consumption serves as an additional indicator of the population's economic level, increasing in parallel with a rise in economic standards. Municipal water consumption per capita in Bene Beraq in 1993 was 61m³, one of the lowest in Israel; this compares with 101m³ in Tel Aviv, 81m³ in Givatayim, and a national average of 79m³ per capita for the same period.¹¹

These figures, combined with the Haredi community's unique features and customs already highlighted in other studies,¹² illustrate the many difficulties a Haredi municipal administration encounters. The primary difficulty, which then generates others, stems from the demographic change in the status of the community. As a minority, the Haredi community tries — and usually succeeds — to influence those who set municipal norms and standards to take its special needs into account. Such cases do not pose a problem as the system can generally afford to make some economic allowances (on taxes and other levies imposed on residents) when the group in question is small, economically weak, and has special religious demands. But as the demographic weight of that same group grows, these benefits become more burdensome on the city. When the group represents the majority and holds the reins of the municipality, the discounts and benefits it previously enjoyed become a real stumbling block, preventing efficient management.

The failure in functioning brought about by the shift from being a minority to becoming a ruling majority is expressed in two main ways. The first is obvious: when most of the population enjoys exemptions and discounts, the municipal tax base dries up. The second concerns the relationship between the administration and the residents — it remains a “particularistic” relationship, built on closeness and understanding, as the community was used to when it was a minority. In this kind of relationship, it is going to be difficult for the municipality to enforce decisions and laws and impose payments on “its own kind.”

Another feature involved in ruling a community in which Haredim have become the majority is the necessity to deal with the needs and wishes of

¹¹ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Local Authorities in Israel*, Table 36.

¹² This is not the forum to detail the characteristics of the meeting between the traditional Haredi community and the modern city. On this subject, see Menachem Friedman, “Haredim Confront the Modern City,” in P. Medding, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), pp. 74-96; and Yosseph Shilhav, *A “Shtetl” Within a Modern City — A Geography of Segregation and Complement* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991) (Hebrew).

non-Haredi and even secular populations, which may contradict Haredi values. If the non-Haredi population is concentrated in one area — such as the Pardes Katz quarter of Bene Beraq — the Haredi administration may find itself up against a “territorial opposition,” i.e., a united opposition by a population group whose social and cultural values, and lifestyle, are not compatible with those of the dominant population group. When the “different” population is dispersed in the municipal space, its influence is reduced. But when it is concentrated in a defined geographic area, it has cultural dominance there and enjoys a territorial base in which it can foster its own values, maintaining the territorial opposition, with economic, social, and cultural orientation to other cities in the metropolitan area.

In a modern pluralistic city, the probability of a territorial opposition developing is small, as the city gives legitimacy to a wide range of values and cultures which are part of the urban social fabric. Such is not the case in a city where the dominant population group does not demonstrate openness or tolerance for unfamiliar values. In this case, the differences will become sharper and the contradictions will increase. The territorial opposition will have to face a municipal administration that does not accept its values and sometimes even rejects them. Such a situation could well arise for a non-Haredi group under Haredi rule.

A Haredi Town is Born — The Establishment of Betar Illit

The previous section described Haredi dominance in a local authority stemming mainly from demographic growth. As noted, another way to establish Haredi rule is to build a new town designed from the outset for the Haredi population. Betar Illit is such an example.

The idea behind Betar did not originate with Haredim, but rather was the initiative of Joseph Rosenberg, an orthodox immigrant from South Africa, who had grown up with the ideology of the right-wing Betar movement and served as a volunteer pilot in the 1948 War. He wanted to create a link between the new settlement of Betar and the historic site of the same name nearby. A follower of the Jabotinsky movement in his youth, Rosenberg was raised on the link the Betar movement made between historic Betar — the last stronghold of Bar-Kochba in the revolt against the Romans (132-135 AD) — and the new Hebrew heroism as expressed in the story of Josef Trumpeldor at Tel Hai

(1920).¹³

¹³ In order to make this connection, the Revisionist movement altered the Hebrew spelling of Trumpeldor's name in the 1920s so as to create an acronym that would simultaneously link Betar with Trumpeldor and Bar-Kochba. The private archive of the late Joseph Rosenberg was made available for this research thanks to his widow, Rachel Rosenberg of Tel Aviv.

View of Betar Illit from the old road west of Jerusalem. On the crest of the hill are the Gush Etzion settlements.

Hassidim establishing a town: laying the cornerstone for the synagogue.
(Photograph courtesy of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz)

In the early 1980s, Rosenberg presented the motives for his initiative — that the planned settlement should be “the headquarters of the Betar world movement and the educational center of Jabotinsky’s values.”¹⁴ He took his idea to then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin and to settler leaders, found appropriate land for development of the settlement, and prepared preliminary plans for land use and building. However, suitable potential residents were not found. Archival material shows numerous lists of candidates, lists which are not long, with a large turnover of names. Thus, building plans were drawn up, but no proposal was made for an economic base (the settlement was designed as a suburb of Jerusalem).

Rosenberg’s initiative did not make much impact. He died in 1987, having managed to organize a small group of families associated with the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva and Machon Meir for newly-religious Jews, in Jerusalem. This group founded the new settlement of Hadar Betar (literally translated as the Glory of Betar) in 1985 on the Hebrew date of Lag B’Omer (commemorating Bar-Kochba’s revolt). For a long time, the settlement remained small and neglected, with no signs of permanent building or development and, in particular, no potential residents to boost the population.

However, parallel with Rosenberg’s activities, there was some activity by government ministries to explore the possibility of designating the planned town to be for Haredim. Ministry of Construction and Housing officials sought investors for this purpose, with the proviso that they build a great deal and very quickly. On November 13, 1984, a meeting was held between officials of the ministry’s Jerusalem district office and representatives of Kochav Hashomron, a construction company then in the process of building the town of Emanuel in Samaria.¹⁵ In Emanuel, however, the company ran into difficulties, which prevented it from playing a role in the construction of Betar.

In the early 1980s, while Rosenberg was pushing his idea, the Mishkenot Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Residence) association was formed in Geula, a Haredi quarter of Jerusalem. Its aim was to help provide solutions to Haredi housing problems. The association included a department that served as a kind of real estate agent without commission, helping large families obtain loans, and arranging larger mortgages for the needy. However, the range of housing assistance programs available to Haredim were not sufficient because the

¹⁴ In a letter by the chairman of the Revisionist Movement, dated August 24, 1981. Rosenberg Archive.

¹⁵ Memorandum written by Shmaryahu Cohen on November 20, 1984. Present at the meeting were the director and deputy director of Kochav Shomrom and ministry representatives. Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz Archive.

apartments were scattered throughout the city, particularly in secular neighborhoods, and Haredim preferred to concentrate in defined zones. The apartments offered in Haredi areas were few and high-priced.

According to the director of Mishkenot Yerushalayim, it became clear that housing solutions for the Haredi public could not be treated individually — that a community solution was required. “We realized that only the Ministry of Construction and Housing could promote the subject.”¹⁶ Parallel to the recognition of dire Haredi housing needs, which could not be solved without extensive government assistance, the government approved the decision to build a town in Betar — a decision which had not previously been implemented because of a lack of resources to recruit suitable residents. Thus the green light was given to develop Betar as a Haredi town, south of what was once known as the Jerusalem Corridor (between 1949 and 1967) and north of the settlements of the Gush Etzion area (see Map 3).

This decision was noteworthy for two main reasons: the first indicated a new trend in public housing policy for Haredim. Until the early 1980s this community was not recognized as a separate sector of the population for purposes of public housing; the planning approach was integrative and stemmed from the long-held ideology of a “melting pot.” In determining that Betar should be a Haredi town, this principle was shattered. Examples of building designed for Haredim can, however, be found earlier in Jerusalem — in 1962 in the Shomrei Emunim quarter, on the border between the Israeli and Jordanian sections of the city, and the continued building of Haredi neighborhoods along the northern cease-fire lines (the “green line”). Still, in these cases, there was not the same degree of government involvement as in the case of Betar Illit (Upper Betar). Betar was a Housing Ministry project, carried out by the public construction company Ashdar, and populated by Mishkenot Yerushalayim.

This partnership between the government and the Haredi community was not built on an ideological bond or strategy but rather on partial compatibility: the government wanted to build a new settlement in the territories and Haredim sought solutions to their grave housing problems. In this case, the Haredi population served as a huge potential human resource for realizing territorial policy; people with limited means in need of housing had always served as a tool for implementing planning or ideological policy, unrelated to the needs of that population. Instead of the Haredi community being rejected and its segregation deemed illegitimate, it became an instant source of population.

¹⁶ Interview in the Haredi daily newspaper *Hamodia*, September 29, 1989 (Hebrew).

Even so, cooperation between the sides in setting up a Haredi settlement was not simple. There was a price to be exacted for the change in approach on the government side, from the standpoint of both the authorities and the Haredim.

Map 3: Betar Illit in the Jerusalem Metropolitan Area

The development of Betar Illit became possible when a solution was found for inexpensive bus service. The Betar Tour bus company provides regular service between Betar Illit and Jerusalem.

From the Haredi viewpoint, travel to and from Betar Illit involves certain risks. This bus stop in Betar has a charity box affixed to it for contributions to protect riders during their journey.

The authorities committed themselves to huge investments, much larger than the norm in public housing, in view of the financial limitations of the target group. The Haredim, on the other hand, had no choice but to accept a location policy that did not necessarily match their own wishes and ambitions, and sometimes even raised bitter arguments within the community.

A second, somewhat surprising, aspect of this issue warrants comment here. The first settlers in Hadar Betar were, as noted, orthodox, as are those in Betar Illit. So how is it that the former viewed the founding of a settlement in the territories as a valuable step in expanding Israel's territory, while the latter stressed that their sole interest was a solution to housing problems? The answer lies in the different approach of the two groups to political questions connected with Israeli sovereignty, and this difference warrants clarification.

Both these groups, like many non-religious Israelis, have a traditional religious attachment to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel). Some link the country in religious terms with political sovereignty. How does the nation-state tie in with the religious aspect? National sovereignty is a relatively new phenomenon. Some people identify the sprouting of significant national roots of this sovereignty with Europe after the Peace of Westphalia in the mid-seventeenth century, while others ascribe it to a later period.¹⁷ Clearly, the attachment of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel did not depend on this sovereignty; it was nurtured in religious terms for many generations.¹⁸ Since national sovereignty has developed, it has had no relevance whatever to Judaism, for the Jewish people were deprived of independence or any real territory. Political Zionism, as a national liberation movement that stated as its aim the sovereignty and political independence of the Jewish people, linked national sovereignty to the Jewish people. From hereon, national sovereignty, in its secular European meanings, would be blended with Jewish concepts that link the people with the land.¹⁹

¹⁷ Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography — World Economy, Nation State and Locality* (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 95-140.

¹⁸ Yosseph Shilhav, "Interpretation and Misinterpretation of Jewish Territorialism," in D. Newman, ed., *The Impact of Gush-Emunim — Politics and Settlement in the West Bank* (London: Croom-Helm, 1985), pp. 111-124; Yosseph Shilhav, "Ethnicity and Geography in Jewish Perspectives," *GeoJournal*, 30:3(1993):273-277.

¹⁹ Yosseph Shilhav, "Judaism, Geography, and Sovereignty: The Middle East Peace Process as an Educational Dilemma," in Y. Gradus and G. Lipshitz, eds., *The Mosaic of Israeli Geography* (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996), pp. 269-276.

The orthodox response to Zionism and the new concepts of sovereignty was varied.²⁰ The Haredim rejected them outright and deemed them religiously invalid. Yet another religious approach, led by Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook (1865-1935), the first chief rabbi in the Land of Israel (Palestine), draws on the idea of Jewish nationalism, cloaked in European sovereignty, and applies it to the orthodox world. Followers of his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891-1982), took the religious meanings they gave to the political concepts of sovereignty to the point of national extremism based on religious motives.²¹ The settlers of Hadar Betar (which did not develop) belonged to this stream. The Haredi residents of Betar Illit were educated along the principle of rejection of the secular concepts of sovereignty. The government decision to build a new town and the urgent housing needs of Haredim thus represent a meeting of totally different ideological approaches.

It was obvious to all those involved in planning, developing, and settling the town that only unequivocal economic incentives could attract Haredim to a settlement like Betar Illit. The Haredi builders worked very hard to improve the terms for apartment buyers there — far exceeding Ministry of Housing norms. According to the director of Mishkenot Yerushalayim: “There is a huge advantageous gap between what the ministry is offering the general public in remote Jerusalem neighborhoods like Neve Ya’akov and Ramot and what is being offered in Betar. A three-room apartment in Neve Ya’akov that would cost \$75,000 with much tougher purchase conditions — and which would be out of reach for the Haredi public — goes for just \$54,000 in Betar, where most of the sum is available in loans and mortgages; the down payment is about \$6,000 and even that can be made in 10 installments.”²²

In addition to the low basic price, he said, special benefits were available for Haredi buyers in Betar:

The main difference is in the interest. All the tens of thousands of dollars the Housing Ministry makes available to those eligible for mortgages do not include a penny of interest. For example, a young couple in Jerusalem that gets a loan of \$10,000 with 5 percent interest pays about \$40 a month in interest alone. That does not exist in Betar. Moreover, every young couple in Betar gets \$44,000; if they would have to add interest to that they would have repayments of \$165 in interest alone, before paying back the prime. This makes the subject of interest — which does not ex-

²⁰ Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 185-200.

²¹ Yosseph Shilhav, “Territorial Extremism from Religious Motives,” *Mahanaim*, 5 (1993):174-185 (Hebrew).

²² See note 16 above.

ist in Betar — of huge significance, and one has to appreciate this achievement. Also, the mortgages in Betar, which come directly from the Ministry, are updated once every three months, which further lowers the rate of repayment.²³

The economic assistance offered to Betar residents from state sources was so great that the State Comptroller highlighted it in her 1990 report. She noted that the Housing Ministry signed a contract with the Ashdar construction company for the building of 2,000 apartments in the town planned for 8,000 units — without having issued a tender. The ministry agreed to give Ashdar intermediate financing and to buy 170 of the first 200 units. In addition, the ministry was to cover the cost of infrastructure development in the town — which was not accepted practice anywhere else. The mortgages granted were preferential, based on criteria equivalent to those for ex-servicemen and women and they were given to Haredim who did not serve in the Israeli army. There was a NIS 30,000-60,000 (approximately \$10,000-20,000) difference in the benefits given to mortgage-holders in Betar Illit compared to those eligible for mortgages in other places. The Comptroller's Report added that the ministry provided greater assistance than that warranted by the permanent guidelines on public land allocation.²⁴

These exceptional conditions were intended to achieve two aims: to protect the construction company against severe losses if the marketing to Haredim failed, and in this way to encourage the company to execute the project quickly; and to offer such tempting conditions to potential Haredi buyers that they would throng to Betar.

Such incentives were indeed essential, as Haredi opposition to Betar was also great, particularly from followers of one of the most prominent Lithuanian spiritual leaders, Rabbi Eliezer Schach. The Haredi journal that reflected the rabbi's views attacked the building of Betar, despite the many advantages, claiming that they were only camouflage for the government's true motives:

Even before any public outcry was made over the State Comptroller's Report...the Knesset Comptroller Committee this week discussed the previous report which stated that founding Betar settlers were given exaggerated benefits by the Housing Ministry. It was interesting to hear the opinion of one committee member [Knesset Member Ruby Rivlin (Likud)] who taught us something about the Housing Ministry's attitude on this subject and tried to explain the reason for the special encouragement given to Betar in words that were apparently aimed at representatives of

²³ See note 16 above.

²⁴ State of Israel, *State Comptroller's Report, 1990*, pp. 155-162 (Hebrew).

the Left and anyone with a narrow view of the Haredi public. MK Rivlin said, “The settlement was founded so as to thin out the Haredi population in Jerusalem. When they [Haredim] didn’t show up it was decided to grant major incentives.” MK Rivlin can be considered a rather loyal supporter of the former Housing Minister [David Levy] and should therefore be taken seriously. Anyone who has not yet grasped why Minister Levy and his team attached such great importance to encouraging Betar heard the reason yesterday. As well as wanting to coerce the Haredi public to be an unwilling partner of the settlement policy of the right-wing ministers, the aim was to “thin out the Haredi population in Jerusalem.”²⁵

Betar Illit is thus bad for two reasons, according to its ultra-orthodox opponents: it serves as an accessory to settlement policy and it negatively affects the main Haredi concentration. Anyone who knows how to read a Haredi text carefully will pick up on a small but significant difference in the writing of the name Betar in Hebrew — not as the name of the city referred to in the Babylonian Talmud (compiled around 500 AD) as a great Jewish city, but in its Hebrew abbreviation, hinting at the Revisionist right-wing movement and the name of a soccer team.

Rabbi Chaim Nachum Freiman, director of Mishkenot Yerushalayim, was then recruited to clarify matters for the Haredim. He knew that whatever he would say would be printed in a large-circulation Haredi newspaper and so he stated clearly that he had no intention of assisting the settlements over the “green line.” He acknowledged that Betar Illit hugs the “green line” but the fact that it is technically over the border is irrelevant. The proximity of the town to the secular villages of Zur Hadassah and Mevo Betar, which were founded before the 1967 War, he claimed, indicates that “there is almost no connection between Betar and the territories.” In an interview in another paper he declared: “We did not become involved in order to build a town but rather to solve housing problems.”²⁶ His point is that Haredim have no interest in settling in the territories. They live in Betar only because there they were offered more convenient housing conditions and financial support than were available elsewhere. Their interest in that location is solely economic.

Even if such statements were meant to mollify potential residents of Betar, there was still the objective problem of distance from Jerusalem and security on the way to the town, i.e., the problem of access. In its first stages of construction, there were two main roads to Betar — the shorter was the main Jerusalem-Gush Etzion road, from which one turned west past the Arab villages

²⁵ *Yated Ne’eman* daily newspaper, July 25, 1991 (Hebrew).

²⁶ Interview in *Mishpacha* (Family) magazine, April 1991 (Hebrew).

of Khadr and Hussan. During the early stages of the town's development, the *intifada* (Palestinian uprising, which began in 1987) was at its height and therefore this road, though shorter than the alternative route, was dangerous and not used. The alternative route, which served as the main access road for many years and was once the southern access route for the Jerusalem Corridor, goes from Jerusalem through the suburb of Ein Karem and passes the villages of Bar Giora, Zur Hadassah, and Mevo Betar (Map 3). This is a long and winding road, about 25 kilometers (16 miles) in length, passing through a beautiful mountain landscape. Its advantage was that, except for the last two kilometers, it remains within the "green line." But although not problematic in terms of security, the road has safety problems: the amount of traffic flowing into an area whose population is increasing rapidly presents a danger on this narrow, winding road. The opening of the new road from Jerusalem to Gush Etzion today enables access to Betar via a road that bypasses Hussan.

In order to allay the fears of the Haredi public regarding access, both in terms of distance and from a security perspective, as was the case at the start of construction, a map was published (not to scale) presenting the alternate access roads, stressing the convenient and shorter "new highway."

Aside from the technical element of access, differences between Hadar Betar settlers and the population of Betar Illit could also be discerned by their attitudes to the roads that led to their settlements. The first settlers, the core group that was associated with the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva, Machon Meir, and the Gush Emunim ideological movement, all religious right-wing nationalists, would make a point of traveling from Jerusalem along the Bethlehem Road past Khadr and Hussan. This road went through Arab villages and the travelers quite often had rocks thrown at them. The Hadar Betar settlers saw this as part of the battle over territory; desired control is not only achieved inside the settlement but also as a demonstration of presence and ownership on the roads that lead to it. Their territorial aim was to strengthen the Jerusalem-Gush Etzion route, of which they considered themselves a part, as they are located in the northwestern part of Gush Etzion.

This was not at all the approach of the Haredim in Betar Illit. For them, the old Jerusalem-Gush Etzion road was an impediment, posing a needless danger in which they had no interest — in their view, it should be avoided. Their territorial perception — if it exists at all — is totally different: Betar Illit is located in the south of the Jerusalem Corridor, alongside veteran Israeli villages. The residents would have rather done without the hundreds of meters that separate Betar from the Israeli side of the "green line." The Gush Emunim settlers' journal notes this significant difference between the two, stating:

With the subject of severe housing problems as a central issue these days, we went to see one of the solutions: Betar, located southwest of Jerusalem. The more daring residents, members of the founding core group, i.e., those of Hadar Betar, would drive there via Bethlehem. Today's residents, so as to save lives, drive there via a new road through the Jerusalem suburb of Ein Karem....The story of the founding of Hadar Betar is, among other things, the story of a group of people who wanted to be pioneers. They moved there for pure ideological reasons and lived in extremely harsh conditions. Now that hundreds of housing units have been erected, those people are being forced out to make way for other settlers — settlers who are coming for economic reasons alone, without upholding Zionist settler ideology.²⁷

This item expresses contempt and frustration — contempt for the new Haredi settlers who are not daring, who do not share the Zionist settler ideology; the frustration stems from the fact that the “daring” and idealistic settlers are being ousted by people whose one and only interest is to find economic solutions to housing problems. The cynicism inherent in the changing aims of the settlement hurts the people of Gush Emunim, even if the pain is cloaked in praise for the strengthening of another settlement of Jews — whomever they may be — in the territories.

In this light, the marketing strategy of the new town becomes clear. The two terms “marketing strategy” and “new town” should be emphasized, and the link between them highlighted. For our purposes, “new town” refers to a place whose existence and growth are not spontaneous and orthogenic but rather the result of an external decision. It is true that any suburb erected by a large construction company could fit that definition, but such a decision aims to take into account and respond to market demands. Such a company will focus its marketing efforts on population groups that are likely to be potential clients, identifying them according to socioeconomic structure and their present stage of life. By contrast, the location of Betar Illit is the result of a political decision, which was born of ideological perception. The lack of spontaneity stems from the gap between the ideological motive, to set up the town in its present location, and the inability to realize this motive because of a lack of population to settle there. The Haredi sector, ideologically, is at best indifferent to the political value of the location of Betar and in some circumstances wary of it and even opposed to it. Thus, this is a marketing challenge whose aim is to alter the expectations and characteristic demands of an orthodox community.

²⁷ Meir Rabinovitz, “By the Kosher Confirmation of Rav Schach,” *Nekuda* journal, no. 145, November 1990 (Hebrew).

This gap, which stems from a difference of interests which has been noted, has to be bridged by marketing policy. Creating a supply of apartments will not alone motivate the Haredi public to move to the settlement. The marketing strategy thus was designed to aggressively entice or provide an incentive too good for the target population to refuse: very cheap housing with incomparably good financing. Clearly, a community whose members have no other way of purchasing their own flats will respond to such enticement. In other words, in this way a large, low-level socioeconomic group would develop in Betar. Indeed, this was the case during the first stage of settlement. Without backing by the large Hassidic or Lithuanian communities, the dominant element in settling the town was the commercial Mishkenot Yerushalayim, which doubles as a kind of welfare housing department. It was natural that this company drew needy types to the town.

This created a solid physical and residential infrastructure for a permanent settlement, on the one hand, but raised the danger of it being labeled backward, on the other. It turns out that the mere existence of the first core group provided an impetus for many others to follow. Once the town's existence was a *fait accompli*, during later stages of development it began to attract people who were looking for apartments but did not need the generous financial assistance offered. In its first two years Betar was populated by a range of new residents — Hassidim, Lithuanians, Sephardi Haredim, and even some moderate religious people. The second wave of new residents strengthened the residential structure of the settlement. Toward the conclusion of this research, in April 1996, the most developed phase of the town began: the building of free-standing homes aimed at a wealthier population group.

This was the conception and birth of a Haredi suburban community in the Jerusalem metropolitan area. It seems significantly different from the classic suburb we know in urban geography: classic suburbanization is the result of the deterioration of city centers, a rise in the standard of living, and a demand for larger residential space at the expense of access. Consequently, suburbs tend to reflect a higher average income than that found in city centers. By contrast, in the Haredi suburb of Betar Illit the opposite is true, founded as it was as a housing solution for a weak population. In fact, it was imposed on its population by circumstance and was not the result of free choice in a competitive market. Indeed, its population, at least in the early stages of development, is characterized as having a lower income than its counterparts in the city. The early Haredi suburb was thus antithetical to the classic suburb. From this point of view, Betar Illit more closely resembles towns such as Ma'aleh Adumim and Givat Ze'ev (satellite suburbs of Jerusalem) in their early stages,

which also were aimed at people who could not compete in the city housing market.

The allocation of land for building private homes in Betar and the start of construction of spacious apartments and houses, as well as the entry of a population that did not require mortgages and did not apply for them, indicated a change in the town's development trend: the needy population served as a "bridge" to provide a maintenance base for the Haredi town. From hereon, Betar is likely to develop as a normal suburban community.

Meanwhile, the members of the Hadar Betar core group, who were organized as a cooperative association, continued to live in harsh physical conditions — trailers and huts — and were moved from hilltop to hilltop, as building continued in the town but was not intended for them. Originally, Betar fell within the municipal jurisdiction of the Gush Etzion Regional Council, which included both the town, when Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz served as head of the founding committee,²⁸ and Hadar Betar. On August 30, 1990, a local council was set up in Betar Illit²⁹ and with this Hadar Betar lost its standing. Leibowitz, who served as first council head, claims he allocated resources to the Hadar Betar group for their own needs, including a separate position for a security officer who organized guard duty independently and even a special budget for their own activities, such as Independence Day festivities. Knesset Member Hanan Porat (National Religious Party), a settler leader, together with Shmarya Cohen, who was the Housing Ministry's Jerusalem district head, tried to persuade the Hadar Betar people to move, *en masse*, to a neighborhood in the Gush Etzion town of Efrat. Their proposal was not accepted — neither by the Hadar Betar group, nor by Efrat residents who were wary of the members of Hadar Betar.³⁰

Eventually, the Hadar Betar group disbanded. The last of the original members left the site in mid-1994 and since then, anyone who moved there did so without any organizational framework. Thus ended the idea of the "national" Hadar Betar. On that site, a Haredi town is growing, with a pragmatic economic base for public housing.

