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An Analysis of Religious-Secular Tensions in Israel

Ahava (Laura) Zarembski

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Ms. Ahava Zarembski is a fellow at The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute. Her work tends to focus on religious-secular relations in Israel and North American Jewry, as well as on leadership involvement and perspectives in these areas. Ms. Zarembski has an M.A. in International Relations, concentrating in Conflict Management, Middle East Studies, and International Economics from The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

About the Research

This study examines the religious-secular divide through the perspective of leaders and opinion makers in Israel. Conducted through a series of interviews, the research identifies the red lines of each community and the primary causes, as seen by the leadership, for the increased alienation among the religious and secular communities over the past several decades. Leaders and opinion makers point to fear, growing insecurities, as well as declining commonality between and increased segregation from the communities as the primary causes of the divide and discuss how each impacts religious-secular relations. The research also examines the foremost specific issues – namely military exemptions and marriage and divorce laws – and exogenous variables – namely the media, Israel's security reality, and the Supreme Court – and looks at how each impacts the divide. Finally, this study presents the leaders' and opinion makers' perceptions of their own role in the religious-secular divide, their suggestions for alleviating it, and the commonalities and differences in their visions for Israel's future.

About the Institute

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- **The Relations between Religion, Society and State: Scenarios for Israel**, Shlomo Hasson (Ed.), 2002 (Hebrew, English forthcoming).
- **A Shift in Haredi Society: Vocational Training and Academic Studies**, Jacob Lupu, 2004 (Hebrew, English forthcoming).

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Participating Leaders

(In alphabetical order)

Rabbi *Eliyahu Ben-Dahan*, Director of the Rabbinical Courts of Israel;

Professor *Arik Carmon*, Director of the Israel Democracy Institute;

Prof. *Naomi Chazan*, (Meretz), former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and Member of Knesset;

MK *Yisrael Eichler* (Yahadut ha-Torah) and Editor of *Ha-Machane ha-Haredi*;

MK *Yitzhak Herzog* (Labor), former Cabinet Secretary;

Rabbi *Simcha Kook*, Chief Rabbi, Rehovot;

Rabbi *Mordechai Karelitz*, former Mayor of Bene Braq;

MK *Tommy Lapid* (Shinui), former Minister of Justice;

MK *Yitzhak Levi* (National Religious Party), formerly Prime Minister's Office

Roni Milo (Likud), former Minister of Regional Cooperation;

Jonathan Rosenblum, Chairman of Jewish Media Resources;

Professor *Alice Shalvi*, Rector of the Schecter Institute for Jewish Studies;

Justice *Tzvi Tal*, former Supreme Court Justice;

MK *Yuli Tamir* (Labor), former Minister of Immigration and Absorption.

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Introduction

A rise in tensions between the religious and secular Jewish communities in Israel over the past thirty years is having a negative affect on Jewish social cohesion and social morale. The problem is critical for its own sake and in the context of the nation relating to its security-related crises. Yet the rise in tensions between Haredi, Religious-Zionist, and Secular communities is occurring against what the Louis Guttman reports revealed to be a backdrop of relatively steady, nonpolarizing religious practice in Israel.[1] What then is causing the rise in tensions if not changing religious practice? How does it relate to Israel's diverse conglomerate of religious-traditional-secular-alternative religious behavior? How is Israel to address the declining religious-secular relationship? To do so, there needs to be an intricate understanding of the causes of and influences on the growing divide as well as a projection of where the nation ought to be going.

To help facilitate this complex endeavor of addressing religious-secular relations, the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies has undertaken a two part series dealing with the various elements contributing to Israel's religious-secular divide. Based on a series of leadership interviews, the first publication in the series, *The Religious-Secular Divide in the Eyes of Israel's Leaders and Opinion Makers*, presents the perspective of interviewed leaders and opinion

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[1] Note: The 2000 Guttman report does indicate a slight increase in the secular and Haredi categories and a decrease in the traditional grouping. *Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews*, Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Israel Institute, December 1993. *Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews 2000*, Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Israel Institute, June 2002.

makers on identified underlying factors of the divide – fear, insecurity with identity, decreasing commonality, and societal segregation – the specific issues of military deferments and marriage and divorce in Israel, and the exogenous variables of media, Israel's security situation and the Supreme Court impacting religious-secular relations.

This second paper, combining text-based research with follow up and additional leadership interviews, serves to provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives presented in the first publication by providing historical analysis, a probing of the various underlying factors, specific issues and exogenous variables, and offering policy options to address a multitude of them. These policy recommendations are based on leadership suggestions yet altered to provide robust options that are inclusive of the concerns of the various communities and work on the assumption that increased cohesiveness amongst communities is beneficial to Israel as a whole. Policy recommendations are designed to show respect for the various communities' red lines in order to maximize negotiating space and to promote an environment of belonging in Israel, where each community senses a non-threatening place for itself in the country. The goal is not necessarily to increase interaction, but rather increase an important sense of unity, interdependency and understanding important for Israel's overall national welfare.

1 Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented as mechanisms to improve religious-secular relations in Israel throughout this paper. They are designed to take into account the sensitivities and concerns of the various communities while addressing underlying factors, specific issues, and contributing variables detrimental to current relations. They are expanded upon under the various *Addressing the Issues* sections.

1) ***Recognizing the red lines of the various communities as a means of easing fears and opening up negotiation space***. For the Haredi community, education (including the yeshiva as the quintessence of this focus); for the Religious-Zionist, Traditional, and parts of the National Secular, and Conservative communities, maintaining the Jewish identity of the state; for the Liberal Secular, Reform, and parts of the National Secular and Conservative communities, protecting civil rights and maintaining certain basic freedoms.

2) ***Recognition of the Haredi ideology of separation***. This will help ease Haredi concerns regarding the delegitimization of and perceived subsequent attack on the Haredi lifestyle by broader Israeli society.

3) ***Instituting a policy of national support for Haredi, Religious-Zionist, and Secular yeshivas as contributors to national culture***. Support is both in terms of financial backing and national encouragement.

4) ***Creating a minimum framework codifying Israel's Jewish and democratic character***.

5) ***Encouraging traditional and non-traditional methods for Jewish education for the secular community***.

6) ***Perpetuating a method of personal engagement in teaching Jewish education in general Israeli school system, such as those currently implemented by the TALI schools***.

7) ***Incorporating Haredi vocational schools under the Ministry of Education***. This will allow for resource expansion to supply for growing demand and facilitate broader Haredi entry into the workforce.

8) ***Re-creating a common language through Jewish knowledge in order to facilitate dialogue amongst the religious and secular communities***. This would include the development of a World Jewish Curriculum serving as a basis for recommended minimums taught in all Israeli schools, with suggested guidelines for the Diaspora.

