Like a Snake in Paradise

Fundamentalism, Gender and Taboos in the Haredi Community

Comme un serpent au paradis : le combat contre le mal dans la communauté

Haredi

Como una serpiente en el paraíso: el combate contra el mal en la comunidad

Haredi

Nicolas Stadler and Lea Taragin-Zeller

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/assr/29300>

DOI: 10.4000/assr.29300

ISSN: 1777-5825

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 March 2017

Number of pages: 133-156

ISSN: 0335-5985

Electronic reference

Nicolas Stadler and Lea Taragin-Zeller, "Like a Snake in Paradise", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* [Online], 177 | 2017, Online since 01 March 2019, connection on 06 January 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/assr/29300> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/assr.29300>

Nurit Stadler
Lea Taragin-Zeller

Like a Snake in Paradise

Fundamentalism, Gender and Taboos in the Haredi Community

Sin lieth at the door... Genesis 4:7

The present article focuses on modern-day fundamentalist norms that pertain to the body, carnality, and related transgressions. Although most scholars work under the premise that fundamentalist movements generally manage to preserve their lifestyles and tenets (Almond, Appleby and Sivan, 2003; Antoun, 2001; Beeman, 2001), particularly in all that concerns the body and attendant taboos, we will demonstrate how institutionalized groups of this sort undergo major transformations with respect to their asceticism, community-wide isolation, gender roles, and the family model. Our case study on Israel's Lithuanian Haredi¹ community places an emphasis on recent male and female reinterpretations of the *yaišer ha'rah* (evil inclination) – a concept that turns up in various Jewish sources and is a regular topic in the Haredi discourse. According to Boyarin (1995: 460), the term is often synonymous with sexual urges (also see Tishby 1989: 803) and undergirds the sector's taboos and notions concerning the body. Our fieldwork data indicates that younger ultra-Orthodox men and women are criticizing and introducing possible replacements for two of their community's paradigms: the yeshiva scholar and the virtuous mother.² Against this backdrop, we will take stock of various ways in which community members, especially religious educators, are rethinking their group's ideals and practices. Pursuant to our analysis of recent male and female interpretations of the *yaišer ha'rah*, we point to a shift from an ascetic and insular fundamentalism to a piety that demands more involvement with mainstream society. More specifically, as such movements institutionalize and/or their members hanker to contribute to the “greater good,” creative solutions are being found for this sort of enterprise.

1. A synonym for ultra-Orthodox, the term “Haredi” derives from Isaiah 66: 5: “Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble [haredim] at His word” (Heilman and Friedman, 1991: 198; Heilman, 1983, 1992).

2. Both terms shall be explained at length in the next section.

Fundamentalism, Carnality and Transgression

Over the past two decades, anthropologists and sociologists of religion have explored how fundamentalists integrate modern practices and ideas into established traditions and laws (Ammerman, 1987, 2005; Davidman, 1991; Deeb 2006; Mahmood, 2005, Stadler, 2009, 2012). Most scholars agree that fundamentalist communities are inclined to reinforce internal taboo systems by tightening restrictions that pertain to modesty, probity, and body-based practices (*e.g.*, Mahmood, 2005). Building on Mary Douglas's research (Douglas, 1966), researchers have defined these groups as "enclave cultures" (Almond *et al.*, 2003:34; Sivan, 1995) – distinct communities with highly demarcated cultural and moral boundaries as well as strict taboos that partition outsiders from insiders and men from women. Aimed at thwarting the putative efforts of "demonic forces" to corrupt the flock (Almond *et al.*, 2003: 34-36), these taboos and barriers segregate the "virtuous" and "morally superior" fundamentalists from the influences of the "depraved," "polluted," and "dangerous" host society (Sivan 1995). Such stereotypes are all the more pronounced when the "outside" (*i.e.*, the general public) seemingly "partakes of the same tradition as the inside [*i.e.*, the enclave], while being in essence its very negation" (Sivan, 1995: 19). For the sake of buttressing the walls around the enclave and between the sexes, fundamentalist movements have invested heavily in socialization techniques and educational institutions; and the same can be said for corporeal practices that are designed to safeguard the body's purity. Independent schools are the primary builders of the community's segregated identity, which reinforces gendered taboos, concepts, and practices (Aran, 1991; Davidman, 2011; El-Or, 2010; Fader, 2009; Hakak, 2012; Zalcberg-Block, 2011). However, studies on many and manifold religious groups point to mounting discontent with one-dimensional gender roles (Abu-Lughod, 1986, 1998; Avishai, 2008; El-Or, 2010; Fishman, 2009; Griffith, 2000, Taragin-Zeller, 2014, Taragin-Zeller, 2015). Some devotees, both men and women alike, are even clamoring for reform (Fishman, 2008; Leon & Lavie, 2013). In the pages ahead, we will build on these insights for the sake of addressing the ways in which members of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Lithuanian community are challenging its taboos and perceptions of the body. Moreover, the article will examine how the group's men and women negotiate religious ideals and practices. Davidman recently explored the topic of defections from the Haredi community (Davidman, 2014). This withdrawal, she explains, is not simply a matter of losing faith, but of altering one's behavior. Like all identity changes, religious defection is carried out through the medium of the body. Following in Davidman's footsteps, we will show how younger ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazim are reformulating masculine and feminine devotional models via the notion of the *yaišer ha'rah*. Leaning on an in-depth analysis of Haredi texts and narratives concerning the evil inclination, we challenge existing scholarship on the "enclave culture," not least the ideals of the isolated-cum-restrained male

body and the isolated female body. In the process, the following questions will be broached: What is the impact of member criticism on a fundamentalist group's basic precepts regarding carnality and gender? Put differently, what are the ramifications of such actions on the group's conception of the body and corporeal transgressions? And how do they affect the community's models of piety and gender roles in the domestic sphere? Before delving into these issues, let us briefly survey Israeli ultra-Orthodoxy.

“Lo, the People shall dwell Apart” (Numbers, 23: 9)

To date, the Haredi sector accounts for roughly 8 percent of Israel's population (ICBS, 2009). The community's religious mores purportedly adhere to the Hebrew Bible as well as a voluminous body of rabbinic literature, commentary, and rulings. Ultra-Orthodoxy is distinguished from other Jewish streams (Reform, Conservative, and Religious Zionists, among others). In practice, the Haredi sector consists of multiple groups, each with their own religious leaders (rabbis), teachings, and observances. This populace can be loosely divided into the Lithuanian yeshiva-based (Torah learning) communities and the Hassidic dynasties.³ Differences aside, all the sector's members are easily identified by their more or less shared dress code: black hats and dark suits for men; and similarly colored ankle-length skirts, long sleeves, and head coverings for women.

In contrast to other Haredi communities across the globe, the post-war Israeli branch was originally intended to be a quietist society charged with a historic mission: to perpetuate the “age-old” Jewish tradition that was nearly wiped out by the Nazis (Friedman, 1987; Heilman, 1983, 1992, 1994; Selengut, 1994: 246; Soloveitchik, 1994a, 1994b). To this end, the community's founders sequestered the flock and its “sacred” culture into enclaves with the objective of shielding them from what they considered the liberal, depraved, and spiritually corruptive influences of Western civilization. During the mid-twentieth century, various ultra-Orthodox streams publically opposed the founding and existence of a Jewish state⁴. Be that as it may, community members rarely exhibited activist zeal, either before or after Israel's establishment. The most glaring exceptions were demonstrations against perceived violations of major religious tenets or the status quo between the country's secular and observant Jewish citizens, such as the heated rallies against the opening of Jerusalem's first public swimming pool in the late 1950s. The

3. According to Vasserman, there are sharp differences between the Lithuanian and Hassidic camps. Whereas the former endeavors to attain piety through Torah study, the latter is organized around an ethic of kedusha (holiness) (Vasserman, 2011). In any event, both communities include many distinct sub-groups that are differentiated by origin, rabbinic leaders, customs, etc.