In fact, neither group emerged totally satisfied: the ideological settlement that failed to recruit sufficient people or resources, as a program not based on eco-

²⁸ The appointment was valid from the beginning of February 1990.

²⁹ According to an injunction by the IDF commander for Judea and Samaria, while the region was officially under military administration. In an additional order, Betar Illit was included in the jurisdiction of the Gush Etzion Regional Council.

³⁰ Interview with Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

conomic infrastructure and a suitable population, was not ultimately realized; and the Haredi town which serves as a practical solution to the particularistic needs of a segregated sector is fulfilling the controversial territorial policy of a right-wing government.

This report deals with the significance of a Haredi concentration in a new and segregated town with no foreign population, in the context of the functioning of a Haredi local authority. A Haredi community that lives in an “isolated” town cannot rely on others — total responsibility for the administration, functioning, and development of municipal services rests with that community. On the other hand, the community need not fear contact with the secular community or any other non-Haredi population group. Therefore, the administrative problems and municipal functioning in the new Haredi town take on a new hue. Later discussion will analyze Bene Beraq and Betar Illit as two models of Haredi municipal rule.

Haredi Communities in the U.S.

The segregated urban Haredi community is a new phenomenon in Israel but it has parallels in the United States. As in Israel, Haredim in the U.S. segregate themselves geographically and have to fight for residential space for their communities. But unlike Israel, American Haredim have to defend their religious culture in a larger sociopolitical context that separates religion and state. These disputes sometimes end up in court, with Haredim winning some battles and losing others.

After Jewish residents left the Lower East Side and the Bronx, the historically Jewish areas of New York, a large Jewish concentration developed in Brooklyn, especially Haredim in their different shades. Four neighborhoods in Brooklyn have been identified as having major Haredi concentrations: Williamsburg, which houses the Satmar Hassidim; Crown Heights, home to the Habad (Lubavitch) movement; and Flatbush and Boro Park, which are not aligned with any specific Haredi group.

The highest natural increase in New York in 1995-96 was registered in Flatbush. The Haredi rates of natural increase are the highest of any population in New York, where in all levels of society, including minorities and ethnic groups — but excluding the Haredi community — family planning and birth control programs have been adopted. Thus, while an increasing drop in birth rates has been noted among Afro-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other minority groups, they have remained consistently high for Haredim.

Demographic pressure and the closeness of the community, with all its significance regarding the extended family, mold the demand for residential space, and in this way American Haredim are no different from their counterparts in Israel. Territorial limitations and the spread of other population groups make major expansion of Haredi areas within New York City difficult. For example, the Haredi quarter of the Satmar Hassidim in Williamsburg is limited by land that was previously a naval base (owned by the federal government) and industrial areas. The Haredi area expanded in a clear process of “invasion and succession” and, later, with housing aimed specifically at Haredim. With the filling of the available space, specific-purpose housing has become the only option left for expansion, but that is conditional on changing the definition of land use and raising maximum permissible building density. This in turn is dependent on changes in zoning laws; in other words, one needs to have pull with the administration. Such limitations have caused Haredim to leave for other communities in the New York metropolitan area.

The process of suburbanization of the Haredim in New York, while not new, has been gaining momentum in recent years. Demographic pressure on the limited residential space is the main factor for this growing phenomenon, though it is not the primary factor as the first Haredi exit from New York took place in the late 1940s. Then, Rabbi Weissmandel, spiritual leader of the Neitra Hassidim, who hailed from Czechoslovakia, decided to leave Brooklyn and set up a village for Torah students that would be based on an agricultural economy. The community was allocated some 300 acres of land in the vicinity of Mt. Kisco, north of New York City, in a forest on the edge of a lake. (Today such a project would be unthinkable because of high land values.) The village was named the Yeshiva Farm Settlement. All that is left of the initial idea today is an empty cowshed. Some 75 families still live in the village, including one of the branches of the prosperous Herzog family — owners of Baron Herzog Wines. Most of the residents commute daily to New York City, particularly to the Jewish center in Brooklyn and the commercial and jewelry centers in Manhattan.

The largest Haredi community in metropolitan New York is Kiryas Joel, in Orange County, which was founded in the 1970s, though large-scale development began only in the early 1980s. In 1996 Kiryas Joel had a population of 12,500. Two other Haredi communities can be found in Monsey — New Square of the Square Hassidim, on Route 45, and Kiryas Kaser, on Maple Street, both in Rockland County. Another community, which is not yet an independent municipality, is Kashau, of the Pupa Hassidim. This is a small group that lives around the Kashau yeshiva, in a forest area in Westchester.

For the grouping of the yeshiva and some residential buildings to be eligible for independent community status, a population of 500 is required. Lately, building has begun on the site, but there are financial problems. These difficulties raise the question of whether it is worth extending public support to develop communities that are specifically ethnic, cultural, or religious.

The ability to gain public (i.e., state) support to finance residential construction for Haredim is extremely important for the development of Haredi neighborhoods. The U.S. administration recognizes the need for affirmative action to encourage ethno-cultural minority groups which previously suffered discrimination. In the case of Haredim, this approach is expressed in the large-scale support and allocations the communities receive for residential purposes. However, the American Constitution makes a clear separation between religion and state, which prevents the state from getting involved in religious issues, including financial support for religious institutions and communities.

The question is: Does the Hassidic community (Haredim in the U.S. are known generically as Hassidim) qualify as a minority that suffered discrimination which warrants redress, and on this basis is eligible for government support, or is it simply a religious group that cannot expect such support? Lawyers for both sides are currently arguing the point: Haredim claim that as a cultural minority group they are subject to discrimination — observant Jews are discriminated against in economic systems, for example, because of not being able to open their businesses on the Sabbath or being prevented from participating in business meetings and the like because such meetings take place on the Sabbath or in non-kosher restaurants — and in this way their competitive edge in business is harmed. In response, the claim was made that these limitations on orthodox Jews are not forced on them but rather are accepted by free choice.

The claim of free choice in the context of the orthodox lifestyle of Haredim was rejected by a U.S. court. It was accepted that religious principles such as the prohibition of incest or the opposition to female circumcision prevalent in Western civilization are etched into the cultural character of Haredim; these principles are imposed on the individual by his very association with a particular culture. The Hassidic communities were thus recognized as culturally unique and thus saved from the separation between religion and state. At the same time, since affirmative action is relevant only in the specific sphere in which a minority group has suffered discrimination (in this case, in business and finance), the Hassidim won some financial benefits. Still, the pressing problem of housing in New York was not solved. As noted, Haredi housing initiatives in metropolitan New York are advancing, but to have an impact

external support is needed. Therefore, the question of eligibility for government support for housing remains open.

Relatively new developments in urban geography may serve as a solution to the housing problems of the Haredi community as well. A trend can be seen among large corporations to move part of their operations away from the overcrowded and expensive city centers to the suburbs. This avoids environmental problems, access difficulties, depreciation of infrastructure, and the high price of real estate. However, such moves can be detrimental to employees, many of whom are in the lower economic strata. These workers cannot afford expensive suburban living; if they remain in the city, the distance between their homes and their new place of work creates difficulties.

One solution to this problem is to provide staff housing. The transfer of some companies to the suburbs is accompanied by the allocation of land and resources for the construction of employee quarters or a neighborhood close to the work place. These allocations include federal government assistance in recognition of the necessity for such building. Some Haredim believe the idea of staff housing may solve their housing problems as well, with the yeshiva serving as the heart of the community. Consequently, they claim that residential building should be encouraged for those associated with a yeshiva located in an outlying suburb. The Pupa Hassidim in Westchester embraced this idea and attempted to persuade (so far without success) the IBM conglomerate, whose headquarters are in the vicinity, to build staff housing with government assistance in the hope that this would serve as a precedent in the region that the Haredi community could later draw on.

Recognition of Haredi building around a yeshiva as staff housing is not a certainty. Haredim are trying to establish analogies between urban structures based on socioeconomic grounds and their buildings which by no stretch of the imagination can be thought of as based on the same economic or social foundations. Such recognition requires approval by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In order to persuade the federal authorities to consider the yeshiva as an employer so as to obtain government housing aid, the community has organized a lobby, using its political connections and legal consultants.

The Pupa Hassidim have come up against many other problems that point to the difficulty Haredim are likely to find with the various planning systems. They have requested to design their residential space in a way that will meet their community's special needs, including the demographic structure that dictates high-density living conditions. The local council of Yorktown, a mu-

municipal authority in New York State (a “home rule” state) which is independent and has wide-ranging planning authority, will not approve the Haredi plan. Moreover, Yorktown demands that the Haredi community within its jurisdiction not declare municipal independence as a village even when its population reaches the required size. This is apparently to prevent the setting of planning norms and precedents that would be convenient to Haredim but unacceptable by modern, secular, Western standards.

2 Manpower in a Haredi Municipal Administration

Personnel Problems in an Established Haredi City

A Haredi-run municipality has difficulties finding suitably competent employees, as noted by Dr. Arie Hecht, city auditor of Bene Beraq.³¹ The main reasons for this are both a lack of appropriate professional qualifications and a lack of suitable education within the Haredi community. This problem could be solved by employing professionals from outside the community, as it is not unusual for a municipality in a metropolitan area to employ workers who are not residents of that locality. So what prevents Bene Beraq from employing competent professionals from metropolitan Tel Aviv?

The answer lies in the social character of Haredi society. As a traditional community it protects the interests of its own members. There is a distribution of resources and, no less, a distribution of salaried positions and honorary positions within the municipality, which provide the livelihood of community members. So the positions in the Bene Beraq municipality are filled by people who have ties with the various Hassidic groups and those aligned with politicians who represent those groups. In other words, these positions are closed to outside professionals — at least until 1995 when the council was dissolved and a committee was appointed by the Minister of Interior to run the city (as described below).

The result is an inflated municipal administration, with various groups demanding representation in city departments and decision-making positions where they pay no heed to official standards or operational efficiency. They demand that positions be filled by their own people, with the intent that those people will look after their interests when it comes to the allocation of resources. City departments are thus filled beyond capacity with unqualified people, sometimes two to a position. This is particularly blatant in the educa-

³¹ Interview with Dr. Arie Hecht, who later also served as deputy chairman of the appointed committee in the municipality.

tion department, which even has two directors (one each from the Haredi Shas and Degel Hatorah parties). Also, when possible retrenchment becomes an issue — to improve efficiency or for other reasons — pressure is applied by interest groups, because dismissing a worker will reduce a particular group's representation, which, in turn, will create the need to realign power throughout the system.

The relationship between the city bureaucracy and the residents — not only on the city council but throughout the administration — is based on who is connected to whom: every Haredi group demands representation within the various city departments. This negatively affects the running of the system, not only because it is cumbersome, but mainly because those holding the positions take orders from their leaders, orders which may have nothing to do with efficient administration. The functioning of the city system is thus determined by traditional ties among orthodox groups, applying none of the norms of behavior required for objective policy-making.

The personnel structure in a Haredi system is influenced by social, cultural, and even demographic elements, in contrast to that in a non-Haredi local authority. One example is the influence of the community's high birth rates on kindergarten teachers' posts: due to the many births, the number of women on maternity leave in the city education system has grown to the point where the substitute kindergarten teachers are employed for so long that their positions are made permanent.

Another example concerns the role of the municipality as a supplier of religious services: in other cities, religious services are provided by the religious council which is appointed jointly by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the municipality. But in Bene Beraq the religious council serves only the moderate religious and secular communities. The Haredi majority disregard the council and do not require its services because they fear that drawing on those services could harm the status of the great rabbis in the city and because they oppose any government intervention in matters of religion. Thus the cost of supplying religious services to the majority of the population falls on the city. Moreover, Bene Beraq requires special religious services — during the sabbatical *shmita* year, for example (during which agricultural land is left to lie fallow), the city employs a large number of workers who ensure the constant supply of agricultural produce that does not come from *shmita* land (i.e., it comes from Arab farms). In the six years between *shmita*, the contribution of these workers is negligible. Such seasonal or singular services greatly add to the bloating of the system.

The Haredi community's contribution to the artificial swelling of the administrative system on the basis of connections creates an atmosphere typical of a *shtetl* (traditional Jewish town in eighteenth/nineteenth-century Eastern Europe) among public workers; and added to this are many reports of nepotism in the appointment of employees.³² This atmosphere leads the city (among other characteristic flaws in its functioning) to ignore professional legal evaluations, even when they carry the weight of court orders (pending the court's actual issuing of the order, which is done at the instruction of the chairman of the investigating committee). The situation was best expressed by the city comptroller, when asked whether it was possible to improve the situation with the workers currently employed: "To get the city administration to function properly, one would first have to get the people there to make a mental 'switch' away from the *shtiebl* ((literally, a 'small house' but commonly referring to a small orthodox synagogue) mentality."³³

Filling city posts with unqualified people is a sure recipe for failure in all that is related to the rules of proper administration. The concept "proper administration" is very broad; in the present context it relates to the mode of functioning of the municipal bureaucratic system and the degree of responsibility for the many problems that arise in the daily running of the city. The residents finally took collective steps when a sanitation workers' strike was called in 1995: according to the committee's report (see below), some of those workers were hired through employment agencies, not directly by the city. It was customary for sanitation workers to get salary increases of 78 percent (instead of 10 percent, as permitted by law) and garbage truck drivers 88 percent (instead of 10 percent, as permitted by law). When they decided to strike for a pay increase, residents responded with protest placards and letters to the Minister of Interior.

Following this crisis and in view of the city's severe financial problems, then-Interior Minister Uzi Bar'am (Labor) appointed a committee (on May 31, 1995) to investigate the situation in the Bene Beraq municipality.

³² The *Bene Beraq Investigating Committee Report*, submitted to the Minister of Interior, Jerusalem, June 20, 1995. Testimony annexes.

³³ *Ibid.* The concept "*stiebl* mentality" has negative connotations among the public. The term was also used by Sephardi Haredi Interior Minister Eliahu Suissa in reference to the Bene Beraq municipality. Addressing the Knesset Interior Committee, the Minister said that it would be to the benefit of the city to allow the appointed committee to carry out its task because what went on in the municipality prior to the establishment of the committee was "terrible. I am amazed the police did not open investigations there. One must not run a municipality the way one runs a *stiebl*." *Ha'aretz* newspaper, July 9, 1997.

The mandate of the committee was to “examine the need to dissolve the council and appoint a committee to perform its duties.” Such a committee may be appointed by the Interior Minister, in consultation with the Justice Minister, in accordance with Article 144 of the Municipalities Ordinance (Amended). The committee’s job is to investigate whether the city council and/or the mayor are fulfilling their roles as required. Prior to the appointment of the investigating committee, the Interior Ministry’s control department presented figures describing the municipality’s dire situation and these appeared in the committee report:³⁴

1. The municipality’s accumulated deficit stood at NIS 108 million.
2. There was an exponential growth in the city’s regular budget deficit of NIS 3-5 million per month.
3. In fiscal year 1994 the deficit in the regular budget was NIS 47 million and some NIS 1.7 million in the development budget.
4. The city did not sufficiently take the steps available to it to collect the full taxes owed by residents, non-profit associations, and businesses operating within its jurisdiction.
5. The average rate of paid city property taxes in the previous three years was only some 57 percent of the total owed and, in the case of water, only 70 percent.
6. Residents’ debts to the city for property taxes stood at some NIS 100 million at the end of December 1994; this figure was around NIS 12 million for water use.
7. The city did not bill institutes of Torah learning and a range of other benevolent institutions for water use.
8. The city granted irregular salary increments to most workers (some 70 percent), in contradiction of the Basic Budget Law. Salary increases for mid-level and higher-grade workers represent the lion’s share of the financial burden.
9. Municipal heads employ many workers on the basis of family connections, not qualifications.

A comparison of items 1 and 6 above offers one viable solution — collecting taxes would solve the deficit problem. However, of the outstanding debts, the city has defined some NIS 30 million as “lost,” some NIS 25 million is owed by religious and welfare institutions, and an additional NIS 25 million is under legal dispute. The remainder are taxes in arrears for the preceding period.

The investigating committee determined that “this dire financial situation resulted in the inability of the Bene Beraq municipality to meet its debts, in line with the Municipalities Ordinance, and supply essential services to its resi-

³⁴ See note 32.

dents.” This situation arose, the committee added, because of “financial mismanagement (non-collection of owed taxes and irregular salary payments), an impractical budget, and improper and inefficient management on the part of the municipality” (see note 14 above).

On June 16, 1995, just two weeks after being appointed, the committee recommended to the Interior Minister to dissolve the city council and replace it with an appointed committee under its authority. The full report was submitted on June 20, reflecting the intensive work of the committee. Thirty-eight witnesses gave depositions, including members of the city council, municipal employees, Finance and Interior Ministry staffers, accountants, and lawyers.

The Bene Beraq municipality’s gross mismanagement was overt, and needed no further searching. The committee focused on four central areas as the basis of this mismanagement. The first was the recruitment of personnel (the three other areas are outlined in later chapters). The committee noted the difficulty in hiring “qualified local workers.” The intensive pursuit of religious learning by Haredi men does not leave them time to obtain the requisite administrative, technical, and academic qualifications necessary to run a local authority. In the absence of such qualifications, workers were recruited primarily on the basis of affiliation.

The result, as noted, is inefficiency, the duplication of positions, and inappropriate decision-making. “Everything is built on coalition agreements and pressures,” the committee wrote. One clear example, which highlights Haredi motives for special organization that burdens the municipality, is the employment of kindergarten teachers. These women are employed by the city — and not the Ministry of Education — in order to avoid giving a government ministry a say in Haredi education. Similarly, as described above, religious services for most of the population are provided by the municipality, not the religious council, which adds about 200 employees to the city payroll.

The investigating committee report lists personnel problems in the Bene Beraq municipality as the most severe of the Haredi city’s administrative failings. This comment requires clarification: it is difficult to isolate the “quality” element of employees from the social characteristics of the Haredi community — its particularistic nature and associative relations also impact on the quality of employees (discussed below). The distinction between personnel quality and social characteristics is hypothetical only, since in practice there is, of course, a close connection between these factors. It should be noted that the problems discussed here developed in the Bene Beraq municipality over a period of two decades, since Haredim gained control. By contrast, a Haredi town such as

Betar Illit, which is new and therefore free of an administrative and municipal tradition, demonstrates considerable functional success — which warrants separate discussion.

Personnel Problems in a New Haredi Town

In the Talmud it was said in the name of Rav: “A person should always try to reside in a town whose inhabitation is recent, for, since its inhabitation is recent, its transgressions are few” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, 10b). Nowadays, this would be known as a “new town.” The transgressions in the new town are few because, due to its size and brief existence, undesirable institutions and customs have not yet sprouted. Without them, it is easier to establish proper and efficient procedures.

As a new Haredi town, Betar Illit, at least in its first years, can be considered a success. The features of its success will be discussed in later chapters, but as one of its achievements, acting council head Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz won the Local Authority Prize in 1995, awarded by the Interior Minister to local authorities that end the financial year with a balanced budget. The accompanying certificate, signed by then-minister Bar'am, states that the prize was given for “your contribution to promoting a local authority and in recognition of your managerial and organizational ability.” Yet how is it possible that Betar Illit enjoyed success and competency, while Bene Beraq suffered from such gross inefficiency?

The answer, it seems, lies in the acting council head himself. Born in Romania in 1956, Leibowitz immigrated to Israel as a boy and settled in Safed with his family. His external (Haredi) appearance today in no way reflects his personal history, although that history plays an important part in his role as council head and the atmosphere that prevailed as Betar Illit developed.

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Leibowitz was still in high school, he was active in the emergency centers in Safed and northern Israel. For this and his community work at that time he was awarded the title of “Israel Youth” by the magazine *Ma'ariv Youth* and volunteer organizations. Later he went abroad as part of a Rotary delegation.

He served as an officer in the Israel Defense Forces and following his demobilization was a representative of the volunteer organizations in the north of the country. In 1978 he co-founded the Arachim (Values) college of Jewish

learning in Jerusalem, and served as its first director. Leibowitz was also one of the first activists in the Gesher organization which attempts to create a dialogue between the orthodox and secular communities. By the age of 22 he was head of the Safed city department for youth affairs and was soon afterwards elected to the city council. In the business arena he received a deputy directorship in the Kochav Hashomron construction firm, which started to build the town of Emanuel before going bankrupt. He lived in the U.S. during 1985-87 where he held a variety of community positions. Upon his return, he joined a group of builders planning a retirement village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Although this effort came to naught, another of his plans did succeed: a company he had established called “Fruit of the Land” founded a Haredi quarter in the Jerusalem suburb of Givat Ze’ev for Karlin-Stolin Hasidim.

Together with his building and business activities, Leibowitz studied to be a rabbi at the Ateret Yisrael yeshiva and obtained a degree in education at Bar-Ilan University. He was then invited to direct the construction and development of one of the largest projects designed for the Haredi community — a new town — in order to ease that community’s severe housing shortage. Leibowitz had one foot in the Haredi world, another in business, and he was also involved in modern administration, maintaining professional relations with the various strata of Israeli society — economists, army officers, politicians, and the like.

The choice of Leibowitz to head the Betar Illit project was no gamble. He was an apt choice as a liaison between the two worlds, which had to come together to make the project a success — the Haredi world, with its complexities and special values, and the modern world of economics involved in construction and development — particularly at a time when a meeting between the two was not necessarily considered natural. The basic problem of Haredi manpower — lack of suitable skills — simply did not apply in his case. At the same time, his connections, which were mostly instrumental, could have been garnered without his unique background so that, important as they are, they were not the sole reason for his success.

The determining factor in the functioning of Betar Illit as a new Haredi town was the appointment of a professional as acting council head; he was not elected. However, an acting council head can also be close to the political bodies that appointed him, be they rabbis, ministers, directors-general, high-ranking bureaucrats, or other leaders, and he could have an obligation to them in the political and governmental systems. Leibowitz claims not to be affiliated with any political group (he says the political groups preferred a

candidate other than himself) or any specific Haredi group. He was not a resident of Betar and he declared that when the time came to hold elections he had no intention of running for council head. As a “professional” appointment, and not an “affiliated” one, he was free of obligations to any of the particularistic groups in the community.

In this case it was the nature of the individual that provided a solution to the problem of talent in the realms of bureaucracy and social relations. Clearly, an effective council head can use his authority to make the system work, even if the problem of employee inefficiency remains. In this area, too, a new town does not have the problems of a large, established city. The members of the acting city council in Betar do not necessarily represent the local population. Some members of the acting council are not orthodox. The same is true for the council workers, especially those in posts that require professional and academic skills, some whom also do not live in the community.

An additional source of trained manpower relates to the special composition of the local population, at least in the early stages. Betar Illit is very close to the “green line” but is located in the territories. As such, it is a source of controversy and opposition among rabbis and Haredi leaders who would like to avoid settling in the territories which they view as “teasing the *goyim* [gentiles].” This is not the place to discuss this internal Haredi dispute, but it is worth noting that, combined with the notion of danger that surrounds a settlement in the territories, the dispute marred the initial stages of the marketing of Betar Illit to Haredim. Only major economic incentives and attractive social solutions managed to entice Haredim to Betar Illit.

Because of this problematic situation, the first residents did not necessarily fit the social core of the Haredi community — there were not a few newly-orthodox Jews from a variety of streams. Working alongside them were professionals and experienced workers whose skills could be tapped for the community’s various services, especially those important for a settlement located over the “green line,” such as security, communications, first aid, and the like. Once the settlement was considered a *fait accompli*, the type of resident changed to include more traditional groups of Haredim and the probability of finding residents with urban-related experience decreased. One of the main security problems in Betar Illit, as a settlement adjacent to Arab villages (even though it hugs the “green line”) is guard duty. In the Haredi community, whose men largely lack army training, guard duty is a serious enough problem to warrant discussion in a separate chapter.

3 The Education System as an Example of Municipal Management

Haredi Education as a Municipal Service

The city school system serves as a good example of the social problems a Haredi administration faces in municipal management. It is characterized by a clear spatial model of municipal services (location of schools, dispersion of students, and school district boundaries), and includes both social (composition of students in the class) and ideological (curriculum and values in the school) aspects. Managing such a system thus touches upon many sensitivities of the local population, whose social, cultural, and religious features greatly influence the functioning and efficiency of the system.

The State Education Law (1953) affirms that every school should be subject to state supervision and that the state may determine the curriculum, teaching methods, and related matters. Religious schools were to have operated within the framework and under the supervision of the state-religious education system in which the teachers, supervisors, and other officials are orthodox.

No sooner did the law come into force than a legal loophole was found for those who did not wish to be included. It was no surprise that the Haredi sector would not subject its schools to the supervision of the state, whose authorities were secular. (The motives for segregating Haredi education are not a subject for discussion in this report.) The law exempts the state from responsibility for financing schools that do not fall within the state framework, noting that all expenses should be borne by the parents. There is no official standard for the needs of Haredi schools with regard to planning, construction, and the allocation of other resources. Allotments for Haredi education are the result of political negotiations at the state and municipal levels, between representatives of the Haredi parties and politicians in power. This bargaining intensifies prior to the annual vote in the Knesset (Israeli parliament) to approve the state budget, or when the ruling coalition requires the votes of Haredi politicians on subjects under debate.