9) ***Re-forging the link with the Diaspora experience when teaching Jewish history currently neglected in the general Israeli school system***. This will help strengthen a sense of wholeness to Jewish Israeli identity.

10) ***Creating a Curriculum of Communities to be instituted in all Israeli schools***. The objective is to promote understanding and/or interconnectedness with the various communities while providing for the distinctions necessary for acceptance and implementation in the various communities.

11) ***Creating a multidisciplinary assistance initiative for Jewish communities in need***. This will help boost pride for Israel with Israelis and encourage a sense of Jewish interdependency, restrengthening ties with the Diaspora.

12) ***Providing financial incentives for joint community endeavors,*** particularly in the economic sphere, to advance a sense of interdependence.

13) ***Creating a National Endowment for Cultural Development to encourage and promote the unique interests of various communities***.

This will perpetuate a multi-cultural approach encouraging the advancement of individual communities for the betterment of the nation as a whole, allowing various communities to sense a place for themselves in Israel.

14) ***Providing financial incentives for the development and expansion of mixed religious-secular neighborhoods and housing projects***.

15) ***Expanding the Hesder military structure to include a percentage of secular soldiers within the protective framework as a means to promote close religious-secular interactions and relationships***.

16) ***Creating a Haredi national service option, inclusive of a two-year part-time option that would incorporate service with work and/or yeshiva study***.

17) ***Incorporating training on social issues as part of training requirements for the Israeli Rabbinate***.

18) ***Recruiting rabbis to the Israeli Rabbinate with experience in non-religious Israeli society***.

19) ***Instituting a Public Education Program on Prenuptial Agreements*** as a mechanism to improve women's standing before the Rabbinical Courts.

20) ***Utilizing women's advocacy groups***. This will focus on ensuring potentially vulnerable areas for women during divorce, including the granting of gets, or Jewish writ of divorce.

21) ***Integration of Tzohar to the Rabbinate as a means of expanding options within the current Halachic structure***.

22) ***Creating a voluntary, cross-community media watch***. Inclusive of equal members from the various communities, this will monitor specifically religious-secular related issues in the written press as a mechanism for minimizing demonization and inflammatory language.

2 The Roots of Tension: Variable Development in a Historical Context

The birth of Israel's religious-secular divide ironically lay heavily in developments that occurred outside Israel and in the pre-State era – particularly rooted in processes that developed in European Jewry over the past four centuries. At the forefront of these processes are diverging Jewish responses to the Secular Enlightenment and communal schisms that developed via spiritual, political, and economic channels in reaction to the upsurge in antisemitic violence marked by the Chmielnicki pogroms of 1648.

The Haredi Community

The Secular Enlightenment of 19th century Europe – seeking to increase freedom and accessibility to the world of ideas – was accompanied by a general secularization of society. The Jewish community fiercely debated the threats and benefits to the Jewish world and the proper response to it. Three primary responses emerged:[2]

Assimilationists shed the religious Jewish distinctiveness seen as the root of Jewish suffering to become part of the broader society via economic, social, and religious integration. Many assimilationists formally converted to Christianity.

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[2] Heilman, Samuel C. & Friedman, Menachem, "Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim," in: Marty, Martin E., & Appleby, R. Scott (eds.), *Fundamentalism Observed*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 201.

Acculturationists, or ***Maskilim***, chose to involve themselves in the non-Jewish world while maintaining a stronghold in tradition believing the Jewish community could involve itself in non-Jewish society without totally succumbing to it and, even more so, the two worlds could reciprocally benefit from one another.

Contra-Acculturationists, viewed the Secular Enlightenment as a threat to Judaism and required separation from the gentiles, or nations of the world, rather than integration to ensure Jewish distinction and holiness.

The Contra-Acculturationists are the ideological basis for the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) community in Israel today. Comprising 5% of Israel's Jewish population, they are included in the overall definition of the religious community, or those who practice Jewish ritual out of the belief that it is divinely ordained and for whom Jewish law and the biblical commandments serve as the primary source of decision making. Yet the Haredi community places no religious significance to the state. A Jewish state in Israel, to its way of thinking, will only achieve religious status upon its formation during messianic redemption.

The community's development represents a clear and definitive statement, choosing tradition in the whirlwind of choice and change rather than one of passivity in the midst of a changing outside world.[3] Separation for the contemporary Haredi community has been and continues to be a fundamental premise of Judaism. "*Am Kadosh*" means both to be a holy nation and to be a separate nation, and the Jewish people – in the eyes of the Haredi community – must maintain its separateness in order to maintain sacredness. Any attempts by host countries to assimilate the Jewish community were deemed as a mechanism to pressure Jews to surrender to *hukkot goyim*, or the laws and customs of the non-sanctified world. These efforts included trying to integrate them into the

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[3] Katz, Jacob, "Orthodoxy in a Historical Perspective," in: Medding, Peter Y. (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. II, Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

educational and economic systems, and getting them to serve in the army,[4] areas which touch raw nerves in the religious-secular discourse of today.

The basis of the Haredi approach towards Israel, rooted in the perspective of the Contra-Acculturationist, had been dominated by the Old Yishuv and was then reinforced by the influx of Haredim who came to Israel following World War II. Influential voices of the Old Yishuv waged a war against the New Yishuv perceiving religious blasphemy in Zionism's clash with traditional doctrine on Jewish redemption and return to Israel as well as viewing secular Zionists' threat to the Jewish world being both unapologetically secular and undeniably Jewish at the same time.[5] For this same reason, much of the Haredi population in Israel continues to ideologically struggle with the State, fiercely opposing its mechanisms for integration. However, while remaining distinct the Old Yishuv also partook in Israel's forming establishment, exemplified in a small degree of participation in the Knesset Yisrael, the official voice of the Jewish community during the British mandate and debates concerning religion and state issues, as well as insisting on the establishment of the Rabbinate. This wavering, between ideological rejection of Israel and practical participation in, and concern for the nation's well being (including policy making and defense) is also evident within a segment of today's community.[6] While this is often explained on the basis of Israel's spiritual importance now containing such a large percentage of World Jewry, it continues to be an area in which translation of Haredi ideology into daily life is somewhat transmorphous for many in the Haredi world.

As established by the Contra-Acculturationists, there are two primary mechanisms essential to ensuring separation from the outside world: yeshivas and the sealing of Jewish law against new interpretation.

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4 See Heilman and Friedman, in: Marty & Appleby (eds.), 1991, p. 203.