4. As secular Zionism was established, Ultra-Orthodox Jews perceived Zionism as a threat to Jewish faith and observance. They also firmly believed that it is forbidden for Jews to reconstitute rule in the Land of Israel and must wait for a godly action. These ideas run contrary to Religious-Zionists groups who embraced, supported and even sanctified Zionism (Aran, 1991).

Haredi ethos of Talmudic erudition and mitigating temporal concerns was sharply at odds with the fledgling Jewish state's secular and nationalist symbols, especially that of the productive and self-dependent Zionist worker or the self-sacrificing Hebrew warrior (Morgan, 1994: 165). Consistent with their ideology of passively waiting for God to usher in the Messianic era, the vast majority of Haredis rejected (at least in public) Zionism, secularism, and all other proactive models. Likewise, they deemed Israeli aggressiveness to be coarse and initially refrained from partaking in the affairs of state, politics, the military, and the labor market.

Upon Israel's establishment, the community's leaders introduced a new strain of ultra-Orthodox fundamentalism. Unlike the Jewish education system in pre-war Eastern Europe where only a few gifted young men had been chosen to pursue full-time Talmudic studies, all Haredi men were heretofore slated for a path of erudite seclusion from the temporal world for the purpose of instituting what Menachem Friedman has coined a "society of learners." From that point on, the Lithuanian community deemed the all-male yeshiva⁵ to be the only institution capable of defending and preserving the enclave. Research on ultra-Orthodox male piety has demonstrated just how central yeshiva learning is to the sector (Friedman, 1987; Heilman, 1983, 1992, 1994a; Selengut, 1994; Soloveitchik, 1994a, 1994b). Accordingly, the community viewed the *yaišer ha'rah* (evil inclination) exclusively as a self-control mechanism for shoring up the Haredi man's compliance with piety codes and as an impetus for safeguarding the enclave by means of constantly learning Torah in the seminary (Heilman, 1994a), where men are immured from the temptations of the flesh. In parallel, ultra-Orthodox women were assigned the role of "virtuous mother." To this end, the community's education system has trained girls for a life of supporting their future husbands' Toranic endeavors (Friedman, 1988) and bolstering the enclave's culture by attending to all the domestic chores (Davidman, 1991; El-Or, 1994).

The communal redoubts of Israel's ultra-Orthodox sector are Mea She'arim (a Jerusalem neighborhood) and the coastal city of Bnei Brak. Owing to the community's rapid growth and the limited capacity of its existing strongholds, new Haredi neighborhoods were established in towns like Ashdod, Netanya, and Beit Shemesh (Cahaner, 2009; Shilhav, 1991, 1998: 6). Over the past decade, new cities and suburbs have emerged in occupied territories specifically with this populace in mind (e.g., Modi'in Ilit, Beitar Ilit and Elad), as the master plans included high-school and adult yeshivas, religious day schools, synagogues, kosher markets, and ritual baths. These new suburbs were a perfect solution for low-income families searching for affordable housing.

From a material standpoint, most Haredis live exceedingly modest lives, have sizeable families, reside in dense quarters, and rely on government support

5. Yeshiva is the Hebrew word for the Eastern European-style Talmud seminary – a center for male worship, study, and fellowship. From an ultra-Orthodox standpoint, it refers to a male institution dedicated to the study of Torah.

(Berman, 2000; Dahan, 1998; Shilhav, 1991). As a result, the community has been quite vulnerable to the steep cutbacks in Israel's welfare budget since the 1990s. Whereas the quality of the sector's religious education is quite high, poverty and unemployment are ballooning. These developments have hindered the ultra-Orthodox male's ability to devote himself fully to Toranic pursuits. In a similar vein, the ascetic yeshiva-based ideology has become an onerous burden on the average household. While some families are sustained by income from property in Europe and/or still receive German war reparations, these sources are gradually drying up or are no longer sufficient. Moreover, support from the North American community has dropped off on account of the global recession. These economic hardships, along with the realization that a considerable percentage of male adults simply lack the temperament or motivation for full-time study, have stoked intra-communal tensions and are even prompting far-reaching changes.

Until recently, fundamentalist norms were mainly examined through the lens of the "isolated enclave model." However, this approach is now under fire, as many scholars have gradually caught wind of the major shifts in the ultra-Orthodox worldview (Ben-Yehuda, 2010; Bilu, 2000; Caplan, 2007; El-Or, 1994; Goodman, 2013; Hakak, 2012; Shenkar, 2009). In recent decades, the Haredi sector has indeed undergone radical changes in a wide array of lifestyle and cultural issues. Many of the traits that exemplified Israeli yeshiva fundamentalism at its inception, such as uncompromising dedication to Torah study, the exclusion of women from public life, sizeable families, male asceticism, and community-wide segregation, have all been called into question by community members. In consequence, ultra-Orthodox leaders, who hitherto saw themselves as the "guardians of the walls" (*shomrai ha-homot*) of authentic Judaism, have been compelled to reassess their basic outlooks.⁶

As Haredis ratchet up their involvement in mainstream society, the group's dichotomy between the virtuous and superior "us" and the debauched "them" is becoming all the more untenable, for members are coming to the realization that mainstream Israelis elude facile compartmentalization. With this in mind, the ultra-Orthodox leadership is searching for dialectical and case-specific ways to redefine the enclave's relationships with the surrounding culture. In light of the above, scholars are increasingly referring to the sector as a panoply of communities and individuals. Moreover, they are searching for new concepts with which to describe this phenomenon. Among the suggestions have been "gentle ultra-Orthodoxy" (Leon, 2009), "Haredi ambivalence" (Finkelman, 2014), and "modern Haredis" (Zicherman and Cahaner, 2012). These changes are indeed transpiring within a dynamic social context, so that a variety of analytical paradigms – political, economic, cultural, and more – have been bandied about in the hopes of illuminating these developments. As explained in the next section, this is one of the reasons that the present article

6. For instance, a couple of Haredi women have decided to run for Israeli Parliament.

will concentrate on what Israeli Haredis themselves term, the “Ashkenazic segment” of their community.

Haredis have also been affected by Israel’s lack of stability. The wars, terrorism, and political instability that have plagued the country since the early 1990s have prompted different social groups, like immigrants, religious-Zionists, ethnic minorities, and the Haredi populace as well, to recalibrate their relationship with the state and civil society. By slowly adopting certain elements of Israel’s mainstream identity, the ultra-Orthodox community has assuaged the tensions with the state and civil society. A small handful of researchers claim that the welfare state’s aforementioned contraction is, and will continue to be, the primary impetus for change in the yeshiva world (e.g., Lupo, 2003: 12).⁷ Although the Haredi ideal of “poverty by choice” still carries weight within the sector, even its most fervent advocates wish to improve their standard of living. To this end, numerous internal discussions have been held on “secular education,” namely vocational training, for Haredi men. A few sub-groups, particularly those on the margins (e.g., Sephardim and *ba’alei tshuva*⁸), have begun to enroll in universities and build professional careers. Furthermore, some ultra-Orthodox women have taken jobs at secular high-tech companies (Layosh, 2014; Zicherman & Cahaner, 2012). Spurred on by economic pressures, these debates are provoking a great deal of controversy, as Haredi elders nervously vacillate over how to tackle this problem.