In other words, allotments to the Haredi education system are not reliant on education laws. Until 1995, some of these allotments were defined as separate articles in the Budget Law. Prior to approval of the budget each year, the amount they were to receive rose in accordance with the amount of lobbying and pressure wielded by the Haredi politicians. In 1995 the Basic Budget Law did away with “separate articles”; all allocations were now to be defined according to fixed criteria. This formal amendment has not changed the amount of allocations to Haredi education and prior to discussion on the 1996 budget it became clear that it had not reduced pressures by Haredim either.

Therefore, allocations for the Haredi education system depend on the bargaining power of Haredi “deal-makers,” whose status and value in that community (and sometimes among the general public) are dependent on the quantity of resources they obtain. This point is important because it indicates a dependence between different groups and political power-brokers — a dependence with very clear particularistic features. What is important in the framework of this study is that the various streams of Haredi schools, indifferent to the kind of recognition they have from the state, are organized as an autonomous system. The state educational authorities have minimal involvement in this system and even this is dwindling, particularly in the area of financing construction.

The state and state-religious school systems are organized with a division of authority between the state (Ministry of Education) and the municipalities, with both acting as education authorities. The spheres of responsibility are not clear-cut and change over time; much research has been done on this subject and there have been numerous attempts to make the cooperation more efficient.³⁵ The responsibilities of the municipalities compared to those of the Ministry of Education will not be discussed here; suffice it to say that the municipality does have authority over funding and spatial organization of the schools in its area, including school location, the organization of registration, setting school districts,³⁶ physical development, and the like. But since Haredi

³⁵ See Nahum Ben-Elia and Shai Can’ani, “*Costless*” *Local Autonomy: The Issue of Educational Facilities Funding* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1996) (Hebrew).

³⁶ The power of the authorities to dictate which school a child will attend, according to place of residence, is highly controversial. Today a process of weakening the boundaries of school districts can be seen. See Maya Choshen, Yosseph Shilhav, and Lea Kaufer, “School Geography: Spatial Implications of Educational Choice,” *Megamot — Behavioral Sciences Quarterly*, 36:2-3(1994):220-237 (Hebrew); Yosseph Shilhav and Lea Kaufer, *From School District to Catchment Area — New*

schools are not included within the municipality's responsibilities, it has no say regarding the curriculum or educational content of these schools, and no attempt has been made to play a role in their spatial organization.

The Bene Beraq investigating committee overlooked the fact that Haredi education is not subject to supervision by the state educational authorities. In other words, Haredi education receives state financing and resources without bearing any obligation to state norms. By ignoring this aspect, the committee omitted comment that the ability of the Education Ministry to intervene in the Haredi education system is extremely limited.

In a city in which the Haredi community is a minority, the small number of schools and institutes of Jewish learning which are not within the local authority's control come under the wing of the local education system, and they take in children from anywhere they choose. Thus, in a city where the Haredim represent the majority, there is a danger that the local school system will not have any direct authority, not only with regard to the essential quality of education, but with anything related to organization and development. Such a situation could lead to chaos, which has implications on the quality of administration in the Haredi city, as will be discussed below. Moreover, in a Haredi city which has a non-Haredi minority, an upheaval in the structure of the school system has occurred: most of the schools are community-run and segregated, with no state supervision or intervention. However, some are state or state-religious schools and the local authority is responsible for, among other things, their spatial organization. How does a Haredi municipal administration function in this situation?

This question requires clarification. It contains two inherent levels of the problem: social and ideological. At the social level, the question is: How can a person who is used to fighting only for the needs of his community mold policy that takes into consideration the range of needs of different population groups? In other words, how can someone who has become used to looking at things through his community's particularistic eyes develop a universal view? At the ideological level, the problem is even more complex. Even if we assume that the social difficulties involved in dealing with the problem will disappear with time, there are demands and needs that warrant action and funding from the local authority which are difficult for a Haredi administration to accept: elements of secular education and culture that are forbidden in *halachic* terms, such as entertainment performances that desecrate the Sabbath, curricula that contradict the Haredi orthodox world view, or co-educational

Trends in School Geography in Israeli Towns (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1997), Research Series No. 71 (Hebrew).

classes of boys and girls. Even in the case of state-religious schools, tension may develop between the local authority and the moderate religious community. Against this background, it is possible to understand the refusal of representatives of state-religious education in Bene Beraq to relinquish schools with relatively few pupils to Haredim, as the latter operate according to very different rules and customs.

The Influence of Social Characteristics on the Bene Beraq Education System

The problems of the education system in Bene Beraq are the cumulative result of the ills of a particularistic society whose representatives are forced to manage a city. Because, as noted, employees are recruited on the basis of kinship and affiliation, and not according to their qualifications, two deputy mayors head the education department where there is no coordination between them, or between them and the mayor. Because the state's rules of educational organization do not apply to Haredi education, almost anyone is able to lobby the Education Ministry directly and secure resources with no prior coordination with any of the other Haredi groups. The result is inequality between the schools and a sense of deprivation among many.

In addition, most of the financing of the Haredi systems comes from Haredi sources at the state level. Yet, despite the large amount of money the Haredi community receives, the physical state of the schools remains very poor. Haredi lobbyists for education are constantly complaining about the lack of resources for building and maintenance, and often hope to appropriate the schools of other communities. Why are there inadequate resources for building maintenance? The Bene Beraq example demonstrates the problem: the stated lack of resources stems from a number of reasons, at least one of which concerns the social characteristics of the Haredi community.

As soon as financing is secured for setting up new Haredi schools, the various groups in Bene Beraq fight over how to distribute the funds. The education system is split and almost all the different Haredi communities have their own school or Jewish study classes (Talmud Torah). The representatives of the different interest groups are each keen to get a larger number of schools and classrooms for their community. Thus, the competition is not only between the Haredim and the general public but within the Haredi sector as well. Without an agreement, another budget year passes, no classrooms are built, and funds that had been allocated for that purpose are redirected by the Education Ministry to other locales and other sectors, where (non-Haredi) schools are being

built in line with the legal standard. This is one explanation, and it shows how Haredi particularism boomerangs, hurting its own community.

Another explanation for the gross lack of classrooms relates to the priorities in Haredi education. The education budget for this sector is split into four main functions: (1) increasing the number of lessons; (2) providing a meal for the students; (3) bussing — because there are no Haredi districts and registration for Haredi schools is based on community relations, students being spread throughout the Haredi neighborhoods; and (4) teachers' salaries. Since these priorities derive from the segregated nature of Haredi education and its being free of the tight supervision of the Education Ministry, the final distribution of funds does not include resources for construction and maintenance.

Thus, any attempt to run the system according to standard municipal practice is thwarted. There is no strategic plan for developing the education system, for which there is a paradoxical explanation: each group views education as so important that they are unwilling to make compromises in a centrally planned system, and they fight aggressively over power and money. The problem is exacerbated in a poor city like Bene Beraq where some 7,000 children are born each year, joining the education system at the age of three.³⁷

Ideological aspects also have significant impact on the running of the education system in a Haredi city. Haredi ideology is, as noted, bound up with delegitimizing the cultural content and values of other groups, and these issues are more difficult for a Haredi administration to deal with. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail below.

Managing a Diverse Education System in a New Haredi Town

Betar Illit

Betar Illit, as a town intended for a Haredi population, offers a different model of a municipal education system. From its inception it was clear that the local education system would be Haredi, although the final composition of the population, given the range of Haredi groups, was not known. Quality of education is one of the features young Haredi families consider when looking for a place to live, so clearly those coming to Betar Illit expected attractive edu-

³⁷ According to municipal figures. Ministry of Education figures are more moderate and point to the beginning of a decline in the number of births: 4,090 in 1992, 4,113 in 1993, 4,077 in 1994, and 4,042 in 1995.

cation services, which could not have been guaranteed in advance. This inevitably leads to fights over funding for education: every group of young families that moves to the community immediately demands schools and Talmud Torah classes that suit the group's interests, while the local council resources are diminished. Indeed, in a town in which more than a third of the population is school-age and the population is growing rapidly, education services pose a real challenge. The council's education department is forced to find solutions to different, constantly increasing demands. Because the Haredi community is split into different groups, each of which wants to ensure its own type of education and institutions, it can be expected that the range of local educational institutions will be very wide, with differences that include the language of instruction (Hebrew or Yiddish), and the background of the students (Lithuanian, Hassidic, Sephardi, or modern orthodox/state-religious; although it is doubtful whether the latter would remain in such a city). At the time of this research (1994-95), there were five kindergarten classes for girls in Betar, with two more under construction and several temporary structures in different locations serving as girls' kindergartens. Each one belonged to a different Haredi stream or group.

The structure and organization of the Haredi education system differ from those in the state system. An example is the pre-school system: kindergartens are for girls only, while boys already learn Jewish studies at a "cheder" from the age of three. The girls then go on to school, while the boys move on to Talmud Torah and later yeshiva. (It is interesting to note that most Haredim associate the concept of "school" with education for girls.)

Thus formal education begins for boys at age three — earlier than the age for compulsory education set by the state, which means that they are not included in the Education Ministry allotment standards for the construction of schools. At the time of writing there was no construction of pre-school Talmud Torahs and the children studied on a private basis in temporary structures (trailers) around the town. From school age there were specially-designated buildings for girls' schools and boys' Talmud Torahs. However, since Haredi education is not state-run, the available resources are not distributed according to the State Education Law (1953) but rather by political arrangements and legislation that was intended to enable funding of Haredi educational needs. In other words, funding for education in a Haredi city is not automatic and allocations for education follow no set guidelines but are always open to bargaining.

In a city in which the entire education system is independent of the state system, the local authority is in constant conflict with the state authorities regarding definitions of standards and funding, because no state standard is ap-

appropriate. For example, due to the many streams in religious education — and for the purposes of this research that means Haredi education — the allocation of land for educational facilities in a Haredi city should be much greater than that common in a typical Israeli city. To ensure that the gap should not be too big or lead to over-expansion of land use for public purposes in the city, the amount of land allocated for classrooms, playgrounds, and sports fields in Haredi schools is smaller than the standards set by the Education Ministry. Unlike the situation in state schools, a Haredi school sports field is meant to serve the students of that school only, in sports lessons and breaks; no extra-

The high birth rate among the Haredi population and the great variety of subgroups within the community result in a plethora of educational institutions. It is impossible to allocate standard buildings for all of them because the official standard does not recognize the particularistic needs of the Haredi population. Some of these institutions are housed in mod-

ern buildings, while others have to make do with temporary prefabricated structures until funds are found for permanent construction.

curricular sport activity takes place there. The council therefore has to coordinate allocations to the wide-ranging system of learning institutions at two levels: vis-a-vis the state and vis-a-vis the Haredi political brokers who are competing for the same funds.

In the case of Betar Illit, two other important factors help to mollify the problem: the fact that the council is appointed (and not elected) and the fact that the town is being populated stage by stage. The council and the council head, as noted, are free from obligations to any specific interest group. In this way their decisions and policy can be more objective, although the practical interpretation of “objective policy” in this particular case is problematic. The communal structure of the population, at least in the town’s early stages, changed from day to day, and because the relative weight of the different groups fluctuates, it is hard to plan funding for educational institutions.

For these reasons and due to the sensitivity of the subject and the fanaticism of the population regarding the issue, the council chose to minimize its involvement. Thus, the council does not intervene in decisions regarding the establishment of different education institutions but tries to find financing solutions for their establishment and maintenance from donations and other sources. Because of this approach, the lack of permanent structures for learning institutions is accepted with reasonable understanding. An evaluation of the functioning of the council is recorded in the following event:

Due to the great degree of sensitivity of parents and leaders, the appointed council in Betar is using great caution not to impose on residents the schools it prefers, which are “recognized but not official,” or those that are part of countrywide education networks. It is doubtful whether a council elected by the residents will be able to prevent the opening of small, temporary institutes in Betar that are unable to maintain minimal standards of learning and education.³⁸

Kiryas Joel in New York

The burden of financing and maintaining a Haredi education system is immense outside of Israel as well. In the U.S. the problem is compounded by the separation between religion and state, which prevents the state from financially assisting religious schools. The Haredi community in greater New York

³⁸ Arie Hecht, *Evaluation Model for a Local Authority Under an Appointed Committee* (The Case of Betar-Illit), Report published by the author, Jerusalem, 1994, p. 34 (Hebrew).

deals with these limitations as well. A prime example is the school for special education in Kiryas Joel, of the Satmar Hassidim.

Recognition of the need for special education for mentally challenged children is a relatively new phenomenon in the Haredi community. Generally, the family tends to deny and hide any such problems among its children because exposure, including that through a special education school, could be harmful to the values of marriage and the chances of match-making for other family members. It should be pointed out that not a small percentage of Haredi children are mentally and physically challenged due to the phenomenon of marriage within the community and the norms related to fertility and childbirth: very high birth rates, women giving birth at a relatively late age, and the avoidance of fetal testing. Recently, a change has been noted in the approach to such problems within the Haredi community — awareness has grown and such problems are dealt with more openly. The special education school in Kiryas Joel was set up for children with learning disabilities, physical-organic and mental problems. The school's establishment was accompanied by special communal activity organized by the school supervisor.

Naturally, the teaching these children receive is not the same as that provided in the community's Talmud Torahs. Moreover, the community views these children as handicapped and Torah study is perceived as irrelevant to them. Therefore, the Kiryas Joel community established the special education school with the status of a public school, financed and supervised by the state and having the same curriculum as other public schools. The Haredi community was able to accept this situation because it had no expectations of the students and therefore no fear of exposing them to secular curricula due to their limitations. Paradoxically, it is this school for special education which provides Haredi children with a range of general subjects which they are usually prevented from studying, such as science, humanities, and culture.

As in any U.S. locality where there is a public school, Kiryas Joel also has a board of education. Its chairman, who serves as a *de facto* mayor, is Rabbi Avraham Wieder, one of the community leaders and among its wealthy families. The school supervisor, Dr. Stephen Bernado (a secular Sephardi Jew), was appointed by the state but is considered a community employee and the community provides him with the means to fulfill his task. A problem arises since, because the school is defined as public, it has to have a school district and must accept any student living in that district who requires that kind of special education. A public school cannot be defined as aimed at a specific religious group.

The school district of the Kiryas Joel special education school exceeds the boundaries of the community and covers part of the non-Jewish population. Children requiring special education who are not Jewish are likely to be referred there and the school must accept them. Obviously, the Satmar Hassidim would not accept this situation, claiming that the school was culturally, not religiously, unique; as a cultural group, the Hassidim have special needs that must be supplied separately, without intervention from other cultural groups.

The Haredi local authority thus wanted to define the school's district so that it would include only the local Haredi residents. When the argument on the subject reached the courts, the Kiryas Joel Hassidim lost the case.³⁹

³⁹ The case was extensively covered by the media in New York. One example: "High Court Bars School District Created to Benefit Hassidic Jews," *New York Times*, June 28, 1994. A discussion on the legal implications of religion and state relations stemming from the verdict was published in the *New York Law Journal*, July 5, 1994. For an academic discussion on constitutional implications of the case in a wider context, see Martha Minow, "The Constitution and the Subgroup Question," *Indiana Law Journal*, 71:1(1995):1-25.

4 Planning, Building and Managing a Haredi City

The Problem of Town Planning from the Perspective of a Haredi Administration

Managing the components of municipal infrastructure, i.e., the designation of urban land use, including buildings and all that pertains to them, is one of the basic tasks of the local authority. This should be a technical issue, detached from cultural, religious, or ideological differences, but an examination of the functioning of the Haredi local authority will reveal that this is not so: even technical issues face many obstacles. Here, too, it is possible to classify the problems according to the three levels discussed earlier in another context: technical, social, and ideological.

The technical level is indeed simple. The issue demands high-level professional knowledge and, as noted, because this is a rare commodity in the Haredi community it is difficult to find suitable personnel. However, finding professional staff is the lesser problem. The problems at the social and ideological levels are more complex, since the demographic structure of the Haredi population and its religious, cultural, and social characteristics influence its use of space in different ways. These are reflected in Haredi land use choices, which differ from land use among other population groups. For example, the amount of land designated for religious and educational purposes is likely to be greater in Haredi areas, while land intended for cultural and recreational purposes is likely to be much less, or used in a totally different way.

However, the bureaucracy involved in urban planning tends to draw on set programs with defined standards for the allocation of land for different uses and regulated according to population size. Average standards — like optimal models — are not suited to all population strata, nor do they meet the needs of groups with a greater than average diversity. Therefore, a Haredi local authority will have to deal with the disparity between formal standards and actual needs for land use. This will take different forms, in line with local conditions

and the characteristics of both the community and the local authority, as will be explained below.

Pressure and Planning in Bene Beraq

In an established city such as Bene Beraq, the Haredi community grew gradually until it became a majority. Under such conditions it is impossible to set new norms of planning and land use. However, the Bene Beraq municipality did enact some construction regulations based on an understanding of the special nature of the city even before Haredim became the majority.⁴⁰ These are rather esoteric regulations derived from religious interpretation and not from the real needs of the city's inhabitants. For example, building height was limited to four stories so as to save on the installment of elevators (which is obliged by state construction rules in buildings four stories and higher), and thereby avoid discussion on whether they should operate on the Sabbath, which is, in principle, forbidden by *halacha* (Jewish law).⁴¹ Thus, a *halachic* problem was averted but at the expense of exacerbating the need for residential space.

Planning, administration, and control of land use — and all that pertains to building rules and limitations — are aimed at maintaining the public interest of development and efficient functioning. Supervision is intended to prevent encroachment of particularistic interests that could do a disservice to the public. However, when a pressure group comes to power, one that for years has assimilated the contradiction between its own interests and the planning of the system as a whole, it is difficult to change its perceptions and ensure efficient functioning. When lobbyists try to find ways to overcome building limitations, they are operating from particularistic motives; when the ruling community continues to operate according to its past patterns, as if nothing has changed, the particularism takes control of the system. This social failing is added to the technical failing of lack of professional experience.

Density and Building Irregularities

The combination of social and technical failings is reflected in various aspects of municipal activity. The two most obvious problems regarding construction

⁴⁰ See Alexander Cohen, note 7 above.

⁴¹ Alexander Cohen, *ibid.* Another reason for limiting building height has to do with concern for the Talmudic principle that “all cities whose roofs were higher than that of the synagogue will eventually be destroyed” (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat, 11A:1). The main synagogue in Bene Beraq is four stories high, and building height was not permitted to exceed that.

in the city are density and the number of building irregularities. Density in Bene Beraq is extremely high, at 20 persons per dunam. (The total population is 140,000 and the city area is 7,000 dunams. By contrast, Tel Aviv, for example, has a population of 360,000 spread over 53,000 dunams, i.e., a density of 6.8 persons per dunam.) This degree of density invites building irregularities.

The internal divisions within the Haredi community and the allegiance of each group's members to that group's customs and traditions, meaning the preservation of the religious and cultural nature of every sub-group, results in a plethora of religious and educational institutions and synagogues of different hues. This multiplicity adds to building density and causes a shortage of green space, in whose place kindergartens and synagogues are found. Once the local authority has allowed irregularities to take place, it is more difficult to limit them later, especially in a society based on a particularistic and affiliative social order; granting concessions to one group will lead to concessions to other groups, not necessarily based on planning considerations but on the basis of "equality of rights."

The traditional nature of the community and the close ties between its members and the bureaucratic systems resulted in the municipality's avoidance, as far as possible, of filing suit against building offenders. Although there were 130 new cases of such offenses in 1995-96, before the city council was dissolved and replaced by the appointed committee, the actual determination to ensure proper administration in Bene Beraq is different than in, say, Tel Aviv, according to parallel figures. In Tel Aviv — where the local authority does, in fact, take legal steps against building offenders — just 31 new cases were recorded for the same period. This comparison highlights not only the sorry state of construction in Bene Beraq but also the municipality's helplessness in dealing with the problem. Even if the city did collect all its debts, the fees and levies imposed on contractors in the city are lower than the norm in neighboring cities in the metropolitan Tel Aviv area. For example, building charges per square meter in Bene Beraq in 1992 totaled NIS 78.75 (approximately \$22), compared with NIS 96 (\$28) in Petah Tiqwa, NIS 115 (\$34) in Ramat Gan, and NIS 145 (\$41) in Givatayim. In addition, the municipality gives contractors generous discounts on "improvement taxes": when a room is added on the roof of a building, for example, the builder pays NIS 96 (\$28) per square meter in Bene Beraq as an improvement tax. In Petah Tiqwa that figure is NIS 217 (\$62), in Givatayim NIS 565 (\$160), and in Ramat Gan NIS 816 (\$233).⁴²

⁴² Details regarding density, taxes, fines, and legal charges were taken from Bene Beraq municipal figures.

In Bene Beraq, the municipality did not follow up on the many building irregularities, nor did it make any effort to impose fines. Consequently, most of the apartments there are not officially registered under the names of their

The border between Bene Beraq and Ramat Gan is apparent in the absence of high-rise buildings in Bene Beraq. The high-rise buildings above are all in Ramat Gan, whereas height restrictions in Bene Beraq create an area of relatively low building height.

A veteran synagogue in Bene Beraq. In the photograph a group gathers for the *shaharit* prayer early in the morning. The signpost at left publicizes Torah lessons and is affixed next to traffic signs.

owners in the Lands Registration Office because registration of new buildings requires city validation that the building was constructed in accordance with the law, i.e., according to a city-approved building plan. Obviously the city cannot grant approval to a building that violates permissible parameters. The testimony given to the investigating committee by the city comptroller on this subject was extremely insightful. “When a builder submits a plan to the city he rarely waits for approval before commencing to build. He builds whatever he wants and later comes back with a plan of the existing situation. ‘Please approve it,’ he says. In other words, the norm is that there is an ‘existing situation.’ You can’t submit a plan for 12 apartments to the Lands Registration Office when 8 have been approved in the city building plan.” When asked how the surplus apartments are then sold, the comptroller responded: “In Bene Beraq everything gets bought with the proper coin.”

On the other hand, the municipality is not so generous when it comes to ordinary citizens. If a married man, a father of eight, living in a 90 square meter apartment, wants to enlarge it or add a 20 square meter room, he will be required to pay an improvement tax. According to the law, if the apartment is residential and the family continues to live in it for at least four years after the renovation, it is exempt from that tax. When the comptroller pointed out that the city makes it harder for poor people and easier for the wealthy, he was told by his superiors to “leave the subject alone” so that they would not have to refund money to all those whom they had charged. (In exchange, the city “granted” a discount of 50 percent on the improvement tax; the comptroller’s efforts to right the situation were rejected.)

“Planning Dialectic” as a System of Defense

In his deposition to the Bene Beraq investigating committee, the Interior Ministry’s Tel Aviv District Commissioner recounted the following story. The heroine of the story, a lawyer whose husband studies at a renowned Haredi yeshiva, had warned the official about fraud:

One day she told us, “You will be getting plans for a girls’ school from the Satmar Hassidim. Note that the gymnasium is given as 900 square meters. Even Nadia Comaneci doesn’t need space like that to train. And since when do the Satmars exercise at all? My guess is that they are going to build a function hall there.” We met with the mayor and told him that if, in the city building plan, it says “gymnasium,” it will never be used as an events hall. Well, there is an events hall there. The lawyer’s husband was thrown out of the yeshiva, her children were expelled from their Torah study classes, and she barely managed to get away herself.

The story clearly indicates that Haredi institutions know only too well how to exploit planning techniques and terminology to achieve what they may not be able to achieve in other ways. They develop a kind of special “planning dialectic,” because the accepted planning programs do not suit their needs, and because specific programs that suit special communities have not yet been formulated, Haredim have no choice but to submit building plans according to programs with accepted specifications and land allocations. The building plans they submit include land use for sports fields and recreation, which looks unusual in the Haredi urban space. Indeed, these plans could give the impression that something is changing radically in the nature of the spatial needs of Haredim and that they are beginning to resemble the general public more closely.

This impression, at least for the most part, is inaccurate. In at least some cases, the submission of plans with land use specifications that do not suit Haredim is necessary because of a specific planning reality whose conditions and concepts they are forced to adapt. After approval is granted, based on the general plan, they change the designation of the land in line with their needs. Later they may even return to request more land beyond the accepted programs, for religious institutions and educational facilities, for example.

This “planning dialectic” is a reflection of the self-protection system Haredim have developed. When they are forced to operate according to rules that are alien to their culture and needs, they adopt an instrumental approach unrelated to the cultural or social expression they represent. The real significance of this relationship is, in fact, exploitation of the raw advantages of the universalistic system of rules without any commitment to its principles.

Flaws in Administrative Functioning and City Development in Bene Beraq

Chapter 2 outlined the background to the appointment of an investigating committee to examine failings in the Bene Beraq municipality. That chapter also discussed the primary problem area identified by the committee — manpower. In Chapter 3 the problematic nature of the education system was presented, another area of failure highlighted by the committee. In this chapter we will review two other fields that appear in the committee’s report — taxation and administration.

Levying Taxes, Fines and Fees

Another area in which the city failed, according to the committee, is in taxation. The particularistic and associative nature of the Haredi community not only led to a diminished ability and willingness on the part of the local authority to impose fines for building irregularities and set relatively low development and improvement fees, but also harmed other aspects of the levying of fees on residents. One obvious example is the city's refraining from charging fees for religious services. These services are perceived, quite correctly, as a basic right of citizens and are therefore not charged for, even if consumption is much greater than in other cities.⁴³

Despite the large number of synagogues, the city exempts them from property taxes (as do other cities). In principle, this can be justified as a show of respect for religious institutions, but the number of buildings defined as synagogues is so great that it causes great loss to the city coffers. Moreover, not only is a building classified as a synagogue tax-exempt, the same exemption applies to apartments in which one room is defined as a "synagogue" and serves as a permanent place of worship. This arrangement adds to the tension between those who are eligible for such exemptions and those who are not, as well as reducing the city's tax base. It reinforces the feelings of those who do not benefit that they bear a greater part of the burden. This tension will be discussed below.