5 Ibid., p. 227.

6 See Ravitzsky, Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

- *Yeshivas:* Yeshivas represented the pinnacle of Jewish life in Europe, molding leadership for the future generations.[7] With the Enlightenment, yeshivas spread their concern to include protecting Jewish youth from external secular influences, accepting students on a larger scale within their insulated walls. Yeshivas continue to be relied upon as the central mechanism for Torah leadership development as well as the primary vehicle for protection and separation from foreign influences. Yeshivas are one of the red lines of the Haredi community.
- *Limitations on Religious Interpretation*: The Enlightenment provoked ruling of "*Hadash Assur Min Ha-Torah*," by the Hatam Sofer (Rabbi Moses Sofer, 1762-1839), banned innovation in Jewish interpretation of texts and laws. Through this ruling traditional Judaism was given a new face: fortifying the past to ensure loyalty to it. Today's Haredi community develops innovations to arising new issues within the confines of specific boundaries in deference to this ruling.

Divisions provoked by the Enlightenment also created momentum for existing ones developing in reaction to a drastic upsurge in violence against Jewish communities starting in the mid-17th century with the Chmelnitzki pogroms. Included in this was the development of Hasidism, characterized by a quest for God through joy and song, promoting close relationship with a spiritual guide, or Rebbe, and emphasizing the individual's connection with God and the ability to hasten the "end of days" rather than waiting patiently for its arrival. The advent of Hasidism came in serious conflict with the traditional Mitnagdim approach and left an important legacy of the intensification of the idea of schism or division within Jewry.[8] Despite this clash, however, today both sides are incorporated into the umbrella of the overall Haredi community.

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[7] See Heilman & Friedman, in: Marty & Appleby (eds.), 1991, p. 216.

[8] Ibid., p. 209.

The Secular Community

In the footsteps of the schism in Hasidism, were the divisive developments of Marxism and Secular Zionism. Marxism offers an alternative to Jewish suffering by ending all suffering in the world through a strategy creating messianic realities by transforming the existing social ones. It asserted a revolution that eliminated all social divisions, and most notably two that were at the heart of classical European anti-Semitism: class and religion.

Secular Zionism, on the other hand, asserts that Jews could only defend themselves and determine their own fate through the establishment of a Jewish state. Zionism, in the words of the early Zionist Leon Pinsker (1821-1891), is about "self-emancipation, that is all the principles of emancipation applied by ourselves to ourselves." It was a drastic departure from tradition, which maintained that the Jewish people would only return to their land and achieve independence and statehood, through messianic redemption. Zionism clashed head on with the traditional notion of divine redemption, sparking serious clashes between Zionists and traditional Jews.

Marxism and Zionism, united in their effort to change Jewish reality through human endeavor, were deeply divided in that the Zionists fought for further separation of Jews by seeking to create a Jewish state while the Marxists sought to end separation by abolishing all religion, class, and nation-state divisions. In that manner, ironically, Zionists and Contra-Acculturationists were bonded in the effort to utilize separation for the sake of survival. Yet Secular Zionism was also deeply influenced by Marxism, notably marked in the stronghold of the kibbutz, a Marxist microcosm, in the period of early statehood.

Traditional Secular Zionist ideology is based on three critical elements: security, settlement, and aliyah.[9,10] Security consists of the notion that just as the Jews are

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[9] Aliyah is the Hebrew term for immigration to Israel and refers here particularly to Jewish immigration to Israel from the Diaspora.

[10] Yehoshua, A. B., "Israeli Identity in an Era of Peace," in: Malkin, Yaacov (ed.), *Free Judaism and Religion in Israel*, Jerusalem: Free Judaism, 1998, p. 110.

at risk anywhere outside their own state, the Jewish state is at risk in a world full of enemies. It is up to Israel, as the Jewish state, therefore, to protect both itself and the Jewish people at large.[11] Settlement of the land, seeking to make the desert bloom and transform swamps into fertile fields, were the driving factors for the pioneering spirit reuniting the Jewish people with their land. Finally, aliyah was guided by both the practical concern of achieving the critical mass deemed essential to Israel's security, and the ideal of providing every Jew with the conditions necessary to determine his/her own fate. It was a guiding principle that inspired the enactment of the Law of Return as one of the first laws passed by the Knesset.

51% of Israel's Jewish community is secular, or those who downplay or reject any connection between Jewish ritual and divine commandment. Of this number, 4% define themselves as anti-religious and totally non-observant, 18% as totally non-observant, and 29% as non-religious but somewhat observant.[12] Many of the secular Israelis engage in ritual for the sake of identity and/or tradition and have a spectrum of Jewish belief and ritual as well as opinion on Israel's Jewish character. Therefore there is a distinguishing of variances in this community, including Secular Believers[13], Liberal Secular[14], National Secular[15], etc. A growing number in the secular community are also increasing Jewish expression and education via non-traditional or non-obligatory channels, particularly amongst Israel's younger generations. Yet, 19th century Secular Zionism set the framework for secular ideology in Israel, eventually contributing to one of the divide's underlying factors.

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[11] Yehoshua, in: Malkin, 1998, p. 111.

[12] *Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews 2000,* June 2002.

[13] Franko, Hadar & Kopolovich, Ezra, "The Secular Jewish Israeli is a Secular Believer," *Ha'aretz*, 21/8/2002.

[14] Zarembski, Laura, *The Religious-Secular Divide in the Eyes of Israel's Leaders and Opinion Makers*, Jerusalem: The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, February 2002.

[15] Ibid.

The Religious-Zionist Community

Religious-Zionist ideology developed within the debate between the traditional and secular communities over the Jewish return to Israel and the establishment of a state. Asserted first by Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878) and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874), the ideology came from within the traditionalist community yet with a different approach to the redemptive process: redemption is divine yet intended to be a gradual process, revealed in stages and with the participation of physical human endeavor. The Jewish return to Israel and the establishment of the state, via Zionism, was the first of these stages.[16]

The notion gained prominence via the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935), who later became Palestine's first Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Kook in opposition to mainstream traditionalist leaders, who were in the process of segregating themselves and their community from the secularists, postulated that the Secularist-Zionist movement was the expression of Jewish youth preparing for messianic redemption. In his famous essay, "*Ma'amar ha-Dor*", Rabbi Kook explains young Zionists efforts as seeking to perfect the world – a yearning that has always been part and parcel of Jewish messianic belief being transformed now into action during the period of imminent redemption. It was he who insisted on the responsibility of Torah leaders to see these efforts and help young Zionists see their own efforts in this framework.

> *[On the heals of the messiah] The Jewish people have awakened with the younger generation. The forces have awakened in a wondrous and awe-inspiring awakening. There is no possibility of vanquishing them by conquest but rather by raising them to the loftiest levels and to showing them the exalted, beautiful path of light.*[17]

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[16] Ravitzsky, Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Hebrew), Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1997, p. 46.

[17] Kook, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak. "Ma'amar ha-Dor", in: *Eder Hayakar - Ikvei Tzon*, Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1985 (Hebrew).

Rabbi Kook's teachings called for a broad perspective from the religious community, demanding both social involvement and awareness rather than segregation to ensure sanctity of both people and state.