The realization that corrections are long overdue has indeed transformed many aspects of ultra-Orthodox life. For instance, Haredis have modified their views on politics, religion, the economy, medicine, government aid, technology, the state, citizenship, culture, family, and gender. Our findings indicate that young kollel members,⁹ inter alios, are rejecting the accepted male ideal of the “Torah Scholar” in favor of an activist, body-based model of masculine piety. Proponents of this outlook are encouraging husbands to transcend the borders between male and female, communal and national, and holy and temporal expanses. By virtue of his Torah knowledge and wisdom, so the thinking goes, the kollel member has the necessary tools to serve as the family glue, ensure that the children are raised properly, and share in the household duties with his spouse. In parallel, Haredi women are also casting doubt on a few of the sector’s principal memes, foremost among them the idea of battling against the evil inclination for the sake of abiding by corporeal taboos. After generations of connecting to God exclusively through their husbands and children, we have found that younger ultra-Orthodox women are embracing a paradigm of modesty that offers a direct path to “the All Mighty.” As more Haredi wives leave the safety of their homes for better employment opportunities, they are reinterpreting the confrontation with the *yaißer ha’rah* as a life-long mission

7. These developments cast doubt on the affinity between Israeli and North American ultra-Orthodoxy. For a detailed account of the latter: see (Sarna, 2005).

8. Ba’alei tshuva are secular Jews who have “returned” to the fold of Orthodox Judaism.

9. A kollel is a yeshiva program for married students.

that revolves around adherence to modesty rules. By adopting this outlook, these women are upgrading their spiritual contribution from an auxiliary role to an unmediated and intimate relationship with the divine.

The quietist, exceedingly study-based approach for men and the home-oriented model for women are giving way to innovative frameworks. In the process, both sexes are being called upon to rethink their current roles and attitudes to, above all, the body and related taboos. Men are ratcheting up their domestic involvement at the expense of time spent in the yeshiva. For their part, women are putting a greater emphasis on modesty than childbearing, while venturing beyond their front doors ever more frequently. A manifestation of these far-reaching developments is the challenges to the long-standing perception of the *yaišer ha'rah*. In our estimation, these changes have come in response to several trends. First and foremost, Israel's Ashkenazic Haredi population has swelled over the past fifty years thanks to high birthrates and a steady influx of new members (i.e., *ba'alei tshuva*). At one and the same time, the global recession and cuts to government welfare spending have whittled away at the financial support that the community receives, thereby forcing ever more ultra-Orthodox men and women to join the workforce. More recently, acrimonious mainstream debates on Haredi military service, participation in the labor market, and poverty are affecting the community's own discourse on boundaries and identity.

Under the circumstances, the traditional Lithuanian ideals of the “Torah scholar” and “virtuous mother” are being subjected to intense scrutiny within the enclave. Haredis understand that given their dependence on the modern nation-state and the global capitalist system, there is a growing need for models of religiosity that are “this-worldly” and can thus be implemented outside of the home and the sector's established institutions. In advancing such reforms, though, Israeli Haredis have found it necessary to reinforce taboos that pertain to carnality and attendant transgressions.

Methodology

As discussed above, the Israeli ultra-Orthodox sector is comprised of various courts and subgroups. We decided to focus on the Lithuanian (Ashkenazic) community because of its spirited devotion to male-based yeshiva culture. Similarly, the “Litvaks” are the most dedicated Haredi group to the model whereby the “yeshiva scholar” is supported by the “virtuous mother.”

Like other fundamentalist groups, a defining element of the Lithuanian community is extreme gender separation (Bartkowski, 2004; Bendroth, 1993; Davidman, 1991, 2011; El-Or, 1993; Gallagher, 2003; Griffith, 2000; Jenkins, 2005; Messner, 1997). This ideology is promoted by a wide range of images that leading ultra-Orthodox rabbis and educators feature in the sector's public discourse. For instance, pedagogues stress the communal and familial roles of Haredi men and women, including each spouse's emotional relationships with their children. These gender differences are reflected in the group's prevalent

notions of the body, pollution, and devotion to God. Mirroring this same division, researchers are inclined to study the religious experiences of Haredi men and women on a separate basis (Aran, 2003; El-Or, 1994; Goodman, 2013; Hakak, 2003; Sered, 1992). That said, comparing male and female views is bound to enhance our understanding of nuanced ideals and practices in all that concerns gender, taboos, piety, and the evil inclination. With this in mind, we designed a multifaceted methodology that employed the following tools: in-depth interviews, textual analysis, and participant observations.

Interviews were conducted with Israeli ultra-Orthodox men and women: 67 in-depth interviews with male seminarians at various Lithuanian institutions; and twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with pupils and teachers at Ma'ayanot – a Bais Ya'akov (House of Jacob) school for girls.¹⁰ The objective behind these conversations was to discern our subjects' attitude toward, interpretations of, and experiences with piety, the body, corporeal taboos, and gender differences. To this end, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. Finding female informants who were willing to participate in a study on such intimate topics was far from simple. The second author contacted a student at the school who told some of her classmates about the project. As word spread, other girls and teachers "signed up." The fact that the two authors are both women constituted a formidable obstacle to the enlistment of male informants. In the yeshiva world, the presence of women is considered a distraction from male Torah study. Accordingly, the very foundation of anthropological fieldwork – the intimate encounter between researcher and subject – is anathema to the community's sacred order and basic conception of masculinity and femininity. The first author turned to a variety of strategies with the objective of penetrating the yeshiva fellowship. After recruiting a key informant, she studied ancient texts with him and other male seminarians using the institution's venerable techniques. These methods helped her win the subjects' trust and gain access to a world still off-limits to women.¹¹

After obtaining some standard background information, we asked all the interviewees, male or female, to describe their views on and experiences with gender, piety, the body, and related taboos. Though many of our questions were prepared in advance, a handful of extemporaneous follow-up questions were posed for the sake of clarification. This structure generated an informal, protean, and free-flowing environment that enabled the respondents to candidly speak their minds.

10. The Ma'ayanot seminary is affiliated with Bais Yaakov (House of Jacob), a Haredi all-girls school network that is part of Israel's Chinukh ašma'i (Independent Education) system. Founded by Sarah Schneirer in 1917, the network began as a small academy in Krakow with all of thirty pupils. However, the pioneering school grew at a brisk pace, gradually expanding into the Bais Yaakov Network – the largest ultra-Orthodox high-school chain for girls. As Weissman demonstrates, Schneirer sparked a revolution in Jewish female education (Weissman, 1995).

11. For a detailed description of this method see: Stadler (2007).

Participant observations:¹² Over the course of 50 field observations at Ma'ayanot, we ascertained the values that the institution sought to instill in its charges and the negotiation processes between the instructors and their students. Furthermore, we attended “Modesty Nights” that the pupils organized on their own. Conducted after school hours, the stated goal of these events was to help the teenagers *le-hithazek* (“strengthen ourselves”). Given the fact that they were initiated and run by the girls themselves, these evenings spoke to the ideology that they are striving to promote, rather than merely the values that Bais Ya'akov pass on to them.

Analysis of canonical and popular texts: In the 1980s, Israel's ultra-Orthodox community embarked on a publishing enterprise that has since put out many and manifold books, manuals, and journals. These works, which are by and large distributed via bookshops in Haredi commercial districts, offer insights on how the sector contends with a variety of quotidian issues, not least gender, family, customs, and festivals. We poured over approximately 150 publications that target ultra-Orthodox males, including full-length self-help books about seminary life, kuntras (small booklets for yeshiva students), and manuals offering advice on everyday problems.¹³ Of course, our emphasis was on a smaller number of publications that focus on the *yaißer ha'rah* and Haredi models of piety for men. With respect to literature intended for female audiences, we combed through books, manuals and guidebooks for emergent themes that pertain to the body, female carnality, the evil inclination, and transgressions. This material fell under one of two categories: published books that are available in the aforementioned outlets; and books and pamphlets that are circulated exclusively at Bais Ya'akov seminaries. Needless to say, the latter texts contain in-house rules and perspectives that are unique to this institution. Most of these works were penned by teachers who felt the need to add to the community's existing literature on modesty. As such, these texts are germane to the changes in the realm of female piety throughout the Haredi sector. The Bais Ya'akov material appears to contain the first seeds of this transformation, even if neither the instructors nor the pupils grasp these works as novel. On the contrary, they deem these texts, as well as their own selves, to be links in the age-old chain of Orthodox Judaism.