In addition to synagogues, the city gives property tax exemptions to certain businesses such as function halls and religious institutions.

Due to the *halachic* principle that prevents the charging of interest, the city refrains from imposing fines on outstanding tax payments. Again, this benefited the members of the groups whose leaders initiated this practice. When citizens know that they will not be penalized for being in arrears, there is nothing to prevent them from postponing payment indefinitely — even until the Messiah comes. The city loses, the people win.

The above are just some examples, though it is doubtful that they indicate consistent tax policy. The investigating committee found that the local authority had no comprehensive strategy: city policy is like a patchwork quilt,

⁴³ As previously noted, religious services in Bene Beraq are provided directly by the municipality.

with one piece added to another, depending on the various pressures applied, as noted above.

Administration and Urban Development

A more expansive field noted in the committee's report is administration. The committee defined the administration of the local authority as "reprehensible," and referred to the different levels of the city's activities in this context: a budget was prepared with an unreasonable deficit, which did not stop the city from using it as a basis for its operations; projects were awarded with no tenders issued, with no budget and no guarantee of financing; orders were placed without approval of the finance department and without the appropriate permits; no written guidelines exist at the municipality, and when a tender is issued, the same small clique of contractors responds.

There was an absurd number of 12 deputy mayors — an unprecedented number in any of Israel's local authorities. This is easy to understand in view of the particularistic nature of the community, based as it is on affiliations, but its negative influence cannot be overlooked: although most of the deputy mayors do not receive a salary, they each have an office and secretary at the municipality, the costs of which are high, and each is involved in the running of the city, which leads to a lack of general coordination and flawed administration. Also, there is a problem of conflict of interests in the city council: two of the council members were also union leaders, yet they took part in council meetings that concerned workers, and they were not prevented from leading negotiations on the part of the workers. Such phenomena reflect profound disdain for the laws and standards set by others. They believe that only their rules count; others are not binding.

Another administrative deficiency can be described by the term "evasion." The municipality does not show an ounce of assertiveness in enforcing laws and avoids any initiative in realizing the potential of development in the area within its jurisdiction. Some examples of this have already been described, in the context of irregularities, which were also raised by the committee. This lack of law enforcement may be explained by the desire to "help our own," which would highlight particularistic motives as opposed to city slackness.

Such is not the case in many instances of appropriating land for public use, a phenomenon particularly prevalent in the new non-Haredi neighborhood of Pardes Katz, in the northern part of the city, near Jabotinsky Road, the main Tel Aviv-Petah Tiqwa artery, where known and suspected criminals take over

public space and set up food stalls and kiosks. Fearful of violent conflict, the municipality is unable to deal with them and does not evict them. The head of the rehabilitation project in Pardes Katz claimed that the Haredi municipality was interested in preserving the peace in its relations with local criminals and showed no interest in law enforcement.

Another example of evasion relates to urban development. A large area in northern Bene Beraq, including the Pardes Katz quarter, is suited for economic development. Some of the area today is an industrial zone, which could also be further developed. The committee reported that “City leaders did not devote time or attention to promote required changes in city planning, especially in the city’s northern sections. This area has *huge* [my emphasis, Y.S.] potential for the city of Bene Beraq.”

Developing an urban area and making it efficient require initiative, time, thought, and courage. The committee found none of these at the Bene Beraq municipality. Committee chairman Ya’akov Ne’eman, a lawyer and orthodox Jew (currently Finance Minister), drew on the teachings of the Sages to rebuke city leaders for exploiting their positions to wield power, not to serve the public. Had the city better utilized the space north of Jabotinsky Road, it would have been possible to create a balance between different functional regions of the municipal system: the established southern side is characterized as a Haredi residential area with its various institutions, while the northern side serves as the city’s economic base and could have been developed to function at a metropolitan level. As noted, the city leaders did nothing to promote such development because they viewed the existing industrial zone as a guaranteed source of income which could solve some of the municipality’s resource problems.

It is possible that a relationship exists between this situation and the sheer short-sightedness and “idleness” of the city heads — which is not at all related to their Haredi identity. However, it can also be supposed that members of that community are more worried about the image of modern urban development and all that goes with it, especially regarding the preservation of the orthodox character of a Haredi city and the city’s responsibility to preserve that character. It should also be remembered that any deviation from the norm in the life of the city is accompanied by a request for rabbinical approval or direction. In a split Haredi society, internal competition is daring, and the dependence on rabbinical leadership is another factor that holds back development.

Land Use in a New Haredi Town

A Haredi town such as Betar Illit, designed from its inception to meet the needs of the Haredi population, can, in theory, overcome the problem of disparity between formal standards and actual land use needs. Its independence allows the municipality to redefine the community's needs in different fields including the nature of spatial needs and various land uses. However, in practice the situation is more complex. The local authority is dependent on ministerial funding and approval, and the ministries operate according to norms and standards that suit the population as a whole. Therefore, even if local leaders are well aware of the differences between the rules and the special needs of their community, they cannot ignore the general public and do whatever they want. In other words, even a new Haredi city is not totally exempt from arguments — and even conflict — with external groups regarding the setting up of new programs that relate to the allocation of municipal services that suit the needs of the Haredi community.

However, in the initial planning of a Haredi city the special needs of the target community are taken into account. The problem is in the active allocation stage; i.e., when the plan is translated into real resources, various constraints arise, including pressures from other authorities, which hold up the allocations according to the proper standards.

Betar was not the first Haredi city to have been planned. Emanuel preceded it, although that effort failed. In planning the program for allocation of land for public space, the city's planned character was also taken into account. In Emanuel the target population was 27,000. Compared with accepted programs in other cities of similar size in Israel, the division of planned land use was different in Emanuel (Table 1).

Table 1: Land Use According to Function in Emanuel and Nationwide

Function	Emanuel	Nationwide
	Land in Dunams	
Education	359	181
Health	7	8
Religion	2	21
Culture, youth and sport	68	212
Open public space	192	188
Administration and business	45	62
General urban services	55	67
Total	728	739

Source: Ziva Weinschel⁴⁴

A closer look at the breakdown in Table 1 indicates several principles of land use planning in a Haredi community. The figures show that the total amount of land allocated for public space is similar in Haredi and other communities. The differences are in other categories of space.

The first prominent difference is in the quantity of land intended for educational buildings: the area dedicated to education in a Haredi community is twice that of a non-Haredi one with a similar population size. Three reasons may explain this difference: (1) the high birth rate among the Haredi population, which leads to a significantly higher proportion of children in this community compared with other sectors; (2) the fact that in Haredi education (and, more recently, in state-religious education as well) it is customary to segregate girls from boys in schools and other educational institutions; and (3) the splits that have been developing in Haredi and religious education, which cause an increase in the religious and ideological range of schools, and therefore in their numbers as well. There is a specific minimum standard for space that is required in order to get permission to set up a school, even when the number of students is small. Therefore, while the average number of students in a Haredi classroom is low, the area per student is relatively large.

Another area of land use, which shows significant differences between the accepted allocations and those earmarked for a Haredi city, is “culture, youth and sport.” The proportion of land designated for this purpose in Emanuel was a third of the nationwide average. Undoubtedly, this expresses the difference between both groups in modes of entertainment for youth. Recently there have been changes in Haredi demand for land for this purpose, both because awareness of the importance of sports and recreation has grown and because this land can be utilized for general expansion according to need.

However, the most surprising difference in land designation is in the category of “religious” use. Land designated for religious services in Emanuel represents less than one-tenth of that usual in a typical Israeli city, and totals only 2 dunam. It should be recalled that this refers to ground space only, not floor space, and that public land in the Haredi city and in a typical Israeli city take up similar proportions of the city’s total land space. Thus, in a given place, compensation has to be made for the large difference between the two types of city from the point of view of land designated for education. Indeed, the nature of schools in a Haredi city — the fact that they are all Haredi and there are no secular state schools — enables their exploitation for a twofold pur-

⁴⁴ Ziva Weinschel, *Emanuel — Program* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Housing, 1981), p. 2, Table 1-1 (Hebrew).

pose: for educational needs and religious needs, as in a synagogue or “bet midrash” (house of learning), in after-school hours. The split in education is expressed also in land use for religious purposes: just as there is a range of schools, ideologically and religiously, there is also a range of synagogues. So in every school building it is possible to establish a synagogue for the same group, thereby exploiting the land designated for education for religious needs as well.

Unlike in Emanuel, where execution of the project and its failure could be attributed to a commercial corporation, once the decision was made to target Betar for the Haredi population, it was included in the framework of public responsibility. City construction plans defined the town’s zones into geographic units and, following pressure from the acting council head, constant changes were made in line with changing needs. Allocations for the different public services were determined in line with the rate of development and the unique features of the residents. The city was planned to include about 9,000 housing units, which in the Haredi community represents about 60,000 persons. At the time of field research (1995) there were 1,200 housing units and 6,500 people, about a third of whom were children under the age of 12. The building momentum continued throughout the period of research and still goes on, so that the number of residents is still changing constantly.

A new Haredi town is thus established that both meets with accepted practice in urban planning and serves the unique needs of the community that is projected to inhabit the city. This combination is linked to a constant process of coordination: the state authorities take into account only the general urban planning programs, while the local Haredi authorities seek to modify those programs to fit their needs and are struggling for acceptance of their demands. Their success in this struggle depends on the issue under dispute and how far they can endure the struggle.

The main street in Betar Illit displays the unique requirements of construction in Haredi neighborhoods. Every apartment has an outside balcony for a Sukkah, with bars installed on the windows and balcony for the safety of the many children in each family.

5 Ideological and Social Tension between Haredim and Non-Haredim

Conflict between Different Normative Systems

Haredim are a minority group in Israel and their orthodox and cultural world and norms of behavior are foreign to most of the population. This research examines a reverse situation: in the area under discussion, the cultural dominance and norms are Haredi. In this case, the norms of the majority in Israel become those of a minority group. At the point where the two normative systems meet, there is great potential for conflict.

The narrative of this conflict appears in various configurations — “orthodox and secular,” “religion and state,” and the like. The conflict takes on practical significance at the junction where the two opposing value systems meet, such as in administration that is managed jointly, in which the upper echelons of one system have to set policy that takes the other into account. One example can be found in the behavior of a former Interior Minister, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, of the Sephardi Haredi party, Shas. In a High Court ruling, he was ordered to register Reform conversion as Jewish, although it is not considered Jewish *halachically* in orthodox circles.⁴⁵ He found that he was unable to reconcile himself with the court decision, which forced him to act against his religious principles, so he resigned as minister, thereby avoiding the contradiction between his ministerial obligations and his religious faith.

In resigning, Peretz resolved the conflict at the personal level. A Haredi party can pull out of the coalition if its values are affronted, and thus resolve the conflict at the group level. In certain political situations it can solve the problem by imposing its norms on the majority, avoiding the need to pull out and lose all that it gains by being a coalition member.

⁴⁵ High Court of Justice, 230/86, *Susan Miller vs. Minister of Interior, Verdicts*, vol. 40(4), p. 436.

The situation is different when Haredim are in the majority and secular and other non-Haredi groups find themselves under Haredi rule. In this case, the dominant norms are Haredi, as is the management of funds and resources, and the welfare of the non-Haredi minority and its ability to uphold its own value systems depend to an extent on the ruling Haredi administration. Such a situation invites conflict and raises the fears of the non-Haredi public (especially that which defines itself as secular) concerning the potential behavior of the Haredi majority. These fears are reinforced in statements made by Haredim themselves. For example, on September 17, 1995, a meeting took place in Jerusalem with a group of Haredi “proponents.” The meeting, entitled, “Love Thee Truth and Peace — The future of Jerusalem viewed by Haredi proponents,” was a Haredi initiative responding to the concern expressed by the secular population regarding growing Haredi control of the city, particularly following Ehud Olmert’s victory in the mayoral elections.⁴⁶ The most interesting part of the evening were lectures by two rabbis, neither of them decision-makers at the day-to-day level, but who articulated what was regarded as the view of the Haredi spiritual leadership. Since they were not politicians or experienced public speakers, they had no need to camouflage their views.

The first speaker was Rabbi Samuel Jakobovits (son of the former chief rabbi of British Jewry, Emmanuel Jakobovits). He is chairman of Urah Kevodi, “a Haredi association for the clarification of questions of the times,” and he initiated the meeting. Jakobovits outlined the principles for the “dominance of full Haredi involvement in municipal rule,” stating that the era of Haredi apologetics was over. The first article in his principles was “concern for all sectors of the public, materially and spiritually.” So as to dispel any doubts regarding what he meant by “spiritual,” he said he had no intention of satisfying the range of cultural needs of all sectors of the public in Jerusalem, but rather sought to impart his cultural principles to the public at large. His concern reflected Haredi paternalism toward the general public.

Jakobovits outlined the spiritual and material problems that warrant intervention, with an active setting of principles in Jerusalem. Haredim had to fight two phenomena, he stated — the view of the state as the “beginning of redemption” and all that pertains to this regarding Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. He thus nullified the national-religious definition of the state as the “beginning of redemption” and opposed the activist political perceptions that are drawn from it. In this context, the rabbi called for “national humility” — to identify what can be achieved and what cannot: “Haredim do not impose their utopian ideas on reality.” They therefore oppose geopolitical adventurism because “it is forbidden to provoke the gentiles,” including on the sub-

⁴⁶ All quotes from this meeting were recorded at the time by the author.

ject of Jerusalem. The second phenomenon is “to breathe a new spirit into Jerusalem as the city of God,” which could be understood to mean: We must fight the phenomena that harm a Jewish lifestyle and the Jewish people. In fact, this was a declaration of war on secularism in Jerusalem.

In a positive way, Rabbi Jakobovits pointed to three principles he believed should guide Haredi activity in the city: (1) total obedience to the rabbis, forever; (2) nurturing of the sacred yeshivas; and (3) an expansion of the segregated Haredi neighborhoods. (It is pertinent to recall here that the meeting was titled “Love Thee Truth and Peace,” as part of an effort to assuage feelings in the city.)

The other speaker of note was Rabbi Shlomo Welbe, the most prominent of the “overseers” in the yeshivas. He expressed more moderate views, though stressed his hope that there would never be a “Dizengoff Square” in Jerusalem, referring to a former symbolic geographic and cultural icon of secular Tel Aviv. Interestingly, however, he added that he was not sure that attaining rule in the city was good for Haredim or that they even aspired to this. He well understood the difference between the status of Haredim as an interest group — however strong — and what would be required of a Haredi municipal administration, if and when it came about.

A Haredi administration could become mired in daily conflicts as a result of the collision between different normative systems. The main conflict would occur each time funding allocations were discussed or when the administration intervened in social, educational, or cultural matters whose values did not match those accepted by Haredi society. As long as the Haredi community is not part of the ruling system, this conflict transpires only when Haredim are forced to submit to bureaucratic systems whose policies are molded by limited normative rules, such as the principle of separation between religion (“church” in Western Christian societies) and state. Today, the Haredi community in Israel is in a complex situation of growing involvement in decision-making processes, and its spheres of influence are increasing and expanding. In certain fields it requires assistance from the ruling administration and in other cases it is part of it. Further on we will examine how a Haredi municipal administration treats communities with different values, drawing on the example of Bene Beraq.

As indicated above, Bene Beraq reflects the change in the stance of the Haredi community, which has emerged from being a large pressure group, dependent on others, to a dominant majority, controlling municipal systems. This development has put the community in an unprecedented situation: it has had to

shift from a particularistic perception to a universalistic one; from a group fighting for its particularistic interests it became the majority group, with responsibility for the needs of the whole city. Some of the implications of this situation have already been discussed; here we will deal with an additional interesting perspective on the situation: how the Haredi administration deals with the needs of the non-Haredi population which became the minority in Bene Beraq. Even if it is possible to relate sympathetically (without acceptance) to the needs of those close to the locus of power, the problem of Haredi control, as noted, is more severe: the Haredi municipality is forced to allocate resources to activities that do not match its values. As noted in the Introduction, when the secular population of a defined area acts as a kind of “territorial opposition” to the Haredi local authority, the normative conflict can take on spatial dimensions.

The Pardes Katz Quarter of Bene Beraq — A Secular Nucleus in a Haredi Environment

The Pardes Katz region today has the largest concentration of secular residents in Bene Beraq. The quarter was founded in the 1930s as a private initiative, and named for its founder, Ephraim Katz (“*pardes*” means “orchard”). Until 1945, the small neighborhood north of Bene Beraq had no municipal status; in that year it was officially included in Bene Beraq’s jurisdiction. In 1949, all the areas north of Bene Beraq and those surrounding Pardes Katz were annexed to the city, north of the Tel Aviv-Petah Tiqwa route (Jabotinsky Road) to the Yarqon River, land that had been held by Arabs from the village of Jamousin prior to the establishment of the state. In the early 1950s, a transit camp was set up adjacent to Pardes Katz, populated primarily by new immigrants who had fled from Asian and North African Arab countries. In the 1960s, the construction of housing projects began, aimed at camp residents (see Map 4).

Like many housing projects for immigrants, Pardes Katz became a lower-class residential area, with all the accompanying social consequences. This posed a very serious problem for the Haredi authorities in Bene Beraq: not only were they required to fulfill the needs of a population with a “foreign” culture and values, but the residents also required special attention and treatment as a “needy” group. In the early 1970s, violent demonstrations broke out there, with residents demanding improved physical conditions and traffic arrangements (e.g., traffic lights at a dangerous intersection) and, in particular, solutions to educational and cultural problems among local youth. This last demand was particularly difficult for the municipality to meet, both financially

and due to the fact that culture and education that are not drawn from religious values are deemed illegitimate by Haredim and, consequently, not deserving of assistance. Towards the end of the decade, Pardes Katz was included in Project Renewal, a project sponsored by, among others, the United

Map 4: Bene Beraq and Pardes Katz

Jewish Appeal to assist poor neighborhoods in Israel. The neighborhood remains in that framework to this day.

The 1980s saw growing collective organization by the residents, demanding that their quarter be removed from Bene Beraq's jurisdiction. The deterioration of the situation in the municipality spurred this activity. On November 22, 1994, neighborhood committee leader Haim Avraham wrote to Mayor Rabbi Moshe Irenstein complaining about the gross neglect of the quarter "regarding municipal services which are not provided by the authority and are thus withheld from residents." Many of the residents' complaints were outlined in the letter, which threatened that if their demands were not met, they would continue "to act in any legal way available" to achieve their aims.

The letter also called for the establishment of a neighborhood administration that would include: a secular education authority to be run by education officials who are aware of the needs of secular education, and departments responsible for community work, sanitation and environment, business licenses, landscaping, transportation, taxes, help for the aged, culture, youth and sport, and "other departments, based on need." In fact, the demand was to remove anything to do with Pardes Katz from Bene Beraq, with a strong emphasis on all the areas in which the city had failed to provide adequate attention or did not deal at all, according to the residents.

Pardes Katz won political assistance from Member of Knesset Ra'anah Cohen (Labor), a former resident of the quarter, who submitted a bill for the establishment of a local council whose jurisdiction would extend to "the borders of the Pardes Katz neighborhood" and remain outside the jurisdiction of Bene Beraq.⁴⁷ The bill, as specified in its appendices, did not include details of the boundaries or of the proposed council, other than noting that the quarter had 30,000 residents, i.e., it gave a broad definition of Pardes Katz.

The main complaints of Pardes Katz residents against the Haredi municipality appear in a local committee document of January 15, 1995, submitted to the Knesset Interior Committee. They include:

1. The absence of local cultural and leisure services, such as cinema, theater, swimming pool, youth clubs, library and sports fields.
2. The rundown state of educational facilities and services: dilapidated schools, allocated funds that are not transferred, continuously deferred payment of teachers' salaries, which affects their ability to fulfill their

⁴⁷ The 13th Knesset, bill submitted by MK Ra'anah Cohen (Labor), "Bill for the Establishment of Pardes Katz Local Council," 1985.

role properly (this refers to salaries from the city, not those paid by the Ministry of Education).

3. Inadequate arrangements for vehicular transport: traffic jams occur at all hours of the day, traffic laws are not enforced, there are no speed bumps in the immediate vicinity of schools, sidewalks are inadequate and safety railings dilapidated. The complaint was made that money transferred to the city for such improvements was reallocated to projects in the (Haredi) city center instead of in Pardes Katz.
4. Sanitary hazards are not dealt with: the local market is neglected, and an abattoir operates there, giving off a foul stench.
5. Public matters are neglected: the city ignores incursions into public areas, thereby preventing development, the paving of roads, and the general promotion of public matters in the quarter.
6. Youth and youth movements are neglected: There is no culture, youth and sports department in the Bene Beraq municipality.
7. The industrial zone is unkempt: the area is run down and filthy, with no sidewalks; traffic jams are constant, and there is no city supervision. The only way the city acknowledges the industrial zone is as a source of taxes.
8. Local residents feel they are only of interest to the Bene Beraq municipality as taxpayers, while in the Haredi areas, many people are exempt from municipal taxes. They thus feel that they also bear the burden of financing services for Haredi residents.
9. Haredim are taking control of structures built by outside agencies for the welfare of Pardes Katz residents: for example, the city turned the community center, which was donated to Pardes Katz by the State Lottery, into a Talmud Torah for children who are bussed in from the Haredi city center.

It is possible to concentrate all these complaints into three main focal points: (1) allocation policy; (2) municipal development policy; and (3) enforcement — or, more precisely, lack of enforcement — of planning and building laws, including land use regulations. These three items are interrelated and, in light of what has been described in previous chapters, it is clear that coping with all three is highly problematic in Bene Beraq. This situation creates a sense of severe deprivation among Pardes Katz residents, as expressed by one in a radio interview: “You can’t call a quarter with 30,000 residents a neighborhood; it is a community...in its own right...Pardes Katz is not Bene Beraq...Our cultures are different.”⁴⁸ Local committee head Haim Avraham reiterated the

⁴⁸ IDF Radio talk show, “*Yesh im mi Ledaber*” (There’s Someone to Talk With”), February 23, 1995. Transcript by Ifat Ltd. During the broadcast, the Bene Beraq municipality spokesman phoned in to respond to each of the listeners’ complaints. He insisted that the call to separate the neighborhood from Bene Beraq was the wish of only a few and hinted that there was a political connection between this call and the Labor Party primaries.

sense of being neglected: aside from the lack of culture and entertainment options in the city, such as theater, cinema, and a public swimming pool, the municipality did not bother to decorate the city and the neighborhood in advance of Independence Day, injuring the feelings of local residents. The municipal supervision department does not adequately enforce laws within the neighborhood, and the Haredi majority on the city council does not allow decisions to be made that take into account the needs of the secular population. He claims that the city sees Pardes Katz as a source of taxes and nothing else.⁴⁹

The lack of a development policy, like its impotence in enforcing planning and building laws, are characteristic of a conservative and particularistic administration whose policy is to minimize incremental changes and avoid conflict with stronger forces. In the case of Pardes Katz, the city is trying to avoid clashes with criminal elements seeking to gain a degree of control over various fields of municipal activity. Examples include control of trade in the neighborhood, while seizing public land, or an attempt (that failed) to assume control of Project Renewal in order to gain access to decision-making and funds. Following the inclusion of Pardes Katz in Project Renewal, amidst clashes with the criminal elements early in the project and a later reconciliation, the neighborhood committee was dispersed and intensive physical and social rehabilitation of the quarter began. The Project Renewal officials did not succumb to pressure from the unwanted elements, and local leaders assisted in calming tempers.

The local head of Project Renewal was forced to contend with a heavy-handed city system that delayed plans for the expansion of apartments in the neighborhood. Approval came only after a blatant threat to cancel the project in Bene Beraq if the plans were not approved.⁵⁰ Residents complained that the city was deliberately holding up the plans to browbeat secular residents — so that they would eventually decide to move away and leave the area for Haredim. This theory of “craftiness” is understandable, but anyone familiar with the city’s inefficiency does not need a conspiracy theory to explain the delays. In any case, the residents felt they were being discriminated against because of their secularism.

In response to Pardes Katz residents’ complaints of discrimination regarding community work and rehabilitation of the quarter, the head of the city’s social

⁴⁹ Haim Avraham in an interview with Hana Zoref-Hargil, a student in the Geography Department, Bar-Ilan University, May 2, 1995.

⁵⁰ Moshe Ka’atavi, director of Project Renewal in Bene Beraq, in an interview on January 12, 1997.

services department stated that of the social services operated by the city, some 50 percent of resources were directed towards Pardes Katz, i.e., to a sector that represents no more than 15 percent of the city's population (based on the municipality's reduced definition of Pardes Katz's neighborhood limits, which will be discussed below). These activities include: extra-curricular classes for fulfilling course requirements, courses for women, a youth unit, and a unit for handling drug problems and young girls in distress (of the 60 children in the unit's care, not one is Haredi). The Pardes Katz community center runs clubs for the mentally disabled and for retarded people, which serve only residents of the quarter. At the same time, the head of the department admits that an attempt to organize cultural activities on the Sabbath as part of an effort to fight juvenile delinquency was met with total objection by the mayor, who vetoed the idea.⁵¹

Social services department officials also claim that Project Renewal, which has been operating in Pardes Katz since 1979, was probed by an inter-ministerial committee in 1981-82, which found that Pardes Katz was not ignored in all that pertained to education and welfare resources. Regarding the specific complaint about Haredim taking control of the community center built by the State Lottery, the department head noted that Haredi pupils "use the building, but not as a community center," meaning they do not interfere with the center's activities which are aimed at Pardes Katz residents only. However, department officials say that use of the center is diminishing as secular and moderate orthodox residents move out of the area: the latter group primarily to neighboring Petah Tiqwa and the secular dispersing to various places. Thus, they believe the community center's activities will eventually be directed towards the needs of the Haredi population that is penetrating the area.