The Religious-Zionist community comprises approximately 11% of Israel's Jewish community. This religious community believes that Jewish ritual and commandments are divinely decreed and use Jewish law and commandments as the primary source of decision making, yet also give religious significance to the State of Israel, perceiving modern Israel as a reflection of the continuing covenant between God and the Jewish people. Religious-Zionists therefore recognize the authority currently governing Israel in that light. Today's Religious-Zionist community is undergoing a bifurcated evolution. By the mid-1950s, members of the Religious-Zionist community felt that the community was going too far in reconciling the two distinct worlds of tradition and Zionism and making too many compromises in order to ease the tensions between seemingly contradictory notions about religion, the state, and society.[18] As a result, a small group within the Religious-Zionist movement began demanding stricter religious observance and greater segregation from an increasingly open secular public. Today's Religious-Zionist community, particularly in terms of leaders and ideology, is characterized by increased strictness and segregation. At the same time, there is observation that some of those unconnected to the increased strictness have seemingly moved away from the Religious-Zionist community towards increased secularization.

The Status Quo

The current basis of religious-secular legal and social functioning in Israel is what is known as the Status-Quo Agreement, created by then-Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in an effort to establish a united front between the conflicting religious and secular voices within the Zionist establishment during Israel's struggle for independence. The agreement safeguarded the basic religious

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[18] For further reading on this subject see Aran, Gideon, "The Roots of Gush Emunim," in: Medding, (ed.), 1986, pp. 122-123.

concerns of the Old Yishuv, minimizing perceived channels of secular integration reminiscent of those implemented in Enlightenment Europe. It provided a specific number of draft exemptions to yeshiva students and established an independent educational system; it also ensured a minimum of Jewish character for the Jewish state, specifically Jewish dietary observance in public and government institutions, the primacy of religious courts in matters of personal status, and the Saturday as Israel's official day of rest.

Other Voices

33% of Israel's Jewish community define themselves as *Masorti*(m) or traditional.[19] This community is strongly influenced by and adherent to Jewish ritual and tradition yet does not use Jewish law and commandments as the foremost tool in decision making. Between 54%-64% of this community is of Eastern origin,[20] perhaps the result of a spectrum of observance that continued for Jews in Oriental countries. Jews in Europe responded to the historic split between observant and non observant. The community tends to be heavily Zionist and supportive of maintaining Israel's Jewish character. In recent years the community has become increasingly involved in the religious-secular divide via the political developments including the emergence of Shas, discussed later in the paper. Yet historically, this community has been on the periphery of Israel's religious secular divide contributing to a seeming binary model of religious versus secular that has come to describe the religious nature of Israel. Re-including the Masorti community into the model and into the religious-secular dialogue may help to expand the picture of Israel's religious

[19] There is a debate in the field whether the proper translation is traditional or traditionalists.

[20] *Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews* 2000, June 2002.

composition and may help to ease fears or perceptions of religious polarization and kulturkampf [21] in Israel.[22]

Conservative and Reform Jews in Israel are small in number yet growing both in visibility and in their role in religious-secular relations. The Conservative movement (called in Israel the Masorti Movement, to be differentiated from the category described above) claims approximately 50,000 members (60% native born Israelis), while the Reform movement (identified in Israel as the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism) claims 6,000 members.[23] Both movements in Israel tend to be heavily Zionist, while maintaining strong financial, institutional, and ideological ties with the Diaspora.

Both movements' leadership and organizational bodies look to engage the secular community, providing alternative outlets for religious practice. Moreover, they serve as a voice for civil rights and religion and state reform in Israel. Interviews indicate this is particularly true for Reform, which emphasizes a more adamant severance of religion and state in Israel than its Conservative counterpart which also voices notable concern for the preservation of Israel's Jewish character. As a result, both movements, yet in particular the Reform, are thus closely aligned with the secular liberal community. The movements are likely to move more to the forefront as Israel addresses religion and state matters, such as will likely be evident following the recent Supreme Court decision to allow application of the Law of Return to Jews by choice from non-Orthodox conversions.

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[21] Term found in Baruch Kimmerling's work "Between Hegemony and Dormant Kulturkampf in Israel," in: Urian, Dan, Karsh, Efraim (eds.), *In Search of Identity: Jewish Aspects in Israel Culture*, London: Cass Publishers, 1999.

[22] For more on the issue of the Masorti community see Yadgar, Yaacov & Liebman, Charles, *Beyond the Secular-Religious Dichotomy: Masortim in Israel*. Presented at the Conference on "Dyanmic Jewish Belonging," The Advanced Institute of the Hebrew University, June 17, 2004.

[23] These are self-identified numbers. For the Conservative movement in Israel, see http://www.masorti.org/about.html. For the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, numbers obtained from the spokesperson, June 27, 2004.

3 Facing the Underlying Factors

Four aforementioned factors underlie the growing religious-secular divide in Israel: fear, insecurity about identity, a sense of decreased commonality and increased segregation amongst communities. The most volatile factor is fear, motivating alienation characteristics of the divide and serving as a further impetus for some of the other underlying factors.

A) FEAR

Distinct fears within each community hinder the relationship with its religious/secular counterparts. Specific causes not withstanding, fear is a primary reason for the alienation, segregation, and anger characteristic to current religious-secular relations.

According to psychologists, fear is an emotional response that serves to protect, signaling danger to individuals and preparing for response.[24] Two theories categorize these reactions: “Fight or Flight” maintains that when faced with a certain fear, one will avoid the source of fear at all costs or, if that is not possible, will attack for self-defense purposes;[25] The second theory[26] suggests that escape is used to terminate interaction after exposure to a negative stimulus

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[24] "Fears and Phobias", *TeensHealth*, April 2002.

[25] Gray, Jeffrey Alan, *The Psychology of Fear and Stress*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1971, p. 225.

[26] Ibid., p. 34.

which thereafter provokes fear, while avoidance is used to prevent exposure to a negative stimulus altogether.[27]

In today's religious-secular divide there is evidence of fight, flight, and total avoidance. While segregation itself is an independent underlying factor, discussed in detail later on in this paper, fear of being injured, whether ideologically or physically by other communities' encroachments, has also motivated increased segregation. When segregation is not possible, increased "fight" is evident, mostly on the ideological level though also through physical attacks as well.

Fear within the Haredi Community

The Haredi community fears the penetration of external influences they deem corrosive to religious tradition. From the onset, this community has chosen segregation as the foremost mechanism to protect itself. Yet what then, if fear and reactionary segregation have been characteristic of the Haredi community since its inception, has contributed to perceived heightened tensions in the religious-secular relationship with regard to the Haredi community?