Searching for emergent themes and categories, all our findings were coded using the grounded theory of category content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the data on experiences involving the *yaißer ha'rah* were analyzed and compared, it became evident that there were significant differences between Haredi men and women.

12. Due to the gender separation enforced at Haredi Yeshivas, we were only able to employ this method at Ma'ayanot.

13. The reams of Haredi-authored outreach material (pamphlets, cassettes, etc.) that are targeted at secular Israelis, other observant camps (e.g., religious Zionists), and non-Jews (Caplan, 2007) are beyond the scope of this article.

Reimagining the Evil Inclination

Most fundamentalist communities are situated in the heart of diverse urban expanses. This location presents quite a few challenges to the groups' insular lifestyle and rigid theology. For example, devotees are forced to cross religious and gender borders on a regular basis, thereby exposing themselves to what they perceive as the "evils of big city life." To shield the enclave from these hazards, fundamentalist leaders inevitably reinforce taboos that limit contact – be it visual, aural, and tactile – between the sexes. More specifically, these groups interpret and enforce strictures that govern modesty, corporeal taboos, and gender separation in a rigid manner.

Given this idea of an endless struggle with the modern city's vices, yeshiva scholars are commonly depicted in the popular male-targeted Haredi books under review and by most of our interviewees as "fending off" the *yaişer ha'rah*. In this discourse, men are portrayed as spiritual beings whose erudite pursuits constitute the only road to heaven. On the other hand, the women figures in these same narratives are cast in the secondary role of "virtuous mother," namely domestic assistants who enable their husbands to fully dedicate themselves to a sin-free life of Torah study. Furthermore, these household duties are considered the sole means by which a Haredi wife can contribute to her family's holiness and to the perpetuation of authentic Judaism.

In discussions on the accepted model of the Torah scholar and his struggle against the evil inclination, our male interviewees used various metaphors to convey their "love," "lust," "yearning," and "affection" for Talmudic study. Moreover, they all spoke about the exalted pleasure and sense of rejuvenation that they derive from this enterprise. Conversely, an emphasis was also placed on the corporeal hardships that the battle against the *yaişer* entails. For instance, a young Lithuanian seminarian named Yosef told us that "Our main mission is to learn how to fight and withdraw from the *yaişer ha'rah*, how to fight against this physical need, to learn how to control our thoughts, our body, our sight, and behavior with our own mind. It is a question of how to use all this in a positive direction, the direction of the Torah – how to transcend in your studies."

Aside for the enchantment of yeshiva piety and learning Torah, the prevailing ultra-Orthodox narrative accentuates the bodily struggle against earthly temptations, female seduction, and the "ills" of modernity. Not surprisingly, virtues like physical restraint, self-mastery, and the repression of ceaseless internal and external distractions (i.e., the evil inclination) are major themes in the community's popular male discourse. All these skills help the seminarians contend with what is viewed as the most dangerous pitfall of them all: *bitul torah*, or wasting time better spent learning. Chaim, a *kollel* member from Jerusalem, explained that "the *yaişer ha'rah* is the force that stands behind everything we do, throughout our lifetime... Our desires, wishes – they all come from this force. The *yaişer ha'rah* is inside everyone. We all fail because of it; there is nothing more difficult than fighting it."

Despite the evil inclination's preponderance in the traditional Israeli ultra-Orthodox male discourse, it rarely surfaces in the frameworks for women.¹⁴ However, the term is widespread in an emergent paradigm for female piety. As we shall see, this model runs counter to the leading male conception of the wife's role.

Most female ultra-Orthodox pupils in Israel attend schools that are run by Bais Ya'akov (House of Jacob) – a network of all-girl seminaries that, as noted above, was founded in Poland during the early 1900s. The *raison d'être* of this institution is to train its charges to be “good wives.” More specifically, it strives to produce child-rearers that are capable of simultaneously holding down decent jobs, so that their future husbands can learn Torah on a full-time basis (Caplan, 2003: 78; El-Or, 1993: 586; Friedman, 1988: 22). Within the community, Bais Ya'akov's vision is seen as an age-old ideal of the consummate Jewish mother, even though it is a modern invention (Friedman, 1988). Despite the sector's above-mentioned financial woes, yeshiva asceticism and, paradoxically, its members' obligation to “multiply and be fruitful” still reign supreme in the Haredi mindset. The ordeals of parturition and the community's burdensome purity rules notwithstanding,¹⁵ the evil inclination barely registered in the hegemonic ultra-Orthodox discourse on the “virtuous mother.” Therefore, the term's integration into the current Haredi discussion on the woman's role betrays a shift from a paradigm in which the wife is merely a crutch for her husband's spiritual quest to a more autonomous model of female piety.

As we shall see, both the “yeshiva scholar” and “virtuous mother” ideals are currently under fire. The passive male who spends most of his waking hours in the seminary is ceding ground to activist models, such as the “home teacher” (see the ensuing section). Likewise, the “virtuous mother” is giving way to a new paradigm of modesty that is fomenting substantial changes in the way Haredis grasp female corporeality and piety (Taragin Zeller, 2014, 2015; Zalcberg-Block, 2011). In addition, these developments are seeding major transformations in the community's male and female perceptions of the *yaišer ha'rah*. The men are now grappling with the evil inclination outside the yeshiva's walls, even if the new strategies to repulse these urges are predicated on knowledge obtained within the seminary. With respect to Haredi women, the transformation appears to be more innovative.

Heretofore excluded from the female discourse, the *yaišer ha'rah* is now seen as a powerful force that conspires to prevent women from realizing their spiritual goal of modesty. Although the evil inclination is said to cause havoc in all spheres of life, our Bais Ya'akov informants describe it as a powerful goad for unchaste behavior. What is more, they equate their modesty-centric

14. The topic of the *yaišer ha'rah* comes up sporadically in the literature on Haredi women's participation in the workforce (El-Or, 1994, 2006; Neriya-Ben Shachar, 2011; Sered, 1992). However, the topic has yet to garner the attention it deserves.

15. For example, a menstruating woman is forbidden to so much as touch her spouse (Hartman and Marmon, 2004; Sered, 2000).

bout with the *yaişer* with that of men over Torah study. In other words, males and females possess distinct spiritual worlds, predilections, and life missions, so that they each contend with a different evil inclination. As one of the Bais Ya'akov teachers put it:

A point constituting a central axle of spiritual work attracts... all the forces of the *yaişer*. The central axle that a Jewish man is built on is the study of Torah, and there is no greater or more challenging inclination than... *bitul torah*. And the central axle that the Jewish woman is built on is the virtue of modesty, and there is no virtue that is more challenging for her than modesty.

If so, all Haredis must overcome some form of *yaişer ha'rah*, but the struggle centers around different urges for each of the sexes.

The appreciable changes to the male paradigm aside, *bitul torah* continues to be the main front in the “war” against the evil inclination. In forging a model of autonomous female piety, ultra-Orthodox women have introduced the concept of the *yaişer ha'rah* into the discourse over their communal role and spiritual aspirations. In so doing, the Bais Ya'akov teachers and pupils are evidently aspiring to place their quest for modesty on a par with the prestigious male mission of learning Torah.