The head of Project Renewal in Pardes Katz stated: almost all the community work, except that carried out by the department head, who is a city employee, is done by Project Renewal. The city is supposed to provide 50 percent of the funding for these activities, but the administration in the past and the incumbent appointed committee did not meet payment deadlines (at the time of the interviews and writing of this research). Exceptionally, he added, the city replaced all the old lighting in the quarter and paid for 80 percent of the sidewalks. It thus seems that the claim regarding the city's blatant discrimination has no basis. Heavy-handedness, inefficiency, and lack of professionalism are the obstacles that Project Renewal has to fight, not malicious intent.

⁵¹ Shlomit Gidron, head of the social services department in the Bene Beraq municipality, in an interview on April 16, 1996.

The Territorial Background to the Conflict

The conflict between Pardes Katz residents and the Bene Beraq municipality is intertwined, at least in part, with issues of location. The official “Pardes Katz” is a small neighborhood north of the city center with no clearly defined boundaries. The conflict pertains to a much larger area — in fact, the entire area included within the Bene Beraq city limits north of Jabotinsky Road, known as the city’s Quarter No. 1. The borders are: Jabotinsky Road to the south; the Yarqon River (municipal border) to the north; Geha Road (Highway No. 4, municipal border) to the east; and Modi’in Street (municipal border with Ramat Gan) to the west (see Map 4).

Most of the area consists of empty plots of land and industrial zones. In the remaining land four neighborhoods were established: Yesodot, Pardes Katz, Tel Giborim, and, north of Yesodot and Pardes Katz, the relatively new Qiryat Herzog. Residents include in the name “Pardes Katz” the built-up area of Yesodot, Qiryat Herzog, and Pardes Katz, while the city includes Yesodot, Pardes Katz, and Tel Giborim. The difference is significant because Qiryat Herzog is an orthodox quarter (today Haredi as well), while Tel Giborim has veteran secular residents, many of whom were members of the pre-state Irgun and Stern gang underground organizations.

In the polemic over Quarter No. 1, the city is interested in emphasizing the existence in the area of a neighborhood with an orthodox-Haredi majority (Qiryat Herzog), and at the same time to include in Pardes Katz a neighborhood whose socioeconomic statistical data are not as low as those of Pardes Katz. This is in sharp contrast with the motives of the Pardes Katz residents, who are naturally interested in presenting an area with a secular majority and poor conditions: even if Qiryat Herzog is included, the secular are still the majority, even if the veteran residents of Tel Giborim prefer not to be included in the figures. The city sees the region as having a double potential: on the one hand, it has the only remaining reserve of land in the city for future development and, on the other, the industrial zone is an important source of income for municipal coffers, in a city with a high rate of tax exemptions.

The territorial battle in the area north of Jabotinsky Road is thus well underway. The secular residents are aware of this and claim, as noted, that the Haredi municipality’s neglect of the area is deliberate and aimed at forcing them to leave. City officials deny this and claim in their defense that they direct funding to the area to the best of their ability. This is confirmed by the external official responsible for examining city budgets. The fundamental

question is not whether the municipality is “cheating” the secular residents, but rather if it is capable of meeting their expectations, in view of the fact that their culture and lifestyle demand a different approach by the municipal authorities.

Demographic and Political Considerations in Pardes Katz — Is There a Chance the Conflict will Abate?

It is highly possible that the decision regarding Quarter No. 1 is being formulated under the influence of demographic and political processes which are bringing about change in the local residential distribution. The period 1996-97 was marked by Haredi penetration into the area. The extent of the demographic change is well demonstrated in the voting for the 14th Knesset, which took place at the end of May 1996.⁵² The grouping of votes in the statistical areas that together make up “Pardes Katz” shows a significant increase in votes for Haredi parties. The percentage of votes for Yahadut Hatorah (a coalition of the Ashkenazi Haredi Agudat Yisrael and Degel Hatorah parties) was 10.2 percent; the figure for votes for the Sephardi Haredi Shas party was 21.4 percent and, combined with votes for the National Religious Party (NRP; 11 percent), the rate of Pardes Katz voting for religious parties was 42.6 percent. The moderate orthodox and Haredi sectors of Pardes Katz’s population are seemingly on the verge of becoming a majority. This impression is strengthened if the high birth rate among this sector is taken into account. But it should be noted that the main contribution to the success of the orthodox and Haredi parties comes from Shas: not all Shas voters are Haredi or even religious — some support the party in protest against ethnic or social discrimination.

Even if voting patterns are calculated according to different categories, the results remain similar: In the original Pardes Katz neighborhood, as well as Yesodot and Tel Giborim, the religious and Haredi parties won some 45 percent of the vote, with Haredi parties winning 33 percent. In Qiryat Herzog the vote for religious and Haredi parties was 63 percent, with Haredi parties taking about 45 percent.

An examination of the representation indices of the religious and Haredi vote in Pardes Katz, compared with their weight in the country as a whole, reveals

⁵² All statistics regarding voting are calculated from the figures of the Central Elections Committee, the Knesset, Jerusalem.

an interesting phenomenon. One could calculate such a representation index as a comparison between two areas as well, with one area being part of a wider area. The calculation is simple: The rate of votes in the given area is divided by the national voting rate (or the rate in the region which is being compared). An index higher than 1 means relatively high representation compared to the national rate.

The representation index of the NRP in Pardes Katz compared to Bene Beraq city is 0.94, and 1.39 when compared with the national vote. When analyzed, this indicates that the weight of NRP voters in Pardes Katz is less than that in Bene Beraq but greater than their national weight. From here it can be deduced that there is a relatively large concentration of NRP voters in Pardes Katz and Bene Beraq. The situation is similar for Yahadut Hatorah voters: the representation index of this party in Pardes Katz compared with Bene Beraq is 0.23, and 3.17 in relation to the national rate. In other words, Yahadut Hatorah is underrepresented in Pardes Katz compared with Bene Beraq and overrepresented compared to the national index. These figures indicate a link between the spatial distribution of the Haredi population and its electoral weight: because this population tends to concentrate in segregated areas, its primary electoral strength comes from the large concentrations. Thus, its nationwide weight is minuscule. Pardes Katz is starting to become a large Haredi concentration compared to the national average but remains much lower than that in Bene Beraq.

Among other things, the figures point to the special position Shas enjoys in Pardes Katz. The representation measurements of Shas in this area are high, not only compared to the national rate but even compared to Bene Beraq. Pardes Katz, then, could be seen as a developing Shas stronghold. Activists from the party's educational and cultural organizations are diligent in distributing religious, cultural, and political messages in conjunction with community activity. These messages are well understood by many of the residents due to their ethnic background and feelings of discrimination. There is a rapid shift of students in the area, many of whom are moving to schools and other educational institutions aligned with the Sephardi Haredi party. As noted, Shas voters are not necessarily Haredi: this party is winning the votes of Sephardi Haredim but is garnering votes as well from others of Sephardi background, whose vote reflects ethnic protest. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in Pardes Katz. Sephardi Haredim are gaining strength in Bene Beraq and since Pardes Katz is one of the focal points of this strengthening, it influences party policy at the local level.

It is worth noting, as well, that the penetration of Shas into Pardes Katz is not met with the same hostility as is the penetration of Ashkenazi Haredim. The entry of Shas into the area is accepted more on the basis of the Sephardi culture of the neighborhood's residents, more than as the immigration of a foreign population, and the Haredi dimension added to that culture raises no opposition. In fact, this leads to the creation of an ethnic coalition which provides a link between the traditionalism of Sephardim and the Shas lobbyists of the Sephardi Haredim. The main base for their activities is the Sephardi yeshiva Or David, run by Rabbi Daniel Zar, who is responsible for helping many Pardes Katz residents become newly religious. Following the dramas between Pardes Katz and Bene Beraq residents in 1995, it is possible that the source of the quiet that followed can be found in the activity of the appointed committee and the swift spreading of Sephardi Haredim.

Social Tension in Betar Illit

Even in a settlement with an almost-wholly Haredi population, such as Betar Illit, the community cannot totally avoid dealing with what is regarded as anomalous. In other words, sociocultural homogeneity notwithstanding, residents do not show an over-abundance of tolerance for anyone different, even when the others are not secular.

As noted earlier, the original core of the community, before it became Haredi, was aligned with the "national Haredim," including newly religious Jews affiliated with Machon Meir and the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva, and to Sephardi communities who were treated by Ashkenazi Haredim with reservations. A number of religious families who were not Haredi also settled in the town, referring to themselves as "national religious" or "religious Zionists" (and who are referred to by Haredim as "Mizrachis," after what was once a moderate religious party). With the expansion of the town and its services infrastructure, the local state-religious co-educational kindergarten for 3-5-year-olds was moved from Hadar Betar to Betar Illit. The kindergarten also took in "national religious" children residing in Betar Illit. The opening of a state-religious kindergarten in the Haredi town was met with an uproar on the part of the Haredi public. In February 1995 a huge rally was organized with the participation of rabbis with the slogan: "Oppose state-religious education." Among the speeches were some that could be considered incitement against the kindergarten and the national-religious public in Betar. The next day action against the kindergarten began in earnest: a group came to recite Psalms at the beginning and end of classes, which greatly frightened the children, and

a campaign of “persuasion” and threats was launched against the parents of the children in kindergarten.⁵³

Similarly, a plan to open a state-religious school in Betar Illit was met with heated opposition by Haredim who campaigned against a directive issued by the Education Ministry’s Jerusalem district head to the local council to designate land for the school. The local authority made the allocation but tried to be as little involved as possible in the controversy. To illustrate the extent of the opposition, a poster from the time stated:

⁵³ According to a letter by the parents committee of state-religious kindergartens to the official responsible for public complaints in the Israel Police Force, April 15, 1995. Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

Caution: Fire

We were totally stunned to see the Temple of God burned. The town of Betar whose founders settled it to show the beauty of Judaism and faith, who left the holy city and the Temple because tyrants tried to defile them, built a pure temple and here, of all places, comes the corrupt one who is aligned with other corrupt elements and defiles the city of the Torah. Cry to the heavens! We will not rest and we will not be silent until this evil disappears.⁵⁴

The proclamation on the poster continues with a blatant threat to openly publish a “terrible deed” about the “corrupt one” who wants to open a state-religious school (i.e., the chairman of the parents committee).⁵⁵ A state-religious school represents a threat to Haredi education. Moreover, if its existence is legitimate, there is a fear it will try and attract pupils; its curriculum could attract parents and that would lead to a “deterioration” — who could have foreseen it? No less important, of course, is the inevitable contest for resources: allocations for buildings, classes and laboratories, making this a very bitter and pointed struggle.

Betar Illit is still calm, however, thanks to the guidance of the acting committee and the previous local council head. However, the composition of the inhabitants contains a potential for conflict because, at least in the initial stages of populating the town, many people came who could be defined as on the periphery of Haredi society.

The sociocultural behavior of this “irregular” group, like their orthodox customs, are not compatible with the accepted rules of the Haredi community. This is particularly poignant in the case of youth whose behavior could negatively affect the atmosphere in the street. Numerous incidents have already occurred in Betar between Haredim and others they define as “punks.” The local rabbis could wield their influence on the youth and try to mold their behavior to a manner acceptable by Haredi residents, calming the Haredi extremists before matters became violent. The summer period is most common for bad behavior among youth: it is vacation time, days are long and evenings free, it is hot and light clothing is common, which spurs an atmosphere deemed dangerous in Haredi eyes.

On July 21, 1992, a rally for “strengthening the boundaries of modesty” was held in Betar. It was aimed at strengthening rules of behavior which some

⁵⁴ Undated poster. Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

⁵⁵ Personal defamation and slander in posters and Haredi newspapers are an acceptable weapon in Haredi internal battles, even if the stories are completely untrue.

residents did not follow. Resolutions were published following the rally, including a call to residents that “every man should be master in his house” — i.e., the father of the house should bear responsibility for the behavior of his family members. At the rally parents were called on to protect their children “so that they don’t wander the streets, girls and boys together, talking to and playing with each other.” Being on the bus was thought of as potentially bad because women and men crowd together; therefore, by order of the two local rabbis, “the rally calls for ensuring that women will not sit in the first two rows of the bus, so that they do not converse with the drivers before, during, or after the journey.”

An important part of the “boundaries of modesty” pertains to women’s clothing, even within the Haredi community. At the rally women were reminded of the rules of dressing modestly and were told to uphold them. They were also told to “call aside those who stray from the rules, especially women to women, decidedly and without shame.” Finally, residents were called on “to be proud and experience the wonderful noble sensation of our sacred mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, whose humility gave eternal happiness to the People of Israel, and on occasion alert those poor women who have not yet known this wonderful happiness.”⁵⁶

In addition to the usual subjects that come up at such rallies, three main points were raised on this occasion — two overt and one veiled. The veiled point, which was actually the reason behind the rally and the resolutions made there, was that even in a town built on Haredi purity with no immediate contact with urban secular territory, there is no security for remaining pure and the danger of crossing the boundaries of modesty is constant. However, unlike in a big city, there is no defined group here at which one could point an accusing finger without harming the basic existential fabric of the community. Perhaps this is the unconscious reason for raising the two other main points: the first, putting clear responsibility on fathers for the behavior of their children, as opposed to new trends for strengthening the status of women in the family and the Haredi community, and, the second, the clear authorization to pull into line “decidedly and without shame” any deviation from the required norms. This verbal resoluteness could easily be interpreted as permission to protest using physical violence.

One group of residents distributed a flyer after the rally parodying the resolutions that had been taken: a page printed by computer included 10 articles mocking the resolutions to the point of absurdity. Such a response indicates

⁵⁶ From an advertisement publicizing the resolutions of the rally. Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

clear opposition to the strictness expressed at the rally. It should not be surprising that immediately after the rally brawling erupted between Haredi residents and youth whom they viewed as “punks.” Out of fear that the situation would worsen, the rabbis issued a declaration a week later saying, among other things: “We have heard that violence has broken out of late and we therefore declare that although no doubt the need exists to strengthen the boundaries of modesty in our town, no one has the right to take any kind of violent steps and no authorization to do so has been given.”⁵⁷

In this way the town rabbis hurried to extinguish the sparks that had ignited within the community. Such tension in a small Haredi community which lacks Haredi spatial hinterland could endanger the town’s coherence and ability to function. But the tension did not dissipate. It can be found in documents, letters, and press clippings, as well as in residents’ and officials’ responses to a survey conducted in Betar Illit. Continued functioning of the town’s institutions and its social relations depend to a certain extent on the success of the population and its local leadership to prevent damage from such pitfalls as described above. It is this that will determine if Betar Illit will represent a new model of Haredi settlement or echo the model represented by the Bene Beraq municipality.

⁵⁷ Rabbi David Zvi Ordentliech and Rabbi Yaacov Toufik Aviezry, in a joint declaration on July 27, 1992. Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

6 Security Problems in a Haredi Town in the Territories

Haredim on Guard

The Babylonian Talmud tells of an argument between Rabbi Yehudah Nesiyah, grandson of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (literally, “The President”), and Reish Lakish, the most renowned sages in third-century Palestine (Eretz Israel). Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was also president of the Jewish community in the land. During the crisis of the Roman Empire in the third century, the economic and security situation in the Land of Israel was weakened. “Rabbi Yehudah Nesiyah once placed the burden of the expense of a protective wall upon the rabbis along with the other city residents (his action was opposed). Reish Lakish said to him: ‘The rabbis do not require protection.’ [Hence, they should be exempt from the obligation of contributing to the wall]” (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra, 7b). The adage, “The rabbis do not require protection,” became a Haredi call for exemption from many obligations.

To the Israeli public, the image of a Haredi in uniform, armed and doing guard duty, is indeed exceptional — along the lines of the headline, “Man bites dog.” Since the War of Independence in 1948, Haredim studying in yeshivot have been exempt from military service. Officially, this service may be postponed as long as they continue to study, but since it is common for the Haredi man to study for many years, during which time he usually gets married and becomes a father, even if he leaves the yeshiva the army will not mobilize him. Thus, the majority of Haredi men do not serve in the IDF at all and have no experience using a weapon or even the minimal military knowledge required to fulfill the task of security guard.

Israeli settlements in the territories are faced with constant problems of security for their residents and property, both internally and along access routes. It is customary for residents to bear some of the security load, and this trend is reflected predominantly in guard duty. The extent of the activity and methods of organization differ from place to place, depending on the particular conditions of each settlement. Settlers in the territories tend to carry weapons with

them on the roads since they are exposed to potential strife from the Arab population.

Betar Illit, which neighbors several Arab villages with a long history of harassing settlers and is populated predominantly by yeshiva students with no military training, thus finds itself in a unique situation, one which requires special consideration in anything pertaining to its security. Betar Illit's security problem is greatest *within* the settlement and much less so on the roads leading to it: although formally in the territories, it is extremely close to the "green line" (about two kilometers), and the road from Jerusalem via Ein Karem and Zur Hadassah lies almost entirely within Israeli territory. Even the new "tunnel road" to Gush Etzion, which has been serving Betar since 1997, is considered safe.

With the pronouncement of Betar Illit as a settlement with a local council (made by the IDF military governor of Judea and Samaria on August 30, 1990), the residents became officially responsible for guarding the settlement. This responsibility applies to settlements with more than 4,000 residents.⁵⁸

As noted, the obligation to guard the settlement can pose a serious problem for the Haredi community for two reasons: the first is technical — the vast majority of Haredim have no training in weapons use or guarding, and would not be able to respond appropriately should the need arise. The second reason is value-related and can be defined through the Amora Midrash (Talmudic sages study) which appeared in Eretz Israel in the third century. Based on the biblical verse, "Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out; and Issachar in thy tents." (Deuteronomy 33:18), a popular interpretation developed indicating a partnership between Zebulun and Issachar: Zebulun dwelled by the seashore (Genesis 49:13) and traded across the seas; he supported Issachar while the latter studied Torah. This is one of the justifications for the social structure that enables those who maintain that "their Torah is their profession" to be exempt from all other duties and accept public support.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The obligation is in line with the military order for the management of local councils in Judea and Samaria regarding the coordination of guard duty in the settlements.

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the source of the story of the relations between Issachar and Zebulun is in Midrash Tana'im (sages of the Mishnah), according to which Zebulun, by virtue of the fact that he lived by the sea, would sell Issachar's agricultural produce and buy products for him abroad. There is no mention in Tana'im that Zebulun supported Issachar who was preoccupied only with Torah. This motif was the invention of scholars during the Roman Empire crisis period in the third century, when the economic situation of Torah scholars in the land was grave and they sent sermon-givers to collect alms for the poor. See Moshe Beer, "Issachar and Zebu-

This Midrash proposes a division of labor that could also be explained as follows: some people fulfill a spiritual role (Torah scholars) and they are exempt from all other duties, while others must carry the weight of those duties, i.e., perform the instrumental logistical roles aimed at supplying the needs of those whose purpose is spiritual. This definition can be applied in different proportions, depending on the different function groups. In this way it is possible to define the world order (Jews vs. gentiles), Jewish order (Haredim vs. secular and other religious groups), or family order (husband vs. wife).

In the framework of the current study, this Midrash explains the Haredi position vis-a-vis guard duty in their settlement. They have become used to believing that they are exempt from any social or economic burden that is not directly related to the existence of their families; anyone raised in Jerusalem's Haredi neighborhoods or in Bene Beraq is unaccustomed to the rules of division of the load, but, rather, lives in a greenhouse for a closed community of students, all of whose needs are supplied by external agencies. They live by the ancient Midrash regarding the division of roles between Issachar and Zebulun: they are the "Issachars" and do not understand why they have to undertake the tasks of Zebulun. They take literally the adage, "The rabbis do not require protection," but the people of Betar Illit *do* require protection and they are expected to be part of a guard duty roster.

The municipality sent a report, dated February 2, 1994, to the military commander of Judea and Samaria outlining the results of a telephone poll conducted in the settlement. The poll questioned 441 residents about their military service. Of the respondents, 307 (70 percent) said they had not served in the IDF at all, 114 said they had served in a non-combat unit, and only 20 said they had served in a combat unit. On January 13, 1994, the head of the municipal emergency services and security department, Yossi Shapira, wrote to the commander of the Etzion regional brigade about the problem of guard duty in Betar Illit. He noted that guarding was carried out in line with the order to do so, but the order did not compel any kind of training to be able to fulfill the task. Since many residents had not served in the IDF and were not interested in any kind of military training, half the guards did their shifts unarmed. Sha-

lun," *Bar-Ilan*, Annual of Bar-Ilan University Studies in Judaica and the Humanities, vol. 6 (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1968), pp. 167-180 (Hebrew). Among the Amora'im (scholars) themselves, and after them, there were those who steadfastly opposed the use of "Torah as profession," such as Maimonides. Both in his commentary (Mishnah Avot, Chapter 4) and his rulings (Talmud Torah Rules, Chapter 3, Rule 10), he denounced the idea that learning Torah might be a profession financed by the public. Every Jew is obliged to study Torah in his free time and no one may be exempt from learning or from working by the deeds of others.

pira stated that guarding was unprofessional and the guards would not know how to react in an emergency. Nor did the residents' financial situation allow them to hire the services of a security company. "The bottom line is that *the settlement is not protected* [emphasis in the original] and I do not have a solution to the problem at this time."⁶⁰ This, in fact, sums up the problem of self-defense in the Haredi settlement.

Article 36 of the Security Service Law, 1986 states that a Jew of conscription age who states that "the Torah is his profession," namely that he is not involved in any occupation other than Jewish learning, and devotes his time to Torah study, may have his conscription postponed as long as he is in a yeshiva. This applies to anyone who does not engage in any occupation, paid or unpaid, other than learning in a yeshiva, with confirmation provided by the head of the yeshiva and the Board of Israeli (Haredi) Yeshivas. As noted, some 70 percent of men in Betar Illit were exempted from military service in line with this article, and even if they left the yeshivas they would not be mobilized due to their age and family status. The remainder of the men in the town (30 percent) are newly religious and served in the IDF prior to becoming Haredi, and a small number are non-Haredi religious. Those people were appointed, in line with military orders, to protect the settlement and defend it when necessary.

In light of these figures, Leibowitz undertook an initiative of his own. Well acquainted with the military system in Judea and Samaria, he sought ways to gradually train the men of the settlement for the role of guard duty. The target group included those who did not meet the recruitment requirements of the IDF due to the fact that they were married, aged 25 and over, and had at least two children. Leibowitz's lobbying of security and military officials led to a new special IDF training course for this group that would enable them to join the Civil Defense framework. The course was meant to extend for 120 days and include training in knowledge and operation of light weapons, target practice, first aid, self-defense, and fieldcraft. The training program opened on November 21, 1991, with extensive media coverage, but ended after two weeks with only a few trainees completing the course.

Due to the partial failure of the experiment, Leibowitz modified his initiative: in coordination with the Etzion area military unit he organized a two-day training course in use of weapons (including target practice). The training was held at a military installation which was specially prepared to meet Haredi requirements: the training staff was all male, with no female soldiers present in the installation, and the kitchen was made strictly kosher, in line with Haredi

⁶⁰ Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

rules. At the conclusion of the course, the participants were named as official guards of the settlement. Men who did not undertake any kind of training course had to purchase weapons as civilians, with Defense Ministry permits, citing reasons of self-defense.

The various initiatives of the council head to recruit yeshiva students and train them for guard duty, initiatives which continued for three years, had much broader significance than the council head himself acknowledges. The impact of this “recruitment” could be much wider than just the guarding of Betar Illit. This was alluded to by Colonel Nahman Rivkin, Judea and Samaria area defense officer, in a letter dated January 21, 1993, concerning approval by the Home Front Command “to carry out five days of basic training for yeshiva students, for the guarding and security of the settlements.” Rivkin said, “It should be noted that the project is unique to the area of Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] as the IDF is releasing this population from reserve duty.”⁶¹ There is a fairly overt hint here that such training could lead to the inclusion of trainees into reserve duty. Indeed, at least in the early stages of the initiative, the intention was that yeshiva students who underwent training would guard the settlement in the framework of their reserve duty. But from the moment a soldier is included in a reserve unit there is no way of knowing where he will be called in the future.

Leibowitz’s initiative met with fierce opposition on the Haredi side. Haredi leaders immediately understood the social and ideological perils for their community should the plan be successful. With the first attempts to hold military training programs for yeshiva students, the council head publicized the matter in a newspaper interview: “The problem is that today Haredim are recruited [to the army] after studying, when they are older, and they do not contribute much. I say, let’s change that. Let’s bring about change together with the IDF. Today there are Haredim learning in yeshivas who believe they have what to contribute to the state. They are willing to forgo their vacations and enlist while learning...The first ones are currently being recruited and I hope many more will follow.”⁶²

The Haredi response came flooding in, swiftly and strongly. The signal was given by the Lithuanian newspaper of Rabbi Eliezer Schach. Under the headline “Fifth Columnist?” the paper declared that the “Haredi public was stunned by the irresponsible comments regarding recruitment of yeshiva stu-

⁶¹ Archive of Rabbi Moshe Leibowitz.

⁶² *Ma’ariv* daily newspaper, August 12, 1991 (Hebrew).

dents into the army.”⁶³ The proposal, coming from a prominent Haredi figure, was perceived as treason from within the community.