Creating the Change

The years perceived as initiating increased religious-secular tension, as well as increased Haredi fear and its rejectionist response of the individual, directly coincide with increased Haredi involvement as a group in the Israeli system. While the variables may be coincidental, more likely there is a causal relationship between the two. Until 1953, the Haredi movement limited its involvement in Israel's public life, confining involvement to ensuring protection of Jewish religious life in the newly evolving state. Thereafter, the community maintained a policy of complete isolation from the Secular Zionist government[28]

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[27] Ibid., p. 211.

[28] Friedman, Menachem, "The Ultra-Orthodox in Israeli Politics," *Jerusalem Letter/ Viewpoints*, Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, July 15, 1990. VP:104.

with unfavorable religious connotations for Knesset members as "words of blasphemy and abuse against Heaven are voiced there".[29]

Yet with the formation of the Begin government in 1977 and his offer to join hands with the Haredim in the government coalition, the Haredi leadership saw an opportunity to "uphold the principles of the Torah world"[30] in Israel. They thus agreed to the partnership. While initial Haredi involvement only included partnership at the party level, drawing the line at Cabinet membership, soon that line too was crossed, inaugurating the era of intense political participation that is evident today.

Advance of the Movement, Retreat of the Individual

The increased involvement of the Haredi world in the Israeli system changed the reality of non-participation on the macro level by which the community felt relatively safe from exposure, criticism, and cut backs, to increased exposure where all of these became ever possible.

The Haredi community now feels under attack, provoking one Haredi leader interviewed for this study to assert: "There is an attempt to water down the Haredi society in the hopes that it will disappear."[31] Corresponding with this sentiment has been an increased retrenchment of the individual Haredi, evident in a skyrocketing of army deferments, up from 800 in 1968 to 31,000 in 1999 (recipients ages 18-41),[32] and declining participation in economic life. While this itself is subtly changing with the introduction of Nahal Haredi, a religiously protective framework designed for Haredi soldiers which graduated its first group in 1999, as well as attempts to introduce avenues to allow Haredim to enter the workforce, the overall reaction is one of increased distancing and disengagement in general society.

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[29] Ibid., p. 10.

[30] Ibid., p. 11.

[31] Interview with Rabbi Aaron Feldman, July 7, 2001, in Zarembski, 2002, p. 16.

[32] Ilan, Shahar, *Draft Deferments for Yeshiva Students: A Policy Proposal,* Jerusalem: The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1999, pp. 9 & 14.

Compounding the Fear

Compounding the increased Haredi fear generated by external exposure is a growing consumerism on the part of Haredi youth[33] and (for both the Haredi and Religious-Zionist population) an increased secularization of Israeli society, both threatening the "Scholar Society".[34] To older Haredim and community leaders, the former marks declining spirituality and threatens to push the youth into greater involvement with secular society; the latter expounds upon the danger presented from external society by further lowering acceptable thresholds and presenting an extreme secular face to general Israeli society. It has generated "anxiety – one might even say paranoia – over the actions and intentions of the militant secular movements, over the secular modern culture and those who represent it".[35] Increased secularization of general society has translated into further avoidance.

Fear of Compromise

The decision to participate in the Begin Government, also spurred a new fear of political compromise and perpetuated the tendency to create "safeguards" around Haredi basic needs[36] for protective purposes. Red lines have been fortified by additional demands deemed "critical", often to the bewilderment of the non-Haredi world, in order to ensure the continuity of real red lines in the threatening political system. Today, Haredi leaders approach political debate via the perspective "if you give a finger they will take a hand" and negotiate political settlements on this basis.

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[33] Interview with Rabbi Aaron Feldman, July 7, 2001, in: Zarembski, 2002, p. 22-23.

[34] Friedman, Menachem. "The NRP in Transition," in: Krausz, Ernest & Glanz, David (eds.), *Politics and Society in Israel*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1985.

[35] Ibid., pp. 273-274.

[36] See Zarembski, 2002, p. 14.

Addressing Haredi Fears

Due to the intimate relationship between increased Haredi group involvement, perceived criticism and related threats, and increased religious-secular tensions demonstrated particularly in the retrenchment of the Haredi individual, policies should work to reassure the Haredi community of their place in Israeli society. Policies of this nature would contribute to easing some degree of religious-secular tensions, pave a way for reentry of the Haredi individual into social participation in specific areas (see the "Segregation" and "Specific Issues" sections of this paper) and reduce to some degree Haredi protective negotiating behavior that now creates excess non-negotiable space.

While societal sentiment takes generations to transform, initial steps are important to acknowledge and affirm ideological principles basic to Haredi identity. This includes recognition of Haredi communal separation in principle, and the yeshiva as the epicenter of Haredi life to be supported and encouraged as a contributor to Israel's national culture.[37] Support would take the form of financial support as well as national encouragement. The policy is a transition from the founding Zionist thought, which promoted complete integration and uniformity and resembles more those of countries, such as Canada, which look to enhance its various sub-communities seeing its multi-cultural nature as a national asset. In acknowledgment of this effort, the Haredi community should increase financial transparency and accountability in reporting, including the number of pupils and budgetary matters.

Fear within the Religious-Zionist community

Fear in the Religious-Zionist community concerns loss of Israel's Jewish character. It is based on the aforementioned increased secularization of Israeli society, perceived growing ignorance about Jewish life, and a shifting governance. The fear strikes at the heart of the Religious-Zionist identity which

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[37] Suggestion by A.B. Yehoshua, Interview, July 3, 2001.

asserts the State of Israel, while initiated by secular endeavor, is the beginning of divine redemption.

The Religious-Zionist community assiduously guards "Jewish observance" of the state, deemed a critical indicator of progress towards messianic redemption. The community insists on a basic minimum to maintain Israel's Jewish character, originally established for the Old Yishuv via the Status Quo. These include the observance of dietary laws at all state functions and public institutions; Saturday as Israel's official day of rest and observance of Sabbath laws in the Israeli "street"; and that personal status laws, particularly marriage and divorce, be governed by Halakhic law. Interestingly, Religious-Zionist leaders point out that these minimums – dietary laws, the Sabbath, and "family laws" or "family purity laws" – are those which identify an individual to be an "observer of the commandments".[38] Evident in all of these, however, is the Religious-Zionist community's concern for Israel's halakhic public face rather than the practice of individual Israelis.

Creating the Change

The status-quo has traditionally been looked to as the mechanism for ensuring the minimum Jewish character of the state. However, the Religious-Zionist community sees the status quo eroding – unofficial inroads to satisfy public demands,[39] pieces whittled away by Supreme Court decisions to advance the liberal democratic aspect of Israel's character, and pressures placed on the system to deal with Israel's changing social make up, particularly the large Russian immigration since 1989, now 13% of Israel's population,[40] many of whom are not considered Jewish according to Halakhic law.