Spending Time with the Woman You Love

As exhibited in numerous self-help books for Haredi men, the yeshiva underwent a major conceptual alteration beginning in the late 1980s. This institution is no longer exclusively seen as a male haven for coping with the *yaişer ha'rah*, but a place where the scholar learns how to contend with a variety of prohibitions, daily urges, and contingencies. For example, a row of published books and pamphlets exhort *kollel* members to spend more time at home for the sake of filling the aforementioned role of “domestic teacher.” In this capacity, men will be able to “import the yeshiva atmosphere” to the household – a realm that was once under the exclusive jurisdiction of their wives. Furthermore, *kollel* members are enjoined to develop close relations with their spouses, take an interest in their daily routine, and provide emotional support for the entire family. A couple of the manuals advise readers to forgo the solitude of the yeshiva and spread Talmudic wisdom to their homes, neighborhoods, and beyond. Similar thoughts were raised in our interviews. According to our informants, the seminary remains the lone place for restraining the body and complying with appurtenant taboos. That said, by availing themselves of the textual and interpretive skills acquired therein, the men can impart Toranic norms and ethics to their kin. In the process, *kollel* members will improve their domestic standing. As per this new mindset, the perception of women has also been appreciably modified. Whereas women were previously viewed as hostile forces that, not unlike the snake in Paradise, are in league with the *yaişer ha'rah*, they are now perceived as juvenile creatures that require manly supervision.

In his well-received book, *Spend Your Life with the Woman You Love*, Hayim Meir Halevi Vazner discusses the ultra-Orthodox man's relationship with his spouse and expanded role within the family unit.¹⁶ The chapter on marital relations and the evil inclination opens with the following advice:

Every man in Israel must know that most problems and turmoil in the house are caused directly or indirectly by men; or we know that at least men could have prevented them [...] Because the husband has persevered and is immersed in his studies, and because he dwells in the world of the Torah [...] and is well-versed in] religious matters, he is prepared and trained to pour this goodness into the house [...] Since Torah brings joy and grace [...], all the treasures that the student learns in the study hall must be brought home [...] The husband] must be happy and kind, and project his psychological fulfillment onto his wife and children [...], for the [elements of the] triple bond – men, women, and Torah – are connected and empower each other; and when there is joy in this bond, and there is the wish to build a home that is grounded on Torah, all this kindness grows and blossoms and is predicated on the sense of awe (1986: 9).

While the link between piety, Torah knowledge, and communal norms is entrenched in the Haredi literature, Vazner shifts the spotlight away from the yeshiva. He argues that learning Torah should not be confined to the seminary, but extended to the domestic sphere as part of the *kollel* members' paternal responsibility to impart the ultra-Orthodox worldview to his family. By heeding this advice, the Haredi man will bolster his standing at home. Many of our interviewees expounded on this paradigm shift, including a Lithuanian *kollel* member by the name of Yehezkel: "We are now told that in order to deal with our *yaišer ha'rah*, it is necessary that we teach our wives and kids the ways of the Torah. We have to sit with her [*i.e.*, the wife] and teach her the wisdom and help her do the right thing." By working in tandem, Yehezkel posits, the couple can avoid setbacks in its battle against "the *yaišer*."

The long-standing ultra-Orthodox model of piety deems the yeshiva, by dint of the safe haven it provides from the corrupting outside world, to be the only institution capable of defending and sustaining the enclave. Under the current dispensation, though, the seminary is also entrusted with teaching students how to handle domestic and emotional problems. Equipped with Torah knowledge and wisdom, the *kollel* member has the requisite skills to preside over a "God-fearing" household. Among his domestic responsibilities is to provide his wife emotional succor by listening to her needs and openly supporting her.

Haredi thinkers are even drawing analogies between the struggle against the *yaišer ha'rah* in the traditional Jewish ethical literature¹⁷ and the feats of

16. The title of this book derives from Ecclesiastes 9: 9: "Live joyfully with the wife you love, through all the fleeting days of the life that God has given you under the sun."

17. *E.g.*, *Hovot ha'levavot* (The Duties of the Heart, n.d.), an eleventh century work by Bahya ibn Paquda; and Moshe Chaim Luzzatto's *Path of the Just* (1740).

the Israeli soldier-hero. For instance, Shimon Vaanunu shares a thought that he had while boarding a bus in Jerusalem amid a spate of terrorist attacks in the mid-1990s:

There I saw a yeshiva boy sitting and studying a page of Gemara *lishma* [for no ulterior motives]; and I realized that merely through this [act], his study, he has hindered and prevented a suicide bomber from exploding and massacring people, even far away from him, and we realize that through his studies he has saved many souls in Israel and that only those who rise to heaven can understand this act and comprehend how the Torah provides life to its possessor (Vaanunu, 1998: 1).

The writer believes that a public display of learning singlehandedly thwarted a terrorist plot. Put differently, he equates Torah study with military service.

According to the younger generation of Haredi rabbis and students, the yeshiva is not a refuge for avoiding temptation. On the contrary, it is an institution for learning how to *actively* cope with the evil inclination wherever one may be for the purpose of contributing to the wellbeing of the family, denomination, and society at large. In response to our questions about the *yaišer ha'rah* and ethics, a yeshiva student from Jerusalem underscored the husband's present role in the changing ultra-Orthodox family:

Today, in order to be a Jewish father, you have to become an educator. This is your mission as a father. This is how you enable your children to grow and develop morally. In the past, men dedicated themselves to the yeshiva, but today we all understand that in order to educate good men for a typical Haredi life, [in order to cultivate] a person who will maintain the ambience of the yeshiva and the Talmud at home, we must let the fathers do the work, to educate according to the yeshiva [way] and pass it on to his family.

In sum, Haredi publications and our interviews with seminarians demonstrate that male piety is being reinterpreted as an undertaking that also encompasses the domestic sphere. Put differently, the sector's taboos against leaving the yeshiva or spending too much time with the wife and children are steadily fraying. Moreover, the "domestic teacher" is being couched in heroic terms. Under the social conditions in modern-day Israel where the body, according to the Haredi worldview, is being exposed to myriad secular temptations of the flesh, mind, and spirit, it is all the more difficult to walk in the path of the Torah. As a result, it is incumbent upon the ultra-Orthodox community to adapt its ideology to overcome these "unprecedented" challenges.

Creating an Inner Sanctuary: The Female Model

While *kollel* members are being encouraged to apply their Torah wisdom at home, their spouses are finding innovative ways to maintain a high level of piety outside the boundaries of the household and enclave. A rash of changes sweeping through Israeli society has opened up new opportunities for young Haredis to participate in various frameworks beyond their community's purview.

The phenomenon of ultra-Orthodox women securing jobs outside of the house is already old news, but they have now begun to work beyond the enclave's walls, engrossing themselves in academic studies and the business world (Layosh, 2014). In light of the above, Haredi schoolgirls need skills and techniques that will allow them to continue pursuing their spiritual quest on secular ground. "In a generation like ours," one of the Bais Ya'akov teachers said, "women need to work outside of their homes because they have accepted the yoke of employment. Hence, she needs to learn how to create an inner home – one that she can take with her whenever she leaves her house."