Another Haredi paper, with a tendency to gossip, wrote a particularly disparaging and virulent headline: “Betar goalkeeper strikes own goal!”⁶⁴ (with a reference to the well-known Betar soccer team, but with no connection to the new settlement). As part of the offense toward the council head, his title of “rabbi” was omitted when he was referred to by name. The writer, like many in the Haredi press, was not identified by name. He stated, “A brief look at the man’s history...shows it to be not very laudatory,” and went on to attack the personal publicity he brought on, “which severely hurt the world of Torah.” The paper expressed concern that if the council head was not stopped he might yet introduce “national service and state-religious education to the Haredi town.” Leibowitz’s statements, according to the paper, succeeded in unifying — by their fury — Rabbi Schach, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, and Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira, three leaders of different groups who rarely reach agreement on anything. The article of course also took on the yeshiva students who agreed to enlist, claiming that they would have left the yeshiva anyway and the IDF was simply an excuse. In addition, it was noted that the yeshiva heads from whose ranks the students had come had informed them that they would not be permitted to return to their learning.

The Haredi weekend papers are much larger than those on weekdays, with articles, Torah teachings, interpretations, and criticism. Those that appeared on the weekend following the “army recruitment storm” were bursting with the subject. The Lithuanian paper was particularly critical and headlined its lead article, “Is He No Longer Engaged in Study?,” implying that someone who studied but abandoned the commandments hates yeshiva students more than anyone else. The allusion to the council head and the students who had left the yeshiva in order to enlist was blatant.⁶⁵

A more subtle approach was taken by *Hamodia*, the Agudat Yisrael newspaper, which devoted an article to the question of the contribution to society. Countering the council head’s claims that there are yeshiva students who want to contribute to the state, the paper claimed that Torah study is the most sublime contribution possible:

⁶³ *Yated Ne’eman* daily newspaper, August 13, 1991 (Hebrew).

⁶⁴ *Yom Hashishi* weekly magazine, August 16, 1991 (Hebrew).

⁶⁵ Nathan Zeev Grossman, “Is He No Longer Engaged in Study?,” *Yated Hashavua*, weekly magazine of *Yated Ne’eman*, August 16, 1991 (Hebrew).

One of the most important elements of security, if not the most important, is the ability of a people to withstand trials and its belief in the absolute justness of its existence. The secular public knows to what extent its self-confidence in the justness of Jewish presence in the Land of Israel is weak, and rightly so: If Jewish existence here were not based on the fact that ‘in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ and it is He who gave the land — there would be no other justification for us being here. We have heard time and again the claim that the state was established by secular people and that they did not found it so that Haredim would take it away from them. True, Haredim — as a public and an outlook — did not found this state. Proponents of the claim forget just one inconvenient thing: the Haredim did not come to the state, the state came to them. I don’t have to try and be liked by someone who invaded my home and took control of it.”⁶⁶

This is not a direct attack on Leibowitz’s idea but rather a “strengthening” of any yeshiva students who see themselves as inferior concerning a contribution to society. The writer goes on to say: “it is impossible to claim that a yeshiva in a place like Betar, requiring guarding because of its dangers, does not meet the security challenge.” Although Haredim do not view Betar as a “tool for settling,” aimed at expanding territory, if the settlement is needed for the sake of argument, it can be exploited appropriately.

It is not surprising that after this heated offense the attempts to offer Haredi residents military training diminished. The social and ideological opposition stemmed from a combination of two factors: the exemption from military service that applied to yeshiva students was a means of control by the religious leadership on young Haredim. Destroying this control would have far-reaching ramifications for the social structure of the Haredi community. In addition, the ideological importance placed on Torah learning in the community as a superior value should not be underestimated.

Guard Duty in a Haredi Town

Following the training processes described above, security arrangements were organized in Betar with local residents serving as guards. Guard duty was run by the municipality’s security officer and two security coordinators, from Hadar Betar and Betar Illit, in line with the official orders for guard duty in settlements. As part of the procedure, special orders were dispatched to resi-

⁶⁶ Yosseph Lavee, “A Contribution to Society,” *Hamodia* daily newspaper, August 16, 1991 (Hebrew). Sometimes writers in Haredi newspapers use pen-names that have an Israeli “ring” to them.

dents by a runner who would have them sign, acknowledging receipt of the order. They would then be reminded regularly of their duty to guard, so as to ensure that all guards would be in place when required, as outlined in the original orders, issued a month in advance of the guarding date.

Despite these efforts, local security officials say that among Betar's Haredi community awareness of the need for guarding and willingness to share in the burden were minimal, except among the newly religious residents who had some military background and who had opted for the Haredi world after experiencing the basic requirements of Israeli society.

The massacre carried out by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron in 1994 caused tension in the area to rise. Despite the size of the population in Betar, which did not warrant military assistance for guarding, IDF officials considered the special features of the settlement and posted soldiers there as security back-up. Guard duty takes place around the clock, and there is a checkpoint at the entrance to the settlement. On the Sabbath a "Shabbat goy" (a gentile hired for activities forbidden to Jews on the Sabbath) from one of the villages in the Galilee carries out the watch by car.

This one small detail highlights the Haredi essence of the settlement more than anything else. One of the fundamentals of Zionism, in general, and of Zionist settling of the land, in particular, is the ability of the Jewish community to run a full and independent life with self-defense as an important aspect of this independence. Moreover, many *halachic* rulings that came in response to questions raised by pioneering religious settlers permit security activities on the Sabbath. But these principles do not interest Haredim: "Shabbat goy" is a diaspora role, signaling more than anything the Jewish community's dependence on non-Jewish society. Handing over the role of security to the "goy" magnifies this diaspora-like phenomenon among the Haredi community.

At Leibowitz's initiative, and due to the residents' lack of awareness and unwillingness to take part in local security activities, eight points were added to the security arrangement in Betar Illit:

1. *Security center*: In January 1994 a local center was set up, manned by a soldier living in the settlement or close by. It is funded by either the IDF or the local council. The center is intended to ensure proper security 24 hours a day and adequately respond to hostile terrorist activity in the settlement. Therefore, whoever runs it must be familiar with all guarding and security procedures in the settlement, and must know the guards and their scheduled guarding dates, maintain contact with the IDF regional headquarters and the Gush Etzion Regional Council, and be capable of

providing quick solutions in time of crisis by exploiting available resources. The center has communications equipment (some provided by the IDF and some purchased by the municipality), with an alarm system linked up to the schools in the settlement, and with first aid kits, etc.

2. *Security staff:* The individuals who make up the security staff of the settlement are the security officer, who is paid by the municipality, and two security coordinators — one each from Betar Illit and Hadar Betar, who are paid by the IDF. The role of the coordinators is to run the security system of Betar Illit and Hadar Betar — the latter, although a neighborhood within the municipality, is recognized as a settlement in its own right from a security perspective. (Therefore, Hadar Betar was given independence in running its guard system.) Thus, the coordinators have different operative authorities and they are able to enforce guarding and other security-related orders. The security officer officially serves as advisor to the council head, but his function and connections with military officials (from the regional brigade, the Judea and Samaria Region, the Home Front Command, and rescue services) make him the prime address for anything to do with the settlement's security. Needless to say, the security officer served in the IDF as a combat unit officer.
3. *Medical emergency center:* Routine health services in Betar Illit are provided by three health care funds — Clalit, Meuchedet and Leumit. In addition, there is a medical service center that operates at night. The staff includes 2 doctors, 14 paramedics, and 9 ambulance drivers, who work on a roster system scheduled in advance. An ambulance is provided by the local council. The center also assists in emergencies outside the settlement, such as road accidents or terror attacks in the vicinity, as well as supplying services to neighboring settlements. The center operates even before Magen David Adom (Israeli emergency paramedical service) assistance arrives from Jerusalem or Beit Shemesh and, according to Leibowitz, neighboring settlements rely on its services more than they do on existing medical facilities in the area.
4. *Fire brigade:* Betar Illit has its own fire brigade, run by the residents. Like the medical center, it also serves neighboring settlements. Some 10 local residents volunteered to undergo a training course with the Jerusalem fire brigade. When their training concluded, they were appointed as local firemen, on a roster basis. There are four drivers and six fire-fighters.
5. *Rescue teams:* Ten local volunteers underwent a brief Civil Defense training course based on subjects related to rescue and life-saving. This, too, is an initiative of the council head, who says that the team performed successfully in surprise exercises carried out by the IDF in the settlement.

6. *Alert team:* At the initiative of the council head and the security officer, a team was trained to be on alert in case of hostile events. The team comprises about 25 residents who underwent military service and still do reserve duty. In other words, they are not originally Haredi but newly religious (particularly from the ranks of the Sephardi Shas Party) and non-Haredi religious. A security officer, who is a platoon commander in the reserves, supervised the training of the group. Its “soldiers” are trained to set up a Mobile Command Center, conduct negotiations with terrorists (this is for Arabic speakers), help land emergency helicopters and evacuate the wounded, close off roads in case of attack and, in general, assist the IDF. The security officer stated that officials who trained the team members were surprised by their ability and their high motivation.
7. *Police station:* In a town with a population the size of Betar Illit and with the status of a municipal council, a local police station is required. The council set up a station with a policeman from the Jerusalem district of the Israel Police. The station operates when necessary for internal matters.
8. *Security fence:* The council head asked the IDF to enclose the settlement with a security fence, including appropriate lighting, so as to prevent hostile infiltration or the seizing of land by residents of neighboring Arab villages. The Home Front Command built a seven-kilometer fence around the settlement due to its status as a Jewish local council in the territories.

All of the above indicates that Betar Illit, as a settlement in the territories, complies with all of the security requirements pertaining to its location and does not lack essential security elements. However, as noted, the Haredi character of the population makes fulfilling the requirements difficult. In practice, most of the burden falls on other authorities — the IDF in particular — in matters concerning the settlement’s security.

The newly religious deal with the security burden differently from other Haredim due to their military experience and awareness of the importance of guard duty. At the same time, it should be noted that this group is diminishing, as their children can be expected to embrace the more traditional approach and “Torah will become their profession.” This is already happening: the younger ones do not opt for military training and are not willing to share in the community’s security. Moreover, the tension in the settlement between newly religious and Haredim, which also occurs between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, together with the growth of a more middle-class Haredi population, could make integration difficult in the future for additional newly religious residents who would be prime candidates for fulfilling the organizational and technical roles related to the settlement’s security.

7 An Atmosphere of Change in Haredi Society

Background: A Haredi Community in the Process of Change

The leading theme of this research, and one which is particularly prominent in this and the following, final, chapter, is the fundamental question that recurs from different perspectives: To what extent is the Haredi community capable of running modern, efficient administrative and governance systems? The question has an inherent hidden bias which suggests that this community is not capable of fulfilling such a mission successfully, due to its tendencies to isolate itself from a modern urban lifestyle and to present opposing positions to the ruling administration in Israel. Its image as a “society of learners,” inwardly focused and detached from economic and social issues, is rooted in the public consciousness.

In fact, this static image of the Haredi community is inaccurate. Haredi society undergoes processes of change, even if they are relatively slow and lack the dramatic embellishment that has come with the technological, social, and cultural changes of the late twentieth century. After a period of rehabilitation and preservation, and the cultivation of the Haredi community a generation after the Holocaust, recent changes have brought the community to a new phase in its evolution. Its seclusion behind a protective “wall of holiness” is coming to an end,⁶⁷ and two important developments highlight the end of this phase: one is sociopolitical — the inclusion of the Agudat Yisrael party in the government coalition with the rise of the Likud to power in 1977, and the second is geographic — the move of Haredi families out of the traditional bulwarks of Jerusalem and Bene Beraq to development towns and, later, the building of Haredi towns.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ See Yosseph Shilhav and Menachem Friedman, *Growth and Segregation — The Ultra-Orthodox Community in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1985), pp. 11-24 (Hebrew).

⁶⁸ Regarding this process, see Yosseph Shilhav, “The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodox Neighborhoods in Israeli Urban Centers,” *op. cit.*; Yosseph Shilhav, “Socio-Geographical Meanings of the Tendency Toward Religious Strictness,” in M.

These two developments are linked. The inclusion of a Haredi party within the government coalition put Haredim into key positions that required them to make decisions that touched on the public at large, not only on their own community members. Haredi policy- and decision-makers are developing reciprocal relationships in a growing range of fields. These people are being asked to adopt rules of conduct and operative norms that their positions and status demand, and which are different from those acceptable in their traditional community where social relations are affiliative. Such new patterns are likely to gradually rub off on other layers of the community where contact with the “outside” is relatively broad.

Regarding geographic development, the process of suburbanization and metropolitanization in Israel enabled small localities outside the main urban sprawl to develop urban features, particularly regarding the standard of living for their residents. The territorial compactness of a town is not essential for attaining all its traditional advantages. Because this development is essentially technical, the Haredi community does not give it special attention and is not more afraid of it than of the city in general. On the contrary, such developments make things simpler for Haredim in that they are able to find housing solutions in a wider spatial context by setting up Haredi neighborhoods of different sizes in locations away from the major traditional centers of Jerusalem and Bene Beraq. Haredi sections have grown in most development towns around the country. In the meantime, the last stage of this process is, as noted, the establishment of new Haredi towns. This geographic process has significant practical implications as well.⁶⁹

The wide geographic dispersal of the Haredi population gives the Haredi individual, like the community, new possibilities of spatial movement which community leaders preferred to avoid when they set up the “protective wall.” Haredim are no longer restricted to their own quarters. The result of this new geographic openness is an erosion of the supervision over community members, bringing about another crack in the “wall.” Political involvement and geographic dispersion are thus linked with the change in Haredi society. It is natural that the impact of these processes is particularly great on the younger generation. This generation grew up with the reality of the State of Israel and it is less connected to the traditional Haredi stance that opposes Zionism; this is a generation touched by the mass media, with an awareness of political and social affairs in Israel. Its members identify their deal-makers with the Israeli

Ahrend and A. Zalkin, eds., *Religious Education and the Tendency Toward Strictness* (Tel Aviv: Tepper Publishers, 1996), pp. 32-44 (Hebrew).

⁶⁹ For an initial discussion on the significance of this geopolitical development, see Yosseph Shilhav, *A “Shtetl” Within a Modern City*, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-142.

political system, criticize them and make demands of them — as do Israelis in general. Haredi youth today are more mobile, travel more, and come into direct contact with Israeli reality.

Haredi attempts to encourage differential rejection of modernism, i.e., to adopt its instrumental components but reject its cultural ones,⁷⁰ have been fruitless: modern cultural and social values are penetrating Haredi society. The demographic structure of the community (high birth rates) and occupational patterns (high rates of students engaged in Jewish learning) cause growing economic difficulties. Its huge dependence on external support exacerbates these difficulties. Since the early 1990s a significant increase has been noted (especially in the Haredi press and through Haredi advertising) in the number of available professional training courses in a range of fields, even for yeshiva students. An ambition to acquire a profession is one of the distinct signs of change taking place within the community. A second important agent of change in this context is the Haredi woman, whose role is discussed in greater detail below.

Changes in the Status of Women and their Implications for Haredi Municipal Rule

Gender differences in spatial consumption are, among other things, the subject of geographical research. If differences exist in the spatial behavior of men and women then the question arises of how to mold the urban space to suit different customs and needs. Ongoing changes in the status of women have brought this question to the fore again. Such questions are also considered important — perhaps especially so — in the Haredi context. The changes that have been going on for years in the status of Haredi women and their role in society have had significant influence on the community, and this will increase with time.⁷¹

The Haredi social view ascribes an essential role to a woman. This does not refer to the various epithets found in religious texts regarding her importance and the importance of treating her suitably, but to the status granted her in the community and family structure. In many Haredi communities there is a social tradition of a division of labor, based on the Midrash mentioned in the previ-

⁷⁰ Yosseph Shilhav, “Religious Influence on Cultural Space: ‘Haredi’ Jerusalem,” *City and Region*, No. 19-20 (1989), pp. 28-51 (Hebrew).

⁷¹ See Menachem Friedman, *The Haredi Woman*, Discussion Paper No. 4 (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1988) (Hebrew); Yosseph Shilhav, *A “Shtetl” Within a Modern City*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

ous chapter about Issachar and Zebulun. According to this Midrash, the man, who studies Torah, could be defined as fulfilling a spiritual role, while the woman has the instrumental role of satisfying the needs of the student. Thus, the woman supplies the economic infrastructure that enables her husband to devote all his time to learning. As it is understood to be instrumental, employment of women is tolerated and not perceived as a threat to the community's values.

Indeed, today more and more Haredi women are turning to new and modern occupations and branches of the economy. In the not-so-distant past, a befitting qualification for a young Haredi woman was a teaching diploma. The young Haredi woman who did not graduate from a teachers' college was likely to encounter matchmaking difficulties (it was not important if she worked as a teacher or not, just that she had the diploma). Yet recent years have seen changes in this sphere: teachers' colleges are opening high-level professional courses in a variety of fields such as computers, administration, and the like, and there is great demand for such courses, without the stigma of inferiority that existed in the past. Haredi women today are entering all branches of employment. Therefore, to advance in the workplace, they must study, keep abreast of professional developments, and, most importantly, learn modern Western norms. There are not a few Haredi women who have higher education, qualifications, and professional positions that far exceed that of their husbands. If the focus of this report was Haredi family structure, this would be the place to discuss the dangers threatening the family as a result of the division of labor in the Haredi community and its possible implications for the fertility behavior of women in the community. But the subject at hand is Haredi local rule, though even in this context there is importance in the changing status of Haredi women.

It is relevant here to recall the unusual story in Chapter 4 of the Haredi family in which the husband studied in yeshiva and the wife was a lawyer with a rich academic education. Such a family is undoubtedly rare in the Haredi community, although the phenomenon is growing. The Haredi woman lawyer, whose religious and community loyalty are not questioned, was exposed in her work to a culture and values that did not match those practiced in her community and in no way are considered obligatory norms there. She tempered her professional values but, as a result, a cognitive dissonance developed between the two different normative systems. It is easy to imagine what went on in the lawyer's mind when she was told that Haredi leaders intended to deceive the planning authorities with a fictitious land use plan in order to exploit the land for other purposes; she was unable to ignore the contradictions between the mode of operation of her community and the principles of truth and proper

administration which were her legal professional values. One can assume that it was only after some long hard thinking that she gave precedence to her professional values. This decision does not necessarily reflect a negation of her community values — on the contrary, it is very possible that the good of her community stood foremost in her mind as she attempted to save it from disgrace.

The response of expulsion and excommunication decreed by the community for the woman and her family could be interpreted in two ways: the more simplistic interpretation suggests that this was an act taken by a closed community against an “informer” who hurt the interests of the community by divulging a “secret” to a hostile external element. But there is also a more profound explanation related to what was said above regarding the status and role of the woman in Haredi perception. By doing what she did, the lawyer took on a responsibility that had not been given to her; she became an agent of change by seeking to uphold norms instead of just concerning herself with her income, by trying to lead instead of obeying. In other words, she deviated from the niche the community had allotted her, thereby threatening the entire social order. “Zebulun,” of the Midrash, is concerned with economic existence but he is not authorized to intervene in matters of permission and prohibition, i.e., he has no authority in the area of normative values.

The Haredi lawyer personifies the upheaval that is threatening the Haredi social order and the paradoxical fundamentals of this upheaval: since most of the learning community is male while the women are the ones earning a living, the way is open for Haredi women to become involved in new areas of employment/occupation and acquire skills and experience that can prepare them for central roles in Haredi administration. But despite this, no change can be found in the community’s attitude. Women are still seen as “Zebulun” whose role is to support those who study Torah, but a woman’s law and teaching is not recognized. This is the source of the threat she presents: her skills are not hidden from the community, which is well aware of the importance and status of many Haredi women in the “outside world,” but it raises heavy suspicions among the veteran leaders. If women pay the bills, they may also start to call the shots. Although the established Haredi leadership is not willing to accept this change, a Haredi municipality could be built upon it.

How the Haredi Community Views its Town

Special Features of Research on Haredi Community Opinion

The settling of Betar Illit provided an excellent opportunity to examine residents' views on subjects related to the settlement's development, its leadership, and religious, cultural, and social life. Haredim are not used to questionnaires and surveys and in general do not cooperate with demographic and social research projects. The reason is two-fold: for religious reasons — the *halachic* proscription on counting the Jewish population prevents Haredim from taking part in population censuses, and this extends to objection to any poll that hints at calculating population figures; and for social reasons — like all minority groups that fear the majority, the Haredi community is not eager to divulge details about itself, preferring to keep them obscured. Haredi reservations about polls and questionnaires are deeply rooted in the community and therefore the degree of cooperation is very low.

The interview and questionnaire acceptable in social research are suited to modern Western society. Duplicating them for an ethnic group without first adapting them to the group's particular features is a very common methodological error, especially if the same methodology and the same questionnaire are used for different populations with large variations in culture. The Israel Bureau of Statistics was aware of this problem because, as noted, Haredim did not participate in population censuses. Prior to the 1983 census, for the first time, the questionnaire was tailored to suit *halachic* principles and questions relating to the number of family members were omitted. Poll participants were asked to list the people in their family without numbering them; the calculation was done later by computer. One of the Haredi rabbis in Jerusalem was asked whether, in view of the changes, it was permissible to fill in the questionnaire. His response was most interesting: although, he said, *halacha* does not clearly forbid anything in the questionnaire or the census, since the census is unnecessary it would be better not to participate. Thus, adapting the questionnaire to the community is not sufficient — to get a traditional minority group to take part in the census, their natural concerns must first be dispelled.

Also, if the research tools are not suited to the population being polled, errors in interpretation are likely to arise. One clear example is the Haredi dialectic. Although the Haredi interviewee responds in Hebrew, his words or meaning could be incomprehensible to an outsider. A survey was conducted by one of the universities in Israel, in the framework of a seminar to examine how satisfied people were in their apartments in metropolitan Tel Aviv. The poll included Bene Beraq, with its low socioeconomic level and housing problems. The pollsters were surprised to find that Bene Beraq residents were the most satisfied of all those polled with the quality of their housing. The seminar tutor explained the results as best he could: that the Haredi community lived in a spiritual world, immersed in learning and disinterested in material values.

That is why they are satisfied in miserable, crowded apartments and why they do not demand that their apartment buildings be renovated.

Anyone who has contact with the Haredi community knows that such an explanation is baseless. Why then did the Haredi Bene Beraq residents express such a high degree of satisfaction? One possible explanation lies in the Haredi dialectic. When an interviewer appears at the door of a Haredi home, the resident faces a dilemma: on the one hand, he has no interest in surveys; on the other, he has no reason to offend the interviewer. He knows that if he indicates a low level of satisfaction he will have to justify and explain his responses; instead, he expresses satisfaction and in that way gets rid of the interviewer more quickly and without any offense.

When a poll was prepared for Betar Illit, this problem was taken into account. In order to minimize the number of those who would not respond, different draft versions of the survey were sent to the local council head. Following his comments, some questions were deleted and others modified. The poll was then given to local rabbis for comment and only after winning their approval was the questionnaire distributed.

Distribution took place in late February 1995 among 200 households (taken at random from the settlement's computer listings), representing about a third of the homes in Betar. An accompanying letter explained the research and emphasized four points: (1) the importance of the poll for understanding the planning needs of a Haredi town and its usefulness for the future; (2) the local council, in consultation and with the approval of the local rabbis, supported the poll; (3) the sample was random and there was no intention to deliberately approach anyone specifically; and (4) total anonymity was guaranteed, with no possibility of identifying any individual or family who took part.

The poll was placed in the mailboxes of those identified for the project, who were asked to fill it in and return it to a box prepared specially by the local council. The research director had set times (in the evenings) when he would work from the council offices to assist interviewees and respond to any queries. Only a few interviewees took advantage of his presence. Despite all the preliminary preparations, response was low: of the 200 questionnaires distributed, only 63 were completed in full, representing 31.5 percent. Although response in a regular poll of about one-third of interviewees is not high, it is considered quite good for a Haredi community.

The limited experience with and understanding of polls and interviews among Haredim was reflected in the interviewees' responses. Haredim do not under-

stand the concept of “sample” and they do not trust statistics or social sciences. Thus, even if they are willing to answer a question they cannot discern its weight within the sample. The two examples that follow highlight this problematic situation.

When the poll was distributed, it became the talk of the town for the small community. Many waited to receive a copy and when it did not come, they asked for it. It turned out that receiving the questionnaire became a kind of status symbol: no matter how low the willingness to respond, those who had been selected (even if they did not respond) were considered important and their status — in their own eyes as well as others — grew as someone whose opinion was sought. Those who did receive the poll were not necessarily members of the local socio-religious elite, which led to a flood of phone calls to the council offices and, in particular, to the research director’s home. The callers had three main complaints: (1) “We are veteran residents and founders of the settlement, and very active in the community, so why did you ignore us and not select us for the poll?”; (2) “Among those who received the poll there are some very low class people and their opinion is better left unheard”; and (3) “The questionnaire was distributed only to people liked by the council.” It became necessary to explain to the complainers the concept of a sample and how a poll is put together.

A second example indicating a lack of understanding of the poll concept can be found in the approach to the questions and the way in which answers were filled in. Some interviewees used the opportunity to write and write, based on whatever associations they found in the questions. One respondent, who studies in a Hassidic yeshiva, noted his name and home phone number, asking that he be contacted because he had a lot more to say and many suggestions to give. It is very possible that such an approach to questionnaires and interviews among Haredim also influences their low level of willingness to respond.

It seems that such samples highlight the special nature of the Haredi approach to questionnaires and research: an approach of suspicion and a certain innocence in anything related to evaluating the results. This makes an analysis of the respondents’ general comments particularly interesting (blank space was left at the end of the questionnaire for this purpose). They were asked to write down any comment, complaint, or request regarding the functioning, organization, social structure, and administration of the town, or any other subject they believed was important and which was not referred to in the poll.

The questionnaire contained 52 questions in five categories: (1) details regarding the family and their apartment; (2) reasons for choosing to live in the

town; (3) spatial consumer behavior, i.e., location and frequency of purchasing different products and services; (4) degree of satisfaction with different functions in the town; and (5) views on the social structure of the town — reality as against ideal. Each respondent was asked to define his/her religious group affiliation. A high rate of interviewees declined to give this affiliation exactly, opting for a definition of Hassidic, Lithuanian, or simply observant Jew; only a few gave their exact group.