Exacerbating the fear over Israel's loss of its Jewish character further has, ironically, increased in recent decades with the breakdown of Secular-Zionist

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[38] Interview with Supreme Court Justice Tzvi Tal, July 30, 2002.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Gemenne, Francois, "Russian Immigrants in Israel: Changing the Patterns of the Israeli Society", Universite de Liege (Belgium), 2002, p. 10.

hegemony. While the founding Secular-Zionist establishment was indeed secular, it was committed to maintaining the Jewish nature of the state, expressed through Zionist ideals and national priorities. The disintegration of Secular-Zionist hegemony[41] has opened up two main options that had previously been dormant: a Torah state (which will be discussed below with regard to the secular community's fears) and a post-Zionist society. The latter, to great concern of Religious-Zionists, is more individualistic in nature, perceived as demanding a more liberal, democratic society at the cost of the Jewish character of the state that had previously been maintained.[42]

Addressing Religious-Zionist Fears

The fear is based on two planes:[43] a transformation of Israel's governing structure and secularization of the populous. Address of this fear may also lie on these planes.

Minimum Framework

Official state policy, as mentioned earlier, is of critical importance to this population and the erosion of the status quo is increasing its fears. Re-codification of Jewish minimums for the state, protecting them against official change and non-official erosion should work to raise the confidence of the Religious-Zionist community. It should be noted, however, that abolishing the latter runs the risk of jeopardizing a subtle tool for maintaining the status quo while keeping those unhappy with the religious minimums relatively satisfied.

Debate over an official framework protecting Israel's Jewish character, whether via a constitution or basic laws, has been an ongoing one throughout the course of Israel's history. Traditionally, the religious communities have been seen as

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41 See Kimmerling, Baruch, in Urian & Karsh (eds.), 1999.

42 Ibid.

43 See Freidman, in Krausz & Glanz (eds.), 1985, p. 277-278.

opposing such codification, concerned that such a framework would compete with Jewish law or be always interpreted on the side of liberties over religion.

Traditional arguments of the religious community however may be forced to the side by current concerns coupled with now established legal precedent. Competing with the worry that Israel's Jewish character would always be overridden by a constitution on behalf of its liberal democracy is the welcome of the separation of powers structure. Established under a constitution, separation of powers is seen as working to re-shift legislative imbalance, from dependency on the expansive judicial review of the Supreme Court perceived as decreasing the Jewish character of the state, back to the Knesset which voices the will of the people.[44] This re-alignment returns for the Religious-Zionist community a sense of control or empowerment over changes affecting the religious minimums. Even more so, it opens a possibility, if the population is inclined, for further legislation sympathetic to Israel's Jewish character.

With regard to concerns that a constitution would supercede Torah laws, precedent until now has deemed legislation conflicting with Torah law impassible in the Knesset. For such a circumstance to occur, according to the late Prof. Charles Liebman of Bar-Ilan University, Israel's political balance and approach to Jewish law would have to change drastically. The Knesset would "have to pass such a law with all the consequences involved in deliberately defying the religious tradition" and the religious leadership would "have to interpret the law as contrary to Halacha with all the consequences that such a defiance of the authority of the state would entail."[45] Although possible, such developments are highly improbable – while the benefits from a formalized structure protecting the religious minimum needed in the more immediate and under already realized conditions.

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[44] Interview with Rosenblum, Jonathan, August 22, 2002.

[45] Liebman, Charles S., *Religion, Democracy, and Israeli Society*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997, p. 78.

Jewish Identity in Society

Encouraging support for Israel's Jewish character as a whole, however, would ease religious-secular tensions by reducing the fear of the Religious-Zionist community. This goes beyond political infrastructure and is heavily dependent upon the population's concern for it – reflected in the above mentioned Knesset legislation as well as in the level of public support and tolerance for as delicate a matter as national character.

To achieve this aim, a policy of increased Jewish education in Israel's schools should be relied upon – a change that is in the process of being implemented. Moreover, the introduction of new channels of secular Jewish education, such as the "Secular Yeshiva", in which the secular community approaches Jewish texts via its own language and perspective should also be state encouraged and financially supported both as a vehicle of strengthening Jewish identity and connectedness to Israel and as a contributor to Israel's national culture, in line with reasons for funding Haredi yeshivas.

Fear within the Secular Community

The fear of the secular community is of increased religious coercion. The current status quo system places external prohibitions both in the public sphere, such as limiting transportation and venues of leisure during the weekend, as well as in the private sphere, affecting such personal choices as whom a person can legally marry. They imply a way of life restricting choice and freedoms which the secular community both fears and rejects.

Creating the Change

Rising power of religious parties in the Knesset, up from 23 in 1996 to 28 seats in 1999, and increased religiousness of the Orthodox community further exacerbate the secular community's fears of increased coercion. Reverberating in these is the rise of Shas, or the *Shomrei Torah Sephardim* - Sephardi Torah Guardians. Though targeting primarily the Sephardi population, which tends to be on the periphery of the religious-secular divide, Shas has succeeded in winning heavy representation in the Knesset and government ministries contributing to the perception of increasing religious power in Israel's

government. These were all impetuses for the 2003 election results, speaking loudly to the religious-secular tug-of-war in the Knesset: religious parties lost their previous wielding victory, decreasing the number of seats to 22 and Shinui, self-labeled opposition to Ultra-Orthodox parties, skyrocketed in power from 6 seats in 1999 to 15 seats in 2003.

Yet older developments helped set the stage for these changes. The aforementioned breakdown of the Secular-Zionist hegemony following the 1967 war, reintroduced the possibility of a Torah State. That along with the 1977 entrance of the Haredi community into Israeli political life shook the confidence of the secular community. On the other hand, 1967 opened the door for the growth of post-Zionism and the push to make Israel first and foremost a liberal society. It increased the voices of the small yet vocal group of seculars opposing any sort of religious legislation on the basis of it being the most serious obstacle to a post-Zionist Israel. Despite many secular leaders interviewed for this study questioning the actual extent of current religious coercion in Israel, these have upped the determination of the secular community to fight coercion as well as the perception that the push for Israel as a democracy first is representative of the entire secular community.[46]

Growing uncertainty and thus involvement of the secular community in religious matters has led to it relinquishing much of the control over state religious affairs to the religious community, and magnifying a sense of unyielding religion in state affairs in Israel. While in previous generations secular leaders felt secure debating issues of religion and state (best illustrated in the dispute between Ben-Gurion and the first Minister of Religious Affairs, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Maimon, over closing government offices on the Fast of Esther; when challenged by Ben Maimon, Ben-Gurion defended his position by claiming he was as familiar with "what went on in the traditional Jewish towns of eastern Europe as was Maimon"),[47] today such self-confidence in matters of

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[46] Interview with Dr. Arik Carmon, Interview with Rabbi Yitzhak Levi, September 29, 2002.

[47] Leibman, Charles S, "Secular Judaism and Its Prospects," in: Urian & Karsh (eds.), 1999, p. 39.