According to many of our Bais Ya'akov subjects, modesty rules help ultra-Orthodox women that venture beyond the safety of their abodes forge an "inner sanctuary" with which to repel the evil inclination and readily commune with God. Instead of safeguarding themselves by means of physical isolation, these girls are embracing the public sphere; when necessary, though, they seek refuge in their mobile sanctuaries. Unlike Haredi men who consider the secular world a defiled realm in which the *yaišer ha'rah* constitutes a grave threat, the women do not believe that they are susceptible to the temptations of this expanse; they merely view it as a sphere that is rife with "those who deny the inner world." As posited in *Instilling Modesty in the Students*, one of Bais Ya'akov's in-house pamphlets, the power is in the ultra-Orthodox woman's own hands:

A girl who invests in her inner world [...], [who] constantly checks what the Holy One blessed be He wants of her [...] builds a rich inner world **right now**, which will accompany her in her own house, which will go with her after a hundred and twenty years¹⁸ to her final abode, to the world that she built throughout her lifetime (Rosenthal, n.d.).

Besides tightening the rules of modesty and carnality, Haredi women believe that these practices create a sort of haven for communicating with "the holy One blessed be He" whenever the need arises. The life-long struggle with the *yaišer ha'rah* apparently facilitates an ongoing relation with God. Put differently, the quest for modesty is a constant reminder of the *shekbinah* (divine presence) and the woman's own religiosity. According to one of the Bais Ya'akov instructors, "The LORD knows the depths of my soul – the fact that He knows this is what gives me the strength not to externalize myself for others. I am with God. He knows, and that is all I need." Since God is always by her side, the teacher has no need for others to validate her existence, approve her lifestyle, or assign her a role. As per this narrative, the ultra-Orthodox woman's calling in life derives from within – from her inner pursuit of modesty. This spiritual enterprise helps the individual connect to God and distinguish herself from the "externalized" surroundings.¹⁹

18. Among Jews, it is customary to wish a colleague a long life with the words *Ad me'ah ve-esrim* ("May you live until a hundred and twenty").

19. Fader (2009) discusses a similar trend in the American ultra-Orthodox context.

In summation, these young men and women are calling into question and reinterpreting the established ideals of the “Torah scholar” and “virtuous mother.” Correspondingly, the gendered missions against the *yaişer ha'rah* are in flux. For the ultra-Orthodox man, the current model of piety involves venturing beyond the safety of the yeshiva and entering new frontiers. The main sphere of duty is the home, but he can even reach secular frameworks that were once off-limits to the entire community. As opposed to the passive model of yesteryear, the *kollel* member has been thrust into a more active role. The antidote to the evil inclination is no longer yeshiva-based asceticism, for the “battle” is now being waged in the house, the workplace, and other profane realms. Nowadays, then, the seminary is understood as a place for learning how to influence and regulate the male body in new spheres of activity. With respect to Haredi women, the ideal of the “virtuous mother” is being challenged by a novel modesty paradigm. The notion of the *yaişer ha'rah* is no longer alien to the female discourse. While keeping the inclination at bay by means of corporeal practices, women are reinterpreting the meaning of modesty and transforming it into a spiritual outlet for regularly bonding with God. This relationship is conducted in a mobile, personal sanctuary that is readily accessible beyond the enclave’s borders. As more ultra-Orthodox women take jobs outside their neighborhoods, their complex modesty mission and endless struggle with the *yaişer* serve as constant reminders of the divine presence. In light of the above, the current model is expanding the Haredi wife’s opportunities for enhancing her community’s spirituality.

One of the defining elements of both the male and female transformations is the growing role of prohibitions and transgressions. That said, the strategies for fulfilling the missions that are assigned to each of the sexes vastly differ. According to the emergent male paradigm, the husband’s authority is supreme. By virtue of his Torah knowledge, he is expected to leave an imprint on his family and even parts of the secular world. Conversely, the woman plays an auxiliary role in this narrative and can only influence herself. Pursuant to the new female ideal, however, the wife has an unmediated, direct route to piety. The ultra-Orthodox man’s erudition indeed constitutes a source of power, but the woman’s special relationship with the LORD gives rise to a unique and autonomous female virtue. Although this role might seem negligible, it sharply diverges from the established model in which the wife’s contribution runs entirely through her spouse and children. That said, even under the current paradigm, she can only directly affect her own life, so that the gendered “division of labor” remains in force.

Conclusion

Ultra-Orthodox religiosity in Israel is emblematic of the present-day challenges to fundamentalist norms. This article has focused on Haredi-Lithuanian attitudes to female and male piety, carnality, and related taboos through the prism of the *yaişer ha'rah*. In the process, we have analyzed the shifting relations

between conceptions of the body and piety models in this particular community's lifestyle. According to both the group's established and up-and-coming outlooks, men and women struggle against the evil inclination on a daily basis and thus determine their body-based practices in response to this encounter. As the research on ultra-Orthodoxy in Israel demonstrates, the sector's main strategies against temptations of the flesh have heretofore been to reinforce the following elements: its members' asceticism, the enclave's borders, gender separation, and bodily prohibitions. For Haredi men, the lynchpin of this approach is the admonition to spend most of their waking hours studying in the yeshiva, while keeping their dealings with the temporal and corporeal realms to a bare minimum. For women, it has entailed sequestering themselves at home for the sake of avoiding "polluted" modern spheres. Additionally, they have fully dedicated themselves to rearing large families under extremely modest conditions and instilling Haredi values in their children. Pursuant to long-standing Haredi beliefs, the modern city is teeming with defiled public spaces and other formidable obstacles that tempt devotees to violate the sacred. For this reason, the urban environment poses a mortal threat to the group's piety and very existence. The older generation believes that the only way to defend the "holy community" against these perils is via isolation and a gendered division of labor. However, as our findings illustrate, these prohibitions are being challenged by young devotees, both men and women alike. More specifically, the sector is currently in the midst of a transition from ascetic-cum-reclusive fundamentalism to a piety grounded in interaction with society at-large and changing marital relations. Unlike Davidman's subjects (2014), our informants are casting doubt upon the entrenched models of piety. However, they have no intention of straying from the enclave or adopting a secular lifestyle. For instance, men are advised to use their Talmudic knowledge in domestic and public realms. First and foremost, they have been urged to embrace the role of "home teacher." Insofar as Haredi women are concerned, they are validating their existence, assuming a direct role in the familial and community-wide quest for spiritual transcendence, and impugning the notion that "virtuous motherhood" is their sole path to *olam ha'bah* ("the world to come") by tightening the rules of modesty.

Why have these developments transpired over the past few decades in Israel? And what are the ramifications thereof on the general scholarly discourse regarding changes to religious groups? In our estimation, there are three likely catalysts behind these phenomena. First, the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel has skyrocketed over the past fifty years. More recently, the global economic recession and cuts to the welfare state have drained the community's financial resources, thereby compelling more Haredis to join the ranks of the employed. As a result, the old pious models of the Torah scholar and the virtuous mother are no longer sustainable. Second, the sector is no longer a "community in-the-making." In fact, Haredis are now a force to be reckoned with in Israeli politics and the urban sphere. Ultra-Orthodoxy's rapid growth and the institutionalization of every facet of its communal life have stirred up

demand for behavioral paradigms that are firmly planted in the temporal world as well as Jewish religious norms that are more amenable to the greater Jewish public. Against this backdrop, there is a growing need for models of piety that both men and women can emulate outside the enclave's borders. To this end, it behooves the community to redefine the rules that govern its members' bodies, to reinterpret carnality, and modify current gender relations. Lastly, throughout this period, Israel has been under constant threat from external adversaries. For this reason, among the top criteria for inclusion in mainstream society is active participation in various civil and national frameworks, especially those that pertain to state security. Correspondingly, Haredis are thirsting for greater acceptance from the rest of the Jewish populace. Although the sector largely eschews military service, members have found other channels for giving back to the country. Moreover, they have partially adopted the Zionist ethos and the country's models of citizenship and voluntarism. These, then, are the developments that have elicited significant changes to the above-mentioned ultra-Orthodox paradigms of religiosity.