Analyzing the Responses of Haredi Residents

As noted, the analysis of the additional comments made in the questionnaire is particularly interesting. Twenty-four of the interviewees utilized the blank space at the end of the questionnaire to give their comments. Although that is not a large enough number to draw clear conclusions, a qualitative impression is not only possible but necessary. Their comments and responses point to a number of general problems — some technical, others social, and yet others organizational — that perturb the residents of Betar Illit.

Regarding the technical comments, two main problems bothered the residents — residential density and road safety. It emerged that these two were related: residential density is of course a function of the size of the family and the size of the apartment. Standard apartments are evidently too small for a Haredi family. Even in the case of young newlyweds, the birth rate is such that within a short span of time the apartment becomes too small. Therefore, a recurring request is for more readily available building permits for extensions. It is highly possible that buyers of small, cheap apartments have intentions at the outset to build on later. It should be recalled that young Haredi couples do not have the independent economic means to purchase apartments but usually receive them from their parents as part of their dowry. But it is a burden for parents to buy apartments for all their children, so clearly the economic possibilities are very limited.

Crowded conditions of high residential density create another problem. The many children living in large buildings, situated close to the road and with insufficient playgrounds or backyards, play near the road and risk being hit by vehicles. Another request that came up repeatedly on the questionnaire was to find a way of physically separating a play area from the road. The interviewees also complained that there was no “driving culture” in the town and that local drivers had no fear of traffic police. They emphatically demanded that cautious driving be enforced. This indicates the importance of competent executive decision-makers.

Many of the general comments related to the normal problems of a town under construction: there were complaints about noise, dust, piles of building materials, and even about “Ishmaelites who roam around the town” — a reference to Arab building laborers. Also, a town in its early stages of growth lacks various business services and retail trade outlets. There was criticism at the lack of a bank or the inexpensive chain grocery stores found in Haredi neighborhoods in the city centers, and the limited hours of the one existing store. These are features typical of a small, new community where the population is

still below the “commercial threshold,” i.e., too small to warrant a satisfactory level of trade and services. The force of the complaints on this subject stems from the irritability of people used to being under the protective wing of a community which, in the past, insulated them from the kinds of new situations they now face.

The subject that brought about the most extensive responses from the 24 interviewees who detailed their comments was the social structure of the town. Most stated a wish to get rid of some of the other residents, predominantly the more moderate modern orthodox or, as they called them, “the state-religious Mizrahi Jews,” and those of Sephardi origin. One interviewee noted, “We are not racist but Sephardi Jews spoil the atmosphere in our town.” Here, too, such opposition expresses a kind of “social coddling” that stems from the social protection and cultural isolation these people had hitherto experienced.

Some interviewees raised social problems related to the marketing of apartments in the town. The low price of housing attracts a socioeconomically problematic population to the town. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that not all apartment-owners live in the flats; rather, some bought them as an investment and rent them out with no supervision over who the tenants might be. The interviewees proposed that a committee be set up that would screen candidates settling in Betar, as well as a professional body that would know how to deal with problem youth that already live in the community.

In this context, one of the interviewees, an Amshinov Hassid, gave an interesting explanation. Betar Illit was perceived by Haredim, in its initial stages, as a social failure because the construction and sale of apartments was in the hands of contractors and the Ministry of Construction and Housing who were bound by the Tender Law, which does not allow for community supervision of potential residents. Because the great Hassidic groups had no say in potential residents or in directing their community organization in the town, they refrained from buying apartments there, as did the large Lithuanian groups in Jerusalem. Apartments were thus purchased by the smaller groups, which created a large space for all types of people who are not wanted by most Haredim and who harm the image of the town. This problem is particularly serious in Betar Illit due to its character of an affiliative Haredi community. Each Haredi and Hassidic group deals with its own matters; anyone not aligned with a specific group will feel a sense of neglect and will not find his place here.

There was also a spatio-geographic dimension to the system of populating the town. The process was conducted according to streets — once one was full, new residents were moved into the next street. Because residents came, for the

most part, in groups, homogenous neighborhoods were created, with “good” areas and socially “weak” areas. These influenced even the composition of the kindergartens, where some parents had difficulties with the social structure of the class in which their children were placed.

One young interviewee who defined himself as living an Ashkenazi (i.e., Lithuanian) lifestyle made a comment that is typical in an authoritative society. He suggested it was desirable to add an older, well-educated group to the town. Betar Illit, like all new communities, had a young population, a fact particularly striking in this Haredi town with its high birth rates. With such an age structure, his comment reflects a sense of something lacking with regard to religious and cultural leadership. The same sense is expressed in three other requests raised in the questionnaires: that the rabbis of the community reside in it, that the local council allocate salaries for rabbis representing the different religious groups, and that a rabbinical court be set up in the town. By summer 1997, all three requests had been fulfilled.

These requests touch on another plane that appeared in the comments — the organizational plane. The characteristic issues on this plane, as they appeared in the interviewees’ comments, relate to the appointed local council’s method of functioning, which generally won praise from the residents. The criticism (minor, implied, and subtle — so as not to be classified as “*lashon hara*,” or slander) refers to the method of recruitment of workers to the council, the way in which tax reductions were allotted, and the organization of guard duty.

From the analysis in the previous chapters, the importance of these criticisms is clear. The recruitment of competent workers represents a basic problem of Haredi administration. The appointed council in Betar Illit succeeded in meeting this challenge. Complaints by residents on this matter could reflect suspicion of improper appointments, as well as frustration by groups that had anticipated an appointment that would reflect special treatment, but which was not forthcoming. City taxes are also an important matter in Haredi administration. The rate of discounts given in a Haredi town harms the tax base and the local authority’s economic capability. The city tax system also represents a limitation for the employment of women, who are regarded as a principal component in the economic base of a Haredi family. If the woman works, the chance of the family getting a local tax exemption or large discount is reduced. That is apparently the reason for the refusal of almost all interviewees to state the employment of the woman in the family. Women who filled in the questionnaire made a point of adding a comment that the tax system discriminates against women and limits them. It is interesting that the women aimed their complaint at the tax rules and not at the internal social order of the com-

munity, which releases the man from this concern and places the economic burden on the woman.

It is also interesting to see how the residents relate to the subject of guard duty, a subject reviewed in Chapter 6 and a source of pride to the appointed local leadership. Many of the interviewees, especially the women, expressed dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements. The residents are obliged to perform guard duty once every three months. A custom developed among some residents to pay others to do their shifts. Wives of yeshiva students complained in the questionnaire that the guarding is not efficient because those who do the guarding — the yeshiva students — are not properly trained. They lose hours of sleep and so do not study well the following day. In addition, they complained that the going rate for doing a shift was too high — NIS 45 or \$13 (in 1996), and it was up to the council to switch from guarding as an obligation for all and to hire the services of professionals, from council coffers. A lack of willingness to share in any of the burden can be found in these comments — the community expects “others” to bear the burden.

The fact that these three subjects recurred repeatedly in the comments appears to indicate that these are the main problems with which an independent Haredi town must deal. At the same time, residents expressed a rather high level of expectations regarding standard of living. How these expectations are realized can be seen in the following item, originally in Hebrew, which was attached to one questionnaire:

A swimming pool should be built in the town because it is important for yeshiva students who are learning and do not exercise. Also in a Haredi town women are usually after giving birth and it strengthens stomach muscles; exercise is tedious but a pool is fun. It is also relaxing, according to psychologists. In summer we could rent out the apartment to Jerusalemites if they knew there was a pool here. Of course it would have to be in coordination with the rabbis and according to all rules of modesty. The pool should be located at the edge of town so that if secular visitors come they will not wander around here touring.

A similar level of expectations regarding leisure and sports could be found among other of the women interviewees, and less among the men. Awareness is growing among Haredim of the need for leisure and sports facilities, although they associate them with secular culture. What is special in a Haredi town, in this context, is that the community is not concerned that secular people will also ask to use the facilities or to take part in different activities. Here, Haredim feel free to exploit different possibilities of leisure time without secular intervention, which they reject. Such facilities are so closely linked in

the Haredi mind to secular culture that they even harbor concerns that a swimming pool in a Haredi town might attract the secular and therefore it should be built on the edge of town. The very idea of a pool in a Haredi town sounds so daring that it was pigeonholed immediately and conditioned on the agreement and guidance of a rabbinical authority, as is accepted in any Haredi matter that has the remotest hint of being outside the known routine.

Some of the questions were aimed at examining the degree of resident satisfaction with the different features of Betar residences, which would give an indication of how they perceived the town. The first two of these questions pertained to the stage prior to moving to the town and to the considerations involved in selecting Betar Illit as the place of residence: as could be expected, most interviewees moved there from Bene Beraq or Jerusalem (80 percent), with the number of those who came from Bene Beraq three times higher than that for Jerusalem. This is curious because Jerusalem is so much closer to Betar than Bene Beraq. But a large number of Betar residents are young couples and families setting up their homes for the first time. Most of the answers to this question referred to the interviewee's place of residence prior to getting married; Bene Beraq and Jerusalem are the main origins of Haredi brides and grooms.

When asked to give the chief reason for choosing Betar Illit as a place of residence, 68 percent of interviewees noted the cheap cost of housing. An additional 21 percent said it was because of the religious character of the community. One question asked about the sources of information regarding housing possibilities in Betar Illit, to which only 48 interviewees responded. This low figure could be explained in two ways: (1) an inability to point to the source of information which is "common knowledge"; (2) for some residents, investigating the housing market was done by their parents who had bought them the apartments. Of those who did respond, two-thirds were evenly split, citing either the media (press and advertising) or friends as the sources of information. Some 25 percent gave their family as the source of information about the town, confirming the assumption regarding the role of parents in buying apartments for the young family.

One of the elements that influenced the degree of satisfaction with the town was the geographical location of the interviewee's home within the community. Dissatisfaction with housing location could influence viewing the town in a negative light. Here the town's population size and its spatial division is important. In a small, compact community such as Betar Illit, at the time of writing, differences in location between the various population groups were not large. Indeed, most respondents (61 percent) indicated the highest level of

satisfaction with the location of their residences within the community. In order to ensure honest answers, residents asked to note exactly what local features they found positive. Most referred to the location of their home in relation to their street or neighborhood, or access to stores or public parks. Other spatial features of the apartment — the view, or good ventilation and lighting — were also reasons for satisfaction, although to a lesser degree than that of access. Of course, good ventilation or sunlight are not guaranteed in all apartments.

Haredim consider these functions to be of neutral cultural value. How they are related to is very much influenced by functional efficiency and convenience, which certainly benefits from the spatial compactness of the town. By contrast, there are also other functions which, although also dependent on access, have cultural-value or religious foundations. Their treatment is more complex and difficult to define. The synagogue is a clear example. There is the tale about a Jew who is asked what he would build if he were on a desert island. His response was — two synagogues: one to pray in and one to avoid at all costs. The synagogue is indeed an access-dependent function as community members are supposed to gather there three times a day. The question of location is thus very meaningful in the fabric of the town. The tale, on the other hand, points to the enormous sensitivity that surrounds the subject of the synagogue.

Despite the importance of access, this factor is still not the critical element in the molding of one's relationship to the synagogue.⁷² Other elements include the style of prayer, the atmosphere, and the social status of the individual within that congregation.⁷³ Indeed, the split in responses concerning degree of satisfaction with the synagogue did not parallel that in other questions. Less than a quarter of the interviewees said they were very satisfied with their synagogue, while one-third said they were not satisfied, this despite the preponderance of synagogues and the wide range of prayer styles in the town.

Interviewees were not asked to detail their relationship with the synagogue, but to outline what they liked and what they did not like. Topics likely to be relevant to a question of that kind are many and wide-ranging — from prayer style to customs, how the cantors and the synagogue manager [*gabay*] perform, the individual's role in the religious ritual in the synagogue, the quality of the building, accessibility, and even a comparison between the physical

⁷² Yosseph Shilhav, "Principles for the Location of Synagogues: Symbolism and Functionalism in a Spatial Context," *Professional Geographer*, 35:3(1983):324-329.

⁷³ Samuel C. Heilman, *Synagogue Life — A Study in Symbolic Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

conditions of the synagogue they attend and those they “would not set foot in.” The wide range of possibilities, the difficulty in precisely evaluating the positions, and the small number of interviewees does not leave room for a detailed discussion of this matter in this study.

The comments made about the synagogues are also true — and doubly valid — for the schools and Talmud Torah classes. Like the synagogues, the educational institutes are dependent on accessibility. The weight of the accessibility factor may vary when compared to other factors. Educational institutions are a sensitive issue for the Haredi community, perhaps even more so than synagogues because, aside from their existence as a place of learning, they also represent a principal tool in the socialization of the younger generation. Moreover, the study of Torah, which is the main and almost exclusive content in Talmud Torahs, is a religious decree (“*mitzva*”) and the fulfilling of a value mission. The teaching of girls in the schools is known mainly as having instrumental significance. Thus the significance attached to Talmud classes is greater. In this matter as well, public allocations fail to meet the needs.

At least in the early stages of construction, not all Betar Illit residents enjoyed educational services that fulfilled their needs and expectations. Fifty interviewees responded to the question, “To what extent do the Talmud Torah classes in the town meet your expectations?” The low rate of response to this question is understandable because it is relevant only to those interviewees who have children at that age. Of those who responded, 38 percent said the classes meet their highest expectations; 10 percent noted that they did not meet their expectations and the remainder fell between these two positions. The general rate of those who were satisfied was 60 percent, 22 percent were dissatisfied, and 18 percent could be found in the middle range. This division of opinion, given the situation, indicates that the local council is successful in navigating between the various pressures when allocating education resources to a population with a wide range of demands.

Democracy and Haredi Governance

Democracy in Haredi Society in Light of Changes in Israeli Society’s Perception of Democracy

An understanding of democracy, unlike declarations about democracy, has developed in Israeli society over time. Prior to independence and in the initial years of the state, Israeli secularism put socialist ideology and collective values at the forefront. The ruling institutions and authorities’ relationship with

the small Haredi public were based on the belief that this was a minority group and the processes of secularization, which were accelerating, would cause it to eventually disappear. The Haredi symbolized the diaspora Jew as opposed to the new Israeli, and such was the relationship to the Haredi community. It was not perceived as a legitimate group that warranted equal rights and obligations: even the exemption given to Haredi yeshiva students in Jerusalem releasing them from mobilization to defend the city (the exemption which later served as the basis of yeshiva students' "postponement of military service") was granted with the knowledge that the group in question was extremely small.

Thus the Haredi community became used to obtaining resources through various political battles and in roundabout ways. Such methods were adopted by the Haredi sector in light of the norms set by Israeli society in general. Haredi Israeli consciousness was molded in the face of the militant secularism of the state's early years, whose approach they learned the hard way.⁷⁴ As soon as Haredim became the majority in some places, they treated the minority there just as they had been treated in the past. Moreover, as noted above, this is an authoritative community whose members are used to deference to rabbinical authority, i.e., "Torah opinion" (*da'at Torah*). This concept, in its new interpretation which appeared only in the twentieth century, "emphasizes the special status of the Torah sages, who are not likely to make mistakes and whose opinions determine not only matters of religion, but economic, social, and political issues as well."⁷⁵ In this society, then, there is no tolerance for a range of views. It is likely that the changes outlined earlier will encourage the younger generation to be less accepting of authority and more critical, but there is also a danger in such a process: it is not enough to be competent to express criticism if the criticism is not part of a culture that allows discussion and argument. The culture of argument in Haredi society is lacking. Suffice it

⁷⁴ The meeting between David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, and the leaders of the Haredi parties is well known. The Haredi leaders demanded that orthodox laws be passed, to which Ben-Gurion responded: "Bring a million Jews from Brooklyn, then you will become the majority in the Knesset and pass laws that will force us all to wear *shtreimels*" [fur hats] and grow *peyot* [sidelocks] — then I will accede to you." This does not necessarily indicate a democratic view of the world. By contrast, Haredim learned from the episode over the National Service for Women Law — which was passed in Summer 1953 but never enforced — that "in a democratic state, the power of the majority is limited when it is up against a determined minority that is willing to 'pay the price.'" Menachem Friedman, *Haredi Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 62. See also Tom Segev, 1949 — *The First Israelis* (Jerusalem: Domino Press, 1984), pp. 188-243 (Hebrew).

⁷⁵ See Gershon C. Bacon, "Daat Torah and Birthpangs of the Messiah," *Tarbiz, A Quarterly for Jewish Studies*, 52:3(1983):497-508 (Hebrew).

to recall how Haredim treat their opponents, even those within their own community — and even if they are rabbis or community leaders. A culture of discussion and argument, the ability to listen, a readiness to be convinced, and the power of persuasion are all an integral part of a democratic society, and they develop only with education and long-term nurturing. Without these skills, criticism becomes crude and violent.

In recent years, Israeli society has undergone divisive changes in values, for better or worse. In the heat of the political argument declarations like “a majority is a majority” are oft-repeated, meaning the final decision, in any case, will be made by the majority, regardless of the subject in question. Political decrees — sometimes even very important ones — are still made exclusively by the power of the formal majority, without consideration for the intense opposition, emotional and principle-based, of the minority. Yet, gradually, the emphasis has shifted from collectivist values to individualistic ones. Such a society tends to protect individual rights more, and most certainly the rights of minority groups. New social processes encourage overconsideration of the needs and wants of individuals and groups. For that matter, Israeli society is moving from the uniform collectivist pole to something more pluralistic, and there is growing recognition of particularistic rights and the legitimacy of views and lifestyles that are different. This phenomenon is expressed, for example, in the dispute over the right of parents to choose their children’s school, with the increasing weight of super-district schools with particularistic curricula and the growing intervention of the public in planning. In 1996, the need to strengthen democracy instruction in the education system was recognized.

In Haredi society, by contrast, there is another value priority. There is still no sign of adopting such pluralistic social values. But the community is exposed to different instrumental expressions of a pluralistic democratic society, and it is slowly taking on some of these expressions. For example, demand in the community is growing for the appointment of top officials on the basis of referenda or elections. Also, the increasing power of Haredi politicians, lobbyists, and bureaucrats highlights the question of the relative weight of the rabbinical leadership within the political, social, and bureaucratic leadership. It is possible that with time these phenomena will help bring about a temperance of authoritarian Haredi society, even if this process began for other reasons.

In other words, changes are underway in the two social systems under discussion — Israeli society in general and Haredi society. The difference between the two is not necessarily in the direction of those changes but in their rate and destination. Haredi society is striving towards preserving a static situation and

therefore the changes are minor, accumulating gradually, and only after a long period of time will their impact be felt. The situation could be compared to two vehicles moving in the same direction at different speeds: because of that difference the final destination, and the stations along the way, could be different.

Preserving democratic principles sometimes has a significant political or economic price. In any governing system there is a need to find a balance between democratic principles and the demands of efficiency. On the one hand, the democratic process could be used to curb development projects, giving expression to the needs of residents including those who oppose the initiatives of the government or the municipality and are equipped with legal tools to express their opposition. On the other hand, in modern economic systems which are characterized by accumulated flexible capital, mobility, and especially business competition, it is important to make decisions quickly and the element of efficiency gets new emphasis. Between these trends, the local authority is undergoing reorganization and is getting used to working in partnership with a range of sectors, such as the business sector and different urban groups. The changes in the relationship between the local authority and the other sectors are adapted to economic, technological, social, and political changes.⁷⁶ In a Haredi administration the question of balance between democracy and efficiency is more complex, due both to the Haredi approach to democracy and because of the difficulty a Haredi municipality has in achieving functional efficiency, as noted in previous chapters.

The committee investigating the functioning of the Bene Beraq municipality had to recommend at the conclusion of its work whether to permit the mayor and the elected council to stay on or to dissolve the council and release the mayor from his duties. Two opposing principles faced the committee on this question: on the one hand, the right of local residents to elect their representatives to the local council as they saw fit. They would then rule the city according to the principles and values that guided the residents when they elected them. On the other hand is the fact that the residents have no less of a right to a decent level of basic services.⁷⁷ In the comments made above by the committee chairman, the question was not where to put the emphasis, because the situation had already reached a crisis, but rather, whether or not to respect the right of the residents to elect their own city leaders or to take that right away completely. Only denying them the right of election could save their right to benefit from basic services, such as a minimum level of efficiency. In

⁷⁶ See Shlomo Hasson, *The New Urban Order — Urban Coalitions in Israel* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1996) (Hebrew).

⁷⁷ See note 32 above.

making its decision, the committee tended toward the second option and thus dissolved the failing council primarily so as to avoid (in the committee's words) "corrupting the city" and all that relates to it in terms of blasphemy [*chilul Hashem*], as a city of "Torah and *mitzvot*," i.e., where the residents are observant. The committee recommended that the composition of the appointed committee be based on appropriate persons who would continue to foster the special character of the city until the residents could once again elect their own representatives.

Failed Implementation of a Democratic Process: Rotation in the Bene Beraq Administration

Administrative and governance issues are fundamentally political and thus cannot be detached from the political process, which also expresses a basic democratic principle — elections. The Haredi approach to elections could explain some of the phenomena discussed in earlier chapters and is interesting in and of itself. In a democratic society elections reflect the principle of equality in representation of attitudes and outlooks — a problematic principle in Haredi society which, as noted, defers to its rabbinical leaders. So what is the significance of elections in a Haredi community? It seems they reflect primarily an instrumental approach to a system that is likely to influence power in the community and the quantity of resources that would be allocated within it. Elections, then, are nothing more than a competition for access to centers of power and to resources. Such is the case when Haredim are competing for power with other population groups, and within the community itself, such as in municipal elections in Bene Beraq, as elsewhere.

The 1980s saw chaos in Haredi election patterns. Until then, the obedient members of the authoritarian community would largely vote for the one existing Haredi party (Agudat Yisrael),⁷⁸ as ordered by their leaders, or they abstained from voting, in line with orders from other leaders. The principle according to which elections are part of the political process in a democratic society, and all that goes with it, was not relevant to Haredi society, which, in its essence, is not democratic.

Then the appearance of a Sephardi Haredi party — Shas — in the municipal elections in Jerusalem and Bene Beraq in 1983, and a year later in Knesset elections, and the emergence of a Lithuanian Haredi party — Degel Hatorah — in the 1988 general elections, resulted in an unprecedented conflict for the individual Haredi Jew. Both these parties shared equal religious legitimacy; for the first time Haredim were called upon to choose and not simply vote. Each party, naturally, had its hard core of voters, but there were also many who swayed, who had difficulty making a decision in the face of what looked to them like a collision of equally-weighted authority. The dissension among supporters of the different Haredi parties was not characterized by a civil argument about political views or values, but manifested itself as a power struggle over the honor of the various spiritual leaders and their absolute truths. Tension was bound to increase and more than once violence erupted, particu-

⁷⁸ The occasional appearance of the Po'alei Agudat Yisrael party in different political contexts — until it disappeared from the political map — tends to be neglected. This is not the place to elaborate on this subject.

larly in Bene Beraq. The collective memory of the residents links the election campaign at the time with conflict, fights, slander, and other violent incidents. In order to stop such incidents, city officials and rabbis took a special initiative. Just prior to the local elections of November 2, 1993, Haredi leaders issued a “*kri’at kodesh*” (sacred appeal) to Bene Beraq residents, saying:

We appeal to you, dear brothers, residents of Bene Beraq, which is rich with the devout. Go out and work for the Bene Beraq United Torah list, which was established in consultation with our masters and sages and all pious Haredim, from all ethnic and religious groups in the city, unified under this one list, headed by Rabbi Moshe Irenstein, Rabbi Yerachmiel Beuer, and Rabbi Eliahu Suissa. Initially, Rabbi Irenstein will serve as mayor and after a set time Rabbi Beuer will take over, as has been agreed. On election day, go and vote, you and your families, for a municipality led only by the Bene Beraq United Torah list and Rabbi Moshe Irenstein for mayor.

Heaven forbid that apathy will prevail over the municipal elections, because many Torah rules and Jewish existence depend on this.

(Translated from a Hebrew wall poster)

The first three signatories on the poster were the most influential Haredi leaders: Rabbi Eliezer Schach, head of the Ponevezh yeshiva and the Lithuanian Haredi leader; Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Hager, the Rebbe from Wisznice; and Rabbi Pinhas Menahem Alter, the Rebbe from Gur (Gora). Following their names are those of 35 other rabbis, yeshiva heads and “*rebbe*s” from all sectors of the Haredi public — Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Lithuanian, and Hassidic.

The practical significance of this deal was that the internal conflict in Bene Beraq was neutralized and the entire electoral strength of the Haredi public was concentrated to compete with the non-Haredi parties. Eliminating the competition seemed to calm the tension somewhat and it could be assumed that this was the main reason behind the rabbis’ joint agreement, especially in view of past experience. Furthermore, due to the Haredi majority in the city, the agreement could have meant that most of the flaws that stem from a conflict of interests and cultural differences could have been swept aside. With this agreement, the elections had two main aims: to formally establish local rule and to consolidate Haredi strength against non-Haredim.

But a heavy price would be paid for the rotation deal between Agudat Yisrael and Degel Hatorah: the exacerbated failure of city management. Yet while the rotation agreement was criticized by city officials, Project Renewal officials, the Interior Ministry, and the investigating committee as the main reason for city malfunctioning, the saying “an open door invites the thief” could also be applied, with each of the city leaders working for the group he was represent-

ing to ensure that his colleagues would not get a bigger share of the pie than he. Whatever was given to one was immediately demanded by the others — funds, appointments, permits, and the like. Thus, as a result of such extreme inefficiency, paralysis set in.