Jewish knowledge in the secular community is rare. Matters of religion are willfully given over to the religious authorities, disassociating the secular community further from the work of reconciling issues of religion and state.

Addressing Secular Fears

Minimum Framework

The need for a minimum framework ensuring Israel's dual character is equally essential for the secular community. To balance its religious aspects, the Jewish state must also guarantee basic rights and freedoms evident in any democracy and ensure a check to a possible "religious takeover",[48] concern for which echoes within the secular community. The structure, here too, seems preferable to a constitution over basic laws. For while most of the secular community's concerns have already been protected by legislation in the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Freedom (1994), secular leaders repeatedly emphasize the concerns' vulnerability in the absence of a constitution. Fortifying these rights via a constitution will likely contribute to easing secular fears that now compel clashing with the religious communities both on the level of religion and state matters and also spilling onto perceptions and everyday interactions.

Jewish Knowledge and the Secular Community

In addition, assuring proprietorship over Jewish affairs and, once again, reengaging the secular community in discussions of religious issues pertaining to the state would work to decrease secular fears of increased coercion and, by returning them to the negotiating table, reduce the sense of religious manipulation in these matters. To do so, encouraging increased Jewish knowledge in the secular community via traditional and non-traditional forms would work to reengage the community in the discourse rather than keeping it as external opposition.

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[48] Zarembski, 2002, p. 18.

B) IDENTITY

Insecurity about identity is the second identified underlying factor contributing to increased religious-secular tensions. Particularly within the secular community as the traditional pillars of secular identity weaken without replacements, members of the secular community are questioning what defines them and clashing with the seemingly strong identities of the religious communities.

Parameters of Identity

The construction of social identity is a complex process dependent on the intricate relationship of numerous variables. Included in these are an alignment with a particular ethnic group, ties to the group's unique values and to its unique history.[49] History in particular creates a bond of tradition and common past experiences while also defining aspirations for the future.[50] Identity is expressed in a sense of a common fate and mutual responsibility.

For Jewish social identity, these variables are nonetheless critical. Religion generates this sense of alignment, values, interdependence and knowledge of history via the observance of commandments, text reliance, prayer, and communal dependency. So too does traditional secular Zionist ideology, which relies heavily on Jewish notions, and uses alignment, interdependence, and memory to inspire and legitimize the Jewish return to Israel. For religious Jews, therefore, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, identity tends to be strong. Yet while life in Israel tends to naturally germinate some of these variables, the move away from the Secular Zionist hegemony has weakened several of these variables in the secular community at the expense of identity. Absolutely and in contrast to the strong sense of identity in the religious communities, the secular

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[49] Herman, Simon N, *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective*, Vol. 48, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977, p. 45.

[50] Ibid.

community is feeling increasingly insecure in its identity, causing a rise in tensions between the two communities.[51]

Shifts in Secular Identity

The disintegration of the three pillars that once defined secular identity – security, settlement, and aliyah – contribute to the secular identity crisis.

- ***Decreased Urgency over Security:*** Israelis no longer see themselves, nor the Jewish people at large, as existentially threatened. On the contrary, they are often struck by the comfortable lifestyle of Jews abroad, particularly in the West, who seem to have an "easier life." They question both reasons to live in Israel as well as reasons to maintain hold of the land.

- ***Questioning Aliyah:*** In the same vein, the push for aliyah is dwindling, as the secular have a difficult time understanding for themselves reasons to remain in Israel, and yerida, or emigration from Israel, increases. This is particularly true for young adults. In addition, the benefits from mass aliyah particularly from such places as the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and South America though lauded are also quietly being questioned as the already burdened Israeli economy strains further to absorb new immigrants.[52]

- ***Turning Away from Settlement:*** Since implementation of the land for peace policy, security and settlement are seen as coming into conflict with one another rather than going hand in hand as they once did. Rather, settlement is seen as part of a "radical religious right" agenda,[53] particularly by the liberal secular segment of the community, and far from the community's foremost priorities. It should be noted that this has changed somewhat with the onset

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[51] The secular community perceives the religious one as elated over the secular identity crisis, giving it an opportunity to make inroads in the advancement of religious legislation. In reality the religious worry about the crisis, fearing even that it will negatively affect the Jewish character of the State. See Zarembski, 202, p. 21.

[52] See Yehoshua, in: Malkin, (ed.), 1998.

[53] See Ilana Dayan's comments in Zarembski, 2002, p. 23.

of the recent Intifada. Demarcating an enemy or "the other" against which to define themselves, has helped boost secular identity. This has alleviated to some degree, religious-secular tensions.

Lacking a Substitute for the Traditional Pillars

Moving away from these pillars, the secular community must rely on other elements of identity to define itself. This enters into a process of active identity building, a process which takes generations. The desired direction for this new secular identity has not yet been chosen by the secular community. Several secular leaders interviewed connote it involves reliance on Jewish tradition and culture. As one secular leader explained, "If it means something that is more than territory, then it means something that is Jewish."[54]

While giving the secular community time and space to develop their new identity, intervention on some level is necessary to limit the negative impact this underlying factor is having on the religious-secular divide. For the sake of improving religious-secular relations identity must include not only a strong sense of self as a sub-group but also its place in the larger whole of, and thus alignment to, the Jewish people. It should be noted that while the assumptions underlying these recommendations are not universally accepted, they seek to embrace responses to suggestions and concerns of interviewed secular leaders.

Addressing the Secular Identity Crisis

Being secular and Israeli should look to draw upon positive Jewish elements, in a variety of facets – cultural, historical, ritual – to promote identity, encourage alignment, and subsequently nurture attachment to physical Israel and emotional connectedness to Jews around the world. All of these should be promoted first and foremost in a positive sense rather than by reliance on a negative definition or as a last resort. Israel's educational system is currently failing to convey these

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[54] Ibid., p. 21.

ideas in a successful and strong enough manner needed to fill the void of the dwindling old secular Jewish identity

A Multidisciplinary Assistance Initiative for Jewish Communities in Need

To encourage alignment, mutual responsibility, and a positive role of Israel as the physical center of the Jewish people, Israel can establish a corps to assist needy Jewish communities throughout the world. Based on the recommendation of secular novelist A.B. Yehoshua for an Israel-Diaspora Teaching Corps[55] and modeled after such programs as Doctors Without Borders,[56] these missions would send Israeli doctors, engineers, technicians, computer experts (currently in surplus in Israel due to domestic training and aliyah), for a limited period of time to train needy Jewish communities in various fields, help build their infrastructure and improve their quality of life. The corps would be open to professionals as well as students finishing their professional training. The effort would help reestablish the dwindling sense of Jewish interdependency, and reestablish Israel as a center for Jews around the world.