The all but unanimous support within the community for military operations in the occupied territories and massive Haredi enrollment in various defense and first-aid organizations, such as the police, the army (albeit it haltingly and sparingly), the civil National Guard, the Israeli Red Cross, and most notably *Zaka* (an ultra-Orthodox rescue and recovery organization) all attest to this systemic reboot. What is more, these phenomena betray a gradual shift in how fundamentalist groups view the body and carnal taboos (Davidman, 2011). As these sorts of movements grow and institutionalize, our findings reveal that they adapt their strategies. Interestingly enough, our case study indicates that the ensuing reactions differ for men and women. While Haredi wives assume roles outside the household, their spouses are being drawn home. This turn of events naturally leads us to the question of whether such developments can be interpreted as a challenge to the gendered division of fundamentalist societies the world over.

Similar to other fundamentalist groups (Abu-Lughod, 1986, 1998; Avishai, 2008; El-Or, 2010; Fishman, 2009; Griffith, 2000), ultra-Orthodox men and women are expressing discontent with their one-dimensional roles, and some are even clamoring for reform (Fishman, 2008; Leon and Lavie, 2013). To some extent, this phenomenon may be viewed as subversive, for it is blazing a distinct and autonomous path for Haredi female piety and raising doubts as to the ascendancy of Talmudic study. In many respects, this shift is empowering ultra-Orthodox femininity, as the sector's women are no longer relegated exclusively to the functions of mother and wife. Alternatively, the men are improving their domestic standing by spending more time with the family. On the other hand, these same trends are also buttressing many conservative principles: gendered religious roles; ascetic piety; and suppression of the female body and sexuality via onerous corporeal strictures, to name but a few. Despite the radical dimensions of these emergent models, in the final analysis they are simultaneously bolstering traditional precepts.

In any event, the case study on Israel's ultra-Orthodox Lithuanian community – not least the internal criticism of its gendered ideals and practices – places the spotlight on a fundamentalist society in the midst of an ideological realignment. As burgeoning fundamentalist movements gain their bearings and/or its members feel a strong desire to contribute to the greater good (e.g., to lend a hand to Israel's struggle against terrorism), their educators, among others, find innovative ways to allow the flock to interact with mainstream factors beyond the enclave's walls. For instance, creative interpretations are put forth for the norms of both men and women. In light of the above, the following question begs asking: Are these particular findings relevant to the overall picture of institutionalized religious behavior?

The present article concentrated on a single group within Israel's ultra-Orthodox populace, so that we do not purport to cover every nuance of this multifaceted sector. Be that as it may, meticulous ethnographic studies are capable of highlighting phenomenon that are germane to broader contexts. Against this backdrop, are the transformations in our case study unique to Israeli Lithuanian ultra-Orthodoxy, or are they "standard procedure" for any society entering a new phase of institutionalized fundamentalism? The question of the "bourgeoisization" or "mellowing out" of radical groups merits further research. Are fundamentalist groups at this stage in their development open to interactions with society at large? With respect to our case study, the answer is a resounding yes. By reinterpreting the concept of *yaišer ha'rah*, ultra-Orthodox men are expanding their ambit from the yeshiva to the domestic realm, while the group's women are constructing inner sanctuaries that enable them to maintain high standards of modesty even beyond the thick walls of their fundamentalist redoubts.

Nurit STADLER

Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem
nurit.stadler@mail.huji.ac.il

Lea TARAGIN-ZELLER

Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem
lea.taragin@mail.huji.ac.il

References

- ABU-LUGHOD L., 1986, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- , 1998, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- ALMOND G. A., APPLEBY S. R., SIVAN E., 2003, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 281.
- AMMERMAN N. T., 1987, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.

- , 2005, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*, California, University of California Press.
- ANTOUN R. T., 2001, *Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Movements*, Rowman Altamira.
- ARAN G., 1991, “Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)”, Marty M. E., Appleby R. S. (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 265-344.
- , 2003, “The Haredi Body”, Sivan E., Caplan K. (eds.), *Israeli Haredim: Integration without Assimilation?* Tel Aviv, Van Leer Institute and Hakibutz Hameuhad (Hebrew), p. 99-133.
- AVISHAI O., 2008, “Doing Religion” in a Secular World: Women in Conservative Religions and the Question of Agency”, *Gender & Society*, 22, 4, p. 409-433.
- BARTKOWSKI J., 2004, *The Promise Keepers: Servants, Soldiers, and Godly men*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.
- BEEHAN O. W., 2001, “Fighting the Good Fight: Fundamentalism and Religious Revival”, MacClancy J. (ed.), *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 129-144.
- BENDROTH M., 1993, *Fundamentalism & gender, 1875 to the present*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- BEN-YEHUDA N., 2010, *Theocratic Democracy: The Social Construction of Religious and Secular Extremism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- BERMAN E., 2000, “Sect, Subsidy and Sacrifice: An Economist’s View of Ultra-Orthodox Jews”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115, 3, p. 905-953.
- BILU Y., 2000, “Circumcision, the First Haircut and the Torah: Ritual and Male Identity among the Ultraorthodox Community of Contemporary Israel”, Ghousoub M., Sinclair-Webb E. (eds.), *Imagined Masculinities, Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, London, Saqi Books, p. 33-64.
- BOYARIN D., 1995, “Body Politics among the Brides of Christ: Paul and the Origins of Christian Sexual Renunciation”, Wimbush V. L., Valantasis R. (eds.), *Asceticism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 459-478.
- CAHANER L., 2009, *The Development of the Spatial and Hierarchic Structure of The Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Population in Israel*, Ph.D diss., University of Haifa Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Geography & Environmental Studies.
- CAPLAN K., 2003, “The Internal Popular Discourse of Israeli Haredi Women”, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 123, p. 77-101.
- , 2007, *Internal Popular Discourse in Israeli Haredi Society*, Jerusalem, Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History (Hebrew).
- DAHAN M., 1998, *The Haredi Population and the Local Authority*, Jerusalem, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.
- DAVIDMAN L., 1991, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- , 2011, “The Transformation of Bodily Practices among Religious Defectors”, Bobel C., Kwan S. (eds.), *Embodied Resistance: Challenging the Norms, Breaking the Rules*, Vanderbilt University Press, p. 209-219.
- , 2014, *Becoming Unorthodox*, New York, Oxford University Press.