The investigating committee also found that the rotation agreement had no legitimate basis, as it contradicted “public practice.” It is not the purpose of this research to discuss the validity of such a political agreement, but it seems there is room to present another, non-traditional interpretation of “public practice.” From the public’s point of view, the agreement was most certainly defective, transferring the decision over internal matters from the public to the rabbis and even the lobbyists. This is bad for two reasons — one with regard to principles and the other on a practical level. Regarding principles, the public’s voice was silenced and it lost its right to argue about social, religious, and political issues. This argument might be internal, but the emotional strength that emerged in earlier election campaigns shows just how important contentious subjects were to the public. At the practical level, the rotation enabled the lobbyists to arrange their political deals in a way that would guarantee the particularistic interests of the different groups; and when the needs of the public are attended to by wheelers and dealers who are scratching each other’s backs, the public loses out.

Democracy and Leadership in a Haredi Community

An independent Haredi settlement such as Betar Illit poses a problem of leadership. The traditional leadership of a Haredi community is religious, headed by rabbis and spiritual leaders, or “*rebbe*s” in Hassidic communities. Everything is determined by the rabbinical leadership both at the community and the individual levels. This leadership directs the life of the community and its members in a world which is sometimes perceived as hostile, with the aim of preserving the community’s values, culture, and tradition. Temptation is perceived as being a great threat looming over the community’s culture. In any case, the Haredi community was never in charge of its environment; rather, it found ways to survive in others’ milieu. This makes an independent Haredi town radical: the community bears the burden of managing its own space, not as a community huddled in a protective niche but with full responsibility for the functioning of different and complex urban systems.

The management of a town, let alone a large city, poses unprecedented problems for the community’s religious leadership. The situation brings with it the emergence of a new leadership, which rises from a bureaucratic and political

elite. This new technocratic leadership could, with time, challenge the religious leadership. Although the rabbinical leadership will always be regarded as superior in importance compared to the technocratic leadership, this importance might eventually lose its effectiveness and it is possible that only the symbolic, formal dimension will remain intact.

In other words, the rabbis will be granted all due respect but their influence on daily life will dwindle. Such a process is likely to occur, despite the well-known tendency of Haredim to treat their spiritual leaders as infallible and having great knowledge in all facets of life.

In the late twentieth century, town officials face an endless series of problems relating to various facets of development, which demand rapid and successful solutions. The action and oversight involved in the development and management of a town require significant decisions. Theological responses simply are not adequate. Rabbis can remain spiritual leaders, set policy, and sometimes give their "*hechsher*" (authorization for kosher food), but they do not direct daily urban events. In addition, there is one more important difference between rabbinical and technocratic leadership. Resources and funds are allocated by the technocratic elite, giving the political-bureaucratic leaders immense power which, in turn, boosts their prestige among the Haredi population. Still, the religious leaders retain even greater prestige, but ultimately this has only religious dimensions and everyone knows where the real power lies.

The practical significance of the tension between the two types of leadership is sensed strongly in Bene Beraq. Part of the explanation for the stalled development in the area north of Jabotinsky Road lies in the need for rabbinical approval for the planning initiatives because of their far-reaching impact on the urban character of the area. This explanation would seem to indicate the rabbis' great power. Yet the rabbis did not succeed in preventing all the failures and anomalies in the running of the city. A different picture can be found in Betar Illit. Because the town was not originally settled by members of the core Haredi community but rather by small peripheral groups, no one rabbinical personage dominated. The new residents had a relationship with the established spiritual leadership outside the town and some even did not have that. Two community rabbis were appointed in the town — Sephardi and Ashkenazi — with whom municipal leaders consulted. Rabbis from other small communities and branches joined later.

The absence of an authoritative religious leadership in Betar Illit was reflected in the responses of some of those who filled in the questionnaire. As noted above, some complained about this situation in their comments, but the matter

was also raised in the question regarding the degree of satisfaction with local rabbis. A question that calls for an opinion on the rabbinical leadership in a Haredi community has a clear potential threat, which is not acceptable in Haredi circles. However, 21 percent of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the local rabbinical leadership, compared with responses to other questions. This clearly indicates that Betar Illit residents are not satisfied with their rabbis.

The picture is totally different regarding the local bureaucratic-political leadership. The local council at the time of this research was appointed by the Minister of Interior, and not elected by the residents. Thus, the municipal officials do not have any particularistic obligations to pressure groups and their loyalty is only to the development of the town as professionals. Such a situation could lead to hostility toward the bureaucratic establishment if the pressure groups do not get what they want. In other words, an objective and neutral leadership could be the target of general dissatisfaction. But this is not the case in Betar Illit, according to the questionnaire responses.

In the general comments, some interviewees noted the local council's degree of success and the popularity enjoyed by the council head. In questions that related to specific areas of activity, interviewees were asked to give ratings, e.g., for administration and services; sanitation and maintenance; traffic, safety and security; licensing, building and development; and community activities. The residents were very generous in their marks, with 80 percent ranking the council in the top three (out of nine) categories for community activities, and 74 percent giving similarly high marks for administration and services. The lowest share of high marks was given for safety and traffic, 58 percent.

Thus the residents gave an overall positive report of the appointed council. No serious signs of opposition could be found, although, as noted, the council had no obligations to any specific local groups and did not work for them. Opposition is non-existent not *despite* the lack of preference but *because of* it. Any opposition found among groups to the current bureaucratic leadership is not necessarily because they feel overlooked but because of an alleged preference shown to other groups, which makes them feel deprived. If the bureaucratic leadership ensures that no preferential treatment is given to any specific sector and takes pains to treat the groups equally, problems of envy or feelings of deprivation should be reduced. This is the advantage of an appointed council by contrast to a leadership made up of representatives of different particularistic interest groups in a traditional society such as that of the Haredim.

Successful Implementation of a Democratic Process: Municipal Elections in Betar Illit

Despite the calamities and shortcomings of election campaigns and their results in Bene Beraq, the experience in the Betar Illit elections was one of success. The expansion and consolidation of the town's population brought an end to the term of the appointed council. On May 14, 1996, elections were held for the first time for the local council and its leader. Because the town is located just inside the administered territories, the elections were held according to the special regulations pertaining to these territories, the "Order Regarding Management of Local Councils (Judea and Samaria) (No. 892) 1981," the "Regulations for Local Council (Judea and Samaria)," and "Rules and Regulations Concerning Elections to Local Councils (Judea and Samaria) 1990."

Two candidates competed for local council head — Yehuda Gerlitz (Ashkenazi) and Moshe Driham (aligned with the Sephardi Shas party). Four lists ran for the nine council seats, after a failed attempt to put together a unified Haredi list representing all the Haredi groups in Betar — Sephardi and Ashkenazi. Agudat Yisrael and Degel Hatorah ran on one ticket, which represented all the Ashkenazi Haredim, Hassidic and Lithuanian alike. The Sephardi Haredim also tried to combine forces but this led to a split: a small Sephardi breakaway group called Daf Hadash ("new page") rose opposite the united Sephardi ticket, under the auspices of Shas. Added to these two was a fictitious ticket, the independent list of the Ashkenazi candidate for council head. Candidates for council head had to appear at the head of a list, but because the candidate refused to identify with any of the party lists, he opted to head a list whose purpose was clear. Ultimately, the competing lists were as follows:

- Daf** — Daf Hadash (the breakaway Sephardi list)
- Zeh** — United Sephardi Communities–Betar (a Shas coalition)
- Ken** — Betar Betnufa ("Betar on the Rise")–United List (Ashkenazi)
- P** — the Independent ticket (fictitious)

The entire election campaign — from the nomination of the different candidates through the electioneering and election day itself — gave the Betar Haredi community a new status which no Haredi community had previously experienced in Israel: the whole process was free of rabbinical orders that were accepted in the Haredi world. Suffice it to say that in the local elections held two years earlier in the Haredi town of Emanuel, women were forbidden to take part. When the Haredi community is not competing with a secular

community and the competition is solely internal, it is possible to prevent women from going to the polls. Yet in this respect, the elections in Betar were totally different from those held in Emanuel: the voting turnout showed that as many women voted as men.

On election day, there were 2,525 eligible registered voters, of whom 2,283, or 90.4 percent, went to the polls — an extremely high turnout. Of the 2,247 valid votes for council head, Yehuda Gerlitz received 62.6 percent and Moshe Driham 34.4 percent.

Of the 2,269 valid votes for the council, 62.6 percent went to Ken, 31.9 percent to Zeh, 5.4 percent to Daf, and 0.1 percent to P. The nine council seats were divided by an initial index of 252 votes per seat (9:2,269) and, after deducting the votes for the lists that did not win a seat, an index of 237 votes gave Betar Betnufa–United List 6 seats and United Sephardi Communities–Betar 3 seats.

The question, to which there is not yet an answer, is what will be the influence of the new leadership on the functioning of the town's systems from hereon. The positive image left by the appointed council could be overturned in the case of the elected council. In an elected council, the residents' different interest groups are represented and their representatives run the local systems in line with the particularistic preferences of those who put them in power. This is the source of the potential problem: a democratic community knows how to navigate its functioning even in a pluralistic structure, while the Haredi community does not. At the same time, the move from management by an appointed council to an elected council does not necessarily bring with it immediate changes in behavioral norms. The influence of the norms which characterized the term of the appointed council, and especially the energetic and responsible council head, are well recognized by the elected council in its eagerness to minimize conflicts: a wall-to-wall coalition was established to enable a similar type of functioning to that of the appointed council. The council is united, responsible, and does not intervene — at least formally — in internal struggles. Moreover, the Haredi unity found in Betar Illit enables cultural and social activities to be held without fear of opposition from undesirable groups or individuals.

8 Reflections on the Future of Haredi Municipal Rule

As noted above, Haredi governance is distinctive on three levels: the technical level — characterized by a lack of skills; the social level — the functional continuity of an interest group in a situation in which the need for a universal outlook is required; and the ideological level — avoiding the support of different cultures, especially if they are perceived as religiously illegitimate. This type of governance, with all its administrative systems, including the ruling local authority, is gradually exposed to general problems that diverge from the particularistic needs of the Haredi community. Such exposure could influence each distinctive level of Haredi governance differently.

The Technical Level

It would seem that, in facing the problem, the technical level should be the simplest to deal with because all that is required to improve the situation are appropriate qualifications for Haredi staff. The number of professional courses available for Haredim is indeed growing. The range of branches of employment for Haredi women, the changes in their social and economic status, the increased availability of positions with flexible work that do not require long hours away from the home are enhancing the number of Haredim available for such courses. Recently, courses have become available for yeshiva students, too, in fields such as computers and accounting.

Some training courses could also focus on areas that would aid the administrative functioning of the governance system in the future. Unlike courses in technical and economic fields, training for positions in government, whether municipal or state, touches on official employment and is thus bound up with changes in the status of community members for whom “Torah is their profession.” This should start as in-service training for those who already hold posts in Haredi administrative and governing systems, and should be expanded until there is a sufficiently large resource base of trained staff to fill all the personnel requirements of such systems. As noted, dealing with the issue at this level

is relatively easy because real changes to the social structure are not required. In addition, there is a willingness to accept such changes in the Haredi community as a result of the economic changes that are inevitably transforming the society.

The Social Level

It is more difficult to introduce change into Haredi governance on the social and ideological levels. When a particularistic group finds itself in a ruling position whose jurisdiction is expanding at a significant rate, tension and even conflict are likely to develop between the initial reason for the group's existence — its political *raison d'être* — and that *raison d'être* applied within the wider framework of bureaucratic, administrative, social, and political activity. If the group absorbs society's general values, it will be easier for it to integrate into positions of power. Can it be assumed that such a process is taking place in Haredi society? That would mean relinquishing the essence of its socio-cultural structure and its spatial organization. The socio-cultural essence of the Haredi community, from which spatial behavior is drawn, is segregation. The political mission of its representatives is to enable the nurturing of this segregation. The paradox is that just when the mission succeeds in general terms, the primary aim is likely to be harmed.

Here, too, one must look at the different dimensions of Haredi political activity: between the aim or target and the tools and means, or — as emphasized earlier — between the social-value dimension and the instrumental dimension. Haredim have learned to identify the rules of the political game and to use its tools, although this does not indicate an acceptance of the values principles that are inherent in those rules. In other words, Haredim adopt modes of operation and rules of the game that are quasi-universal, but their real and important aims remain, for the time being, particularistic. There are many such examples, the most prominent of which is the Bene Beraq municipality which was run by a community with affiliative principles in which the particularistic perception is dominant.

When rabbis determine the “idealistic” principles of Haredi municipal policy, they are imposing their own ideal principles on reality. This is typical in the creation of an extreme situation.⁷⁹ This is how the rabbis who spoke at the “Love Thee Truth and Peace” conference, organized by the Haredi organization Urah Kevodi, presented their views (see Chapter 5). Indeed, as noted

⁷⁹ Yosseph Shilhav, “Territorial Extremism from Religious Motives,” *op. cit.*

there, one of the speakers well understood the problematic situation stemming from the difference between ideal and reality and stressed that he was not at all sure that it was desirable for Haredim to rule. As a traditional and extreme group, Haredim find it difficult to separate between the two and, like all dogmatic groups, they strive to realize the model in its ideological form. Haredi politicians are more cautious. On August 15, 1996, a seminar was held in Tel Aviv presenting the building plans of the new Minister of Housing, i.e., the ministry was given to a Haredi party following the general elections which took place in May. The seminar was organized by Ma'ariv Congresses, whose organizers initially defined it as a seminar on building for Haredim. When Deputy Minister Rabbi Meir Porush saw the text of the invitation, he sent it back for correction, stating, "We build for all Israelis, not just Haredim." The stated policy is thus universal, not particularistic.

But when Porush outlined his policy at the seminar, it was obvious that, although certain proposals were presented as if based on objective and general principles, their aims lay elsewhere. He proposed to change the eligibility requirements for housing assistance, to base them on two simple and general principles — family size and level of income.⁸⁰ Ignoring sectors such as demobilized soldiers and new immigrants would catapult yeshiva students to the head of the eligibility line. So the symbolic policy expresses one thing while the behavioral policy expresses something totally different. While the Haredi leadership is aware of the need for a universal policy, it is equally aware of the difference between stated policy and policy in practice. The long-term effects of this will only be felt in years to come.

The technical and social levels together create a serious problem that is closely linked to the question of independent administration of Haredi towns. The large number of yeshiva students for whom "Torah is their profession" and high birth rates put Haredim at the low end of the per capita income scale, boosting the number of those eligible for municipal tax discounts. As noted, a small Haredi community which benefits from discounts in a big city will not greatly influence the functioning of the local authority. But when Haredim represent the majority and the rate of eligibility for tax discounts remains high, the tax base of the local authority diminishes and dependence on external sources rises, negatively affecting functioning. Add to these factors other characteristics that prevent initiative (which the committee investigating the functioning of the Bene Beraq municipality understood), and the municipality has no choice but to get close to government coffers. In other words, a Haredi town is incapable of economic independence and will forever be dependent on

⁸⁰ Comments were noted by the author *in situ*, when Porush spoke.

a constant flow of resources from elsewhere. This raises the question: Can this prognosis be reversed?

An answer to the question requires an examination of both the objective scope of poverty among Haredim and the tendency to conceal a family's true level of income; the latter factor aggravating the former. In fact, there is no way of getting a true picture of Haredi income or existing poverty levels. The employment of some men is not legitimate, if they declared that the "Torah is their profession." If their declarations are found to be false, they are liable to pay the consequences, including losing the right of postponement of military service. In some cases the woman's work is not declared either, boosting the family's probability of benefiting from tax discounts. The local authorities in Haredi towns (be it the appointed committee in Bene Beraq or the appointed council in Betar Illit) have invested major efforts in defining and identifying the true extent of eligibility for tax discounts.⁸¹

The Ideological Level

Looking at the ideological dimension in Haredi local rule, it is startling to see how the same people who hold strict views about leniency in certain contexts are ready to buy themselves permits to conceal evidence and lie when it comes to economics and income, even stealing from the public. There is a Talmudic saying, "A man does not transgress unless a spirit of madness has entered into him" (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 3:b), but modern-day criminology offers a different explanation: the psychological situation that allows a person to commit an offense is brought about by delegitimizing the subject of the offense; in that way the offender "justifies" his action. Indeed, in a large city Haredim can explain such "justification": following many conversations with Haredi leaders, lobbyists, and high-ranking officials, it is possible to understand their basic claim against the use of taxes for funding the desecration of the Sabbath, secular culture and education, and other activities that contradict their beliefs. By evading city taxes, those same Haredim believe they are avoiding any complicity in such offenses.

However, this kind of "legitimization" of city tax evasion, as noted, can be claimed only by Haredim living in an integrated city where they do not enjoy rule; when the same claim is made in a locality whose population and rule are Haredi-dominated, it is not pertinent. In veteran Bene Beraq the custom of

⁸¹ There is no full exemption from city taxes. The discounts range from 20 to 90 percent, meaning that those eligible for a full discount pay 10 percent of the amount due and those who receive a small discount pay 80 percent of the amount due.

avoiding taxes became rooted; in a new township like Betar Illit — a small independent Haredi community — it is easier to set a prohibition against public stealing as the norm. Indeed, the appointed council won a *halachic* ruling from the local rabbis forbidding city tax evasion as stealing from the public, and set up a mechanism for collecting information on residents' employment. Moreover, anyone claiming eligibility for discounts is asked to make his claim in front of one of the two town rabbis, and only after he gives his consent is the eligibility endorsed. The appointed committee in Bene Beraq also invested efforts in trying to identify the true figure of those in need of discounts and to preventing others from evading payment.

Despite these efforts, the rate of discounts did not drop and the problem of taxation capability is real. In 1995, some 15,000 families in Bene Beraq received tax benefits of various proportions. In 1996, the Knesset passed the Adjustments Law which changed the income threshold that allows discounts and the rate of those eligible in Bene Beraq grew to 21,000 families.⁸² The situation is similar in Betar Illit. When the appointed council's term ended, there were 1,200 families in Betar, 60 percent of whom received tax discounts. Of those, 30 percent received discounts of 80 percent and the remainder between 40 and 60 percent of taxes due. At the end of the first year with the elected council in office, the local population had doubled but there was no change to the proportion of those receiving tax breaks.⁸³ These figures point to the fact that a real problem exists in the ability of a Haredi town to maintain itself without outside support.

Some of the problems presented in this chapter, such as the ability of the Haredi community to operate according to universalistic values and to maintain itself independently, are not limited to municipal rule. But they are at the heart of Haredi existence as a learning community and they have implications on the relations of this community with Israeli society as a whole. The beginning of social and economic changes presented in the previous chapter appears to be pushing the Haredi community in the direction of solutions. As indicated, the problem lies in the time required to formulate change, if indeed this is to become the trend.

⁸² Joshua Davidowitz, director-general of the municipality in the first 18 months of the appointed committee's term. Interview on May 29, 1997.

⁸³ According to statistics provided by the local council.

Epilogue

On January 6, 1998, municipal elections were held in Bene Beraq, bringing to an end the term of the appointed committee. This was not a scheduled end of term. Rather, heavy pressure on the Haredi leadership at the political level brought an end to the committee's term. The Haredi leaders had long complained that appointing such a committee to a large Haredi city such as Bene Beraq was an insult to the community and blasphemous. The interpretation drawn from this appointment, they claimed, was that Haredi Jews were not capable of running their city independently.

Needless to say, the appointed committee bears no liability for the maladies discussed in this report: its members are professional and experienced, and they have no individual interests in the city or in its local considerations. The committee was a unit of municipal leadership brought in from outside. It did not replace the existing manpower in the city systems. Its mandate was to aptly run the municipality and set policy, but it was dependent to a large extent on proper functioning of the system as a whole. The main features of the appointed committee were following rules of administration, collecting taxes on an objective basis, enforcing building laws, and attempting to create order in the sphere of town planning. All those who came into contact with the city under the committee expressed satisfaction with it, be they representatives of the various Haredi groups, public officials, education officials, or others. As one official said: "Every meeting with the appointed committee was professional; with [the rotating mayors] Irenstein and Beuer at the helm, only their interests come up for discussion."

The complaint raised by the Knesset Haredi coalition Yahadut Hatorah (an amalgamation of Agudat Yisrael and Degel Hatorah, formed for the 1996 general elections and the coalition negotiations thereafter) is therefore surprising. Its leaders demanded that the committee be dissolved and that elections be held in Bene Beraq, as they were in January 1998. If everyone was satisfied with the situation, why return to the previous evil? Was it indeed simply a question of honor and prestige?

The answer brings to the surface internal Haredi conflicts — this time between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The emergence of the Pardes Katz quarter of Bene Beraq as a hotbed of support of the Sephardi Haredi Shas party has already been discussed. The Yahadut Hatorah coalition feared this development could in the future upset Ashkenazi-Haredi hegemony in the municipality. Therefore, the Ashkenazi Haredi party pushed for elections, as long as its electoral strength could still ensure it a large majority. Similar awareness exists in Shas, and so that party tried to postpone elections. Here, then, is a possible scenario for the hasty return to the situation that initially required the city council to be dissolved.

The candidate for mayor in the elections was agreed upon in advance by all the Ashkenazi Haredim. That candidate of course won the vast majority of votes. Of the 25 seats for the elected city council, there is, again, a vast majority of Haredim: 17 Ashkenazi Haredim, four Sephardi Haredim, three state-religious representatives, and one secular council member, representing Labor (the Likud has no representation on the new city council).

Even in Betar Illit, where the elected council and the elected council head succeeded in putting together a wall-to-wall coalition, there is no full guarantee that proper functioning will continue in the future. A town in which most of the male population is ensconced in Torah study lacks an economic base of its own and remains dependent on the state. In 1995-96, 500 local births were registered, according to council figures; that represents a birth in every second family in the town (and four times the national birth rate). There is a blessing often heard in Israel, “*Ken yirbu!*” (“So may they multiply!”), which could equally apply to the implementation of development plans and the creation of local jobs. Continued proper administrative functioning as a legacy of the effective operation of the appointed council is likely to be reduced. The new community’s services are still operating “on probation” and their development will only be able to be correctly analyzed in years to come.

One year into the term of the elected council in Betar Illit, in June 1997, an item addressed to the council head was published in the council’s weekly newsletter, *Kol Koro* (literally, “A Voice Calls”). The writer cautions the council head about building irregularities in the town and calls on him “to destroy! And why? Because if the council head shirks today from destroying a ritual bath that was built illegally — tomorrow he will dither about vacating a house of prayer established illegally, and the next day classrooms will spring up in parks and gardens and this will pave the way to ruin.”

The writer supports his claim with a general picture of the Haredi community: “It is not only the future of Betar that is set on the scales today...all those observing this place are saying, ‘Can one put a local authority in the hands of people who study Torah and observe the commandments, or not?’”

He goes on to recall the failures of Bene Beraq and asks that the necessary lessons be learned: “Two years ago the Interior Minister stated, to the disgrace of all Haredi Jews, that a Jew who wears a *shtreimel* hat is not capable of standing for the head of a local council. You, Head of Council, have been given an opportunity to reverse the shame of the Haredi community and prove publicly that what was until now will not be the case again. The lesson has been learned. Bene Beraq will not fall twice.”

The letter attests to growing Haredi recognition that administration and governance of a Haredi town are fraught with problems and it is necessary to find ways to overcome these difficulties. The question that is still difficult to answer is whether this recognition is widespread and whether it is stronger than the interests of the politicians and other decision-makers.

The development of Haredi administrative and governance systems, at a time when the Haredi community is shifting from a position of receiving resources to a new situation in which it is also responsible for the allocation of resources, could raise a serious problem, only hints of which appear here, but which will demand closer examination in the future. A ruling culture, which has the authority to distribute resources, which demonstrates a universal approach, will put a political and bureaucratic elite up against a traditional rabbinical leadership. The immediate significance of such a structure is that the mechanisms of supervision are weakened and an internal tension is created between the cultural religious elite and the economic administrative elite. Such tension began in Jewish communities with the Emancipation and the departure from the ghettos some 200 years ago, a tension which — so as to avoid it at that time — caused Haredi orthodoxy to burgeon. Such a situation can bring about cracks in the “wall of holiness” that protects the community and can open channels of contact with the surrounding society. From the standpoint of the Haredi leadership, a vicious cycle is developing: halting such developments will set the community back in terms of the quality of life of its members, but a continuation of the process could bring down the “wall of holiness.”

The problems inherent in Haredi administration and governance are not manifest only within the Haredi community but project beyond. They are apparent in American society, dealing with the attempt of the Satmar community of

Kiryas Joel in New York to attain an independent school district that will service its own special public school (an attempt which was thwarted by the court). They are also apparent in Israeli society, which has difficulty in displaying any tolerance in view of, for example, the animosity of Betar Illit's Haredi residents to the local state-religious school. It is also increasingly concerned about the political strength of the Haredi parties in holding the balance of power between the two main political blocs.

The anxiety of the secular and non-Haredi part of Israeli society increased as the Haredi ability to wield political strength became apparent, to the extent that that strength determined the final outcome of the election for prime minister. The greatest fear of the secular public is that Haredim will use their political power to mold a "holy space" based on their values, and express a readiness to harm the values important in an open and democratic society. This is inevitable when different value systems meet, and raises the question of the right of preference of one over the other.

Such a collision of values can endanger the delicate fabric of Israeli society as a whole. The critical question, to which there is no answer, depends on time — what will precede what? Will social, administrative, and democratic rules of behavior penetrate Haredi society, on the one hand, and will the acceptance of this community by Israeli society, on the other, precede the erosion of the cement that holds the different parts of Israeli society together, or — heaven forbid — will the erosion process be faster than the changes, even if they do take place?

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