- DEEB L., 2006, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- DOUGLAS M., 1966, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, Routledge & K. Paul.
- EL-OR T., 1993, "The Length of the Slits and the Spread of Luxury: Reconstructing the Subordination of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Women Through the Patriarchy of Men Scholars", *Sex Roles*, 29, p. 585-598.
- , 1994, *Educated and Ignorant: On Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Women and Their World*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner.
- , 2006, *Reserved Seats: Religion, Gender, and Ethnicity in Contemporary Israel*, Tel Aviv, Am Oved (Hebrew).
- , 2010 [2007/8], "The Winter of the Veiled Women", *Theory and Criticism*, 37, p. 1-33 (Hebrew).
- FADER A., 2009, *Mitzvah girls: Bringing up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- FINKELMAN Y., 2014, "The Ambivalent Haredi Jew", *Israel Studies*, 19, 2, p. 264-293.
- FISHMAN S., 2008, "Reading from Right to Left: Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Women's Changing Roles in Jewish Societies", Sharma A., Young K. (eds.), *Fundamentalism and the Position of Women in World Religions*, Trinity International Press, p. 77-112.
- , 2009, "Women's Transformations of Contemporary Jewish Life", Greenspan F. (ed.), *Women and Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship*, New York, New York University Press, p. 182-195.
- FRIEDMAN Menachem, 1987, "Life Tradition and Book Tradition in the Development of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism", Goldberg H. E. (ed.), *Judaism Viewed from Within and from Without*, Albany, State University of New York Press.
- , 1988, "Back to the Grandmother: The New Ultra-Orthodox Woman", *Israel Studies*, 1, p. 21-26.
- GALLAGHER S., 2003, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.
- GOODMAN Y., 2013, *The Exile of the Broken Vessels: Haredim in the Shadow of Madness*, Tel Aviv and Haifa, Haifa University and Yediot (Hebrew).
- GRIFFITH, M., 2000, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, University of California Press.
- HAKAK Y., 2003, *Yeshiva Learning and Military Training: An Encounter between Two Cultural Models*, Jerusalem, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies (Hebrew).
- , 2012, *Young Men in Israeli Haredi Yeshiva Education: The Scholars' Enclave in Unrest*, Brill, Leiden and Boston.
- HARTMAN T., MARMON N., 2004, "Lived Regulations, Systemic Attributions Menstrual Separation and Ritual Immersion in the Experience of Orthodox Jewish Women", *Gender & Society*, 18, 3, p. 389-408.
- HEILMAN Samuel, 1983, *The People of the Book: Drama, Fellowship and Religion*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- , 1992, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, New York, Schocken Books.

- , 1994a, “Quiescent and Active Fundamentalisms: The Jewish Cases”, Marty M. E., Appelby S. R. (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 173-196.
- HEILMAN Samuel, FRIEDMAN Menachem, 1991, “Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim”, Marty M. E., Appelby S. R. (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 197-264.
- ICBS, 2009, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts of Israel*.
- JENKINS K. E., 2005, *Awesome Families: The Promise of Healing Relationships in the International Churches of Christ*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.
- LAYOSH B., 2014, *Women of the Threshold: Orthodox Women in Front of Modern Change*, Tel Aviv, Resling Publishing (Hebrew).
- LEON N., 2009, *Gentle Ultra-Orthodoxy: Religious Renewal in Oriental Jewry in Israel*, Jerusalem, Ben-Tzvi Institute (Hebrew).
- , LAVIE A., 2013, “Hizuk –The Gender Track: Religious Invigoration and Women Motivators in Israel”, *Contemporary Jewry*.
- LUPO J., 2003, *A Shift in Haredi Society: Vocational Training and Academic Studies*, Jerusalem, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies (Hebrew).
- LUZZATTO M. C. (n.d.), *Path of the Just*.
- MAHMOOD S., 2005, *Politics of Piety, the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- MESSNER M. A., 1997, *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*, Rowman Altamira.
- MORGAN D., 1994, “Theater of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities”, Brod H., Kaufman M. (eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities*, London, Sage, p. 165-181.
- NERIYA-BEN SHAHAR R. (2011). Modesty Discourse in Female Haredi Newspapers 1960 – 1989, K. Gideon & M. Shilo (Eds.), *Gender In Israel* (Hebrew), p. 580-622.
- PAQUDA B. ibn (n.d.), *Duties of the Heart*.
- ROSENTHAL L. (n.d.), *Instilling Modesty in the Students*, Bnei Brak.
- SARNA J., 2005, *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- SELENGUT C., 1994, “By Torah Alone: Yeshiva Fundamentalism in Jewish Life”, Marty M. E., Appelby S. R. (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 236-263.
- SERED S., 1992, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- , 2000, *What Makes Women Sick: Maternity, Modesty and Militarism In Israeli Society*, Hanover and London, Brandeis University Press.
- SHILHAV Y, 1991, *A Town in the City: Geography of Separation and Integration*, Jerusalem, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.
- , 1998, *Ultra-Orthodoxy in Urban Governance*, Jerusalem, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies.
- SIVAN E., 1995, “The Enclave Culture”, Marty M. E., Appleby S. R. (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- SOLOVEITCHIK H., 1994a, “Migration, Acculturation, and the New Role of Texts in the Haredi World”, Marty M. E., Appleby S. R. (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

- , 1994b, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy”, *Tradition*, 28,4, p. 64-130.
- STADLER Nurit, 2007, “Ethnography of Exclusion: Initiating a Dialogue with Fundamental Men”, *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues*, 14, 1, p. 185-208.
- , 2009, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism: Piety, Gender, and Resistance in the Ultra-Orthodox World*. New York : New York University Press.
- , 2012, *A Well-Worn Tallis for a New Ceremony*, Brighton, Academic Studies Press.
- STRAUSS A., CORBIN J., 1990, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- TARAGIN-ZELLER Lea, 2015, “Between Modesty and Beauty: Reinterpreting Female Piety in the Israeli Haredi Community”, Fishman S. B. (ed.), *Love, Marriage, and Jewish Families Today: Paradoxes of the Gender Revolution*, Waltham, Massachusetts, Brandeis University Press, p. 308-326.
- , 2014, “Modesty for Heaven’s Sake: Authority and Creativity among Female Ultra-Orthodox Teenagers in Israel”, *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues*, 26, Spring 5774, p. 75-96.
- TISHBY I., 1989, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, vol. 2.
- VAANUNU S., 1998, *The Joy of the Torah*, Jerusalem, Shimon Chen-Mordechai Chen.
- VASSERMAN N., 2011, *The “Abstinent Society”. The Process of Setting up a Home in Gur Hassidism - A Chapter in the Life of a Hassidic Court in Israel*, Bar-Ilan University.
- WEISSMAN D., 1995, “Bais Yaakov as an Innovation in Jewish Women’s Education: A Contribution to the Study of Education and Social Change”, *Studies in Jewish Education*, 7, p. 278-299.
- ZALCBURG-BLOCK S., 2011, “Shouldering the Burden of Redemption: How the Fashion of Wearing Capes Developed in Ultra-Orthodox Society”, *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues*, 22, p. 32-55.
- ZICHERMAN H., CAHANER L., 2012, *Modern Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Emergence of a Haredi Middle Class in Israel*, The Israel Democracy Institute (Hebrew).

Like a Snake in Paradise: Fundamentalism, Gender and Taboos in the Haredi Community

The meeting with an ultra-Orthodox group in Israel reveals their internal work to protect themselves from the harmful influences of the surrounding society. The new generations call into question the immutable figures of the man devoted to study and of the mother devoted to the family. Male asceticism and feminine virtue change in interaction with the world.

Key Words: *fundamentalism, taboos, ultra-orthodoxy, Haredi community, evil inclination, gender roles, Israel, Judaism.*

Comme un serpent au paradis : le combat contre le mal dans la communauté Haredi

La rencontre avec un groupe ultra-orthodoxe en Israël révèle le travail interne de ses membres pour se préserver des influences néfastes de la société environnante. Les nouvelles générations remettent ainsi en question les figures immuables de l'homme adonné à l'étude et de la mère dévouée à la famille. L'ascèse masculine et la vertu féminine s'infléchissent au contact du monde.

Mots-clés : fondamentalisme, tabous, ultra-orthodoxie, Haredi, penchant pour le mal, genre, Israël, judaïsme.

Como una serpiente en el paraíso: el combate contra el mal en la comunidad Haredi

El encuentro con un grupo ultraortodoxo en Israel revela su trabajo interno para preservarse de las influencias nefastas de la sociedad circundante. Las nuevas generaciones cuestionan así las figuras inmutables del hombre dedicado al estudio y de la madre devota de la familia. La ascesis masculina y la virtud femenina se desalinean en el contacto con el mundo.

Palabras clave: fundamentalismo, tabús, ultraortodoxia, Haredi, inclinación por el mal, género, Israel, judaísmo.