Reshaping Jewish Education in Israel's Schools

Interviewed leaders from across the religious-secular spectrum (as well as alternative religious leaders) emphasized the importance of increasing Jewish education in the secular community as both a framework for identity and a mechanism for choice. Education for identity should entail reconnecting the secular community to Jewish history, ritual, and tradition teaching the traditional and non-traditional interpretations on the secular community's own terms and in its own language and be welcome to probing and interpretation. The most important element is that today's secular community become reacquainted with the constructs of Jewish culture and history to build a

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[55] See Yehoshua, in: Malkin, (ed.), 1998, pp. 123-124.

[56] Doctors Without Borders is an international organization of doctors from around the world that provides medical care to impoverished countries.

framework for identity and perception of themselves, fellow Jews, the land of Israel and the state of Israel.

As with every element of Israeli Jewish society, the secular community should understand how it fits into the larger picture of the Jewish experience. Yet the Secular Zionist educational approach traditionally rejected Diaspora history, focusing primarily on the pre-Galut reality and the Jewish return to the Land. This left a gap in the secular community's understanding of Jewish development, and by default its own development.[57] To strengthen the identity of the secular community, Israel should look to re-forge the link found in the Diaspora experience, emphasizing what the Jewish people gained from it and how it contributed to the Jewish return. This will help the secular community see themselves in the Jewish continuum and help the community envision aspirations for it. To do so, Jewish history, texts, tradition, culture and religion should be taught, in addition to their own value, with this goal in mind. It may also help curb the trend of yeridah (emigration) caused in part by secular alienation from the land by redeveloping the relationship between them. (See also "World Jewish Curriculum" below.)

The Ministry of Education should reexamine both the scope and methodology of Jewish education in state schools. David Zisenwine of Tel Aviv University, for example, recommends that instruction move from the instrumental approach to personal engagement in the search for meaning. Zisenwine credits the Tali schools with moving in this direction and believes it can serve as an example of how to transform Jewish education in public schools from instrumentalism to life-long exploration.[58]

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[57] Interview with Carmon, Arik, September 29, 2002.

[58] Zisenwine, David, "Jewish Education in the Jewish State," in: Urian & Karsh (eds.), 1999, p. 153.

C) COMMONALITY

A decreased sense of commonality amongst communities is the third underlying factor noted by leaders. Decreased commonality has been building up since pre-Emancipation years. However, in the context of the current divide, there is a sense that remaining commonalities are disintegrating. This sense has been magnified particularly over the past thirty years due largely to three main phenomena: the shift in Religious-Zionist focus; the policy of the land for peace; and the overall decline in Jewish education within general state (Mamlachti) schools.

Changes in the Religious-Zionist Focus

Demands for increased religiosity in the Religious-Zionist community, spurred in the 1950s by young insiders who insisted too many unnecessary religious compromises were being made to accommodate the union between religion and Zionism, eventually led to a bifurcated shift in the Religious-Zionist focus.

First, increased segregation from secular society, contributing as well to the fourth underlying factor of broadening segregation in all of Israeli society, meant distancing from Rabbi Kook's original philosophy of close, hands-on social involvement in general society. In its stead was a continued social involvement yet within a protective structure that to varying degrees, entailed separation from general society. In particular, were the establishment of the separate Religious-Zionist school system and army units.

Second, was a shift in focus to the ideal of a Greater Israel and settlement that evolved through the group's close relationship with Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, son of the movement's principal teacher. This ideological perspective was magnified following Israel's territorial expansion over critical Jewish sites via its 1967 victory.

The focus on settlements pulled hard at the Religious-Zionist-secular relationship. The secular community wavered in its support of settlement of the areas obtained in the Six-Day War, moving from strong support in the late 1960s and most of the 1970s to decreasing support in the early 1980s.[59] The Religious-Zionist movement, however, deemed settlement an important social matter, a means of hastening redemption through rebuilding Greater Israel, and maintained strong support for it. The settlement-based focus meant political isolation in periods when it was unpopular. Moreover, the new focus meant physical isolation as increasing numbers Religious-Zionists moved out of the cities into the new territories and while the secular population, when it followed suit for both ideological and financial reasons, did so in smaller numbers.

It should be noted that neither the shift in focus towards segregation nor settlement swept the entire Religious-Zionist movement. Yet both, and settlement in particular, did capture the imagination of the movement's leadership and heavily shape its vision. In turn, in the mind of the Israeli public, the Religious-Zionist Jew became associated with settlement and the shift worked to transform the old secular-Religious-Zionist partnership into a competitive relationship. As Amos Oz writes:

> *The appearance of Gush Emunim was also a blow to the ego of the youth in the kibbutzim and the Labor movement…although [Gush Emunim] represented a position far removed from our own, they managed to steal away from us the hearts of some of our spiritual mentors, as if here were the heirs of the pioneering spark that had dimmed; the heir apparent was ousted by the pretender to the throne…You have brought the storm upon yourselves by electing yourselves the guiding elite.*[60]

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[59] Aran, Gideon, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Block of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)", in: Marty & Appleby (eds.), 1991, p. 284.

[60] Hall-Cahtala, David, *The Peace Movement in Israel, 1967-87*, London: MacMillan, 1990, p. 13.

Slowly, Religious-Zionists were becoming isolated, distinct, and further removed from the integration that had once allowed them to serve as a bridge and influence Israeli society. The new shifts in focus dealt a serious blow to the concept of a religious-based spectrum in Israel and began encouraging the notion of distinct communities independent of one another with little areas of overlap.

The Impact of Land for Peace

The tarrying sense of commonality particularly between the Secular and Religious-Zionist communities was dealt a further blow by the advancement of the land-for-peace philosophy in Israel's political discourse. Trading land for peace and the overall peace movement which gained serious weight in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was seen as being promoted heavily from within the secular community. It sent a message to Religious-Zionists that the common ground of land and settlement – once the primary bases of commonality between the two communities – was no longer important to the secular, and even more, an area of contention. Hence, for many in the Religious-Zionist community, the secular population's love of the land was wavering, and even worse, compounded by a seeming willingness to put Israel's most sacred Jewish areas up for negotiation. Yet, contrastingly for many in the secular community, purported unbreakable ties to parts of these areas created an impasse that stood between Israel and peace. They perceived a radicalism emerging in the Religious-Zionist community putting both Israel, and its citizens, at risk.

The advancement of the land-for-peace policy and the movement toward peace created a sense of discord, putting at odds the two communities which were once strong allies. Discord was greatly exacerbated by the introduction of the Oslo process, transforming a sense of decreasing commonality into full-blown strife. It resurrected a multi-faceted struggle – political, religious, and ideological – between the Religious-Zionist and secular communities. Conversely, the breakdown of Oslo and the current Intifada has contributed to improving religious-secular relations, by boosting the perception of the secular community's devotion to the land and recreating a unifying common denominator, albeit the negative one, of a common enemy.

Declining Jewish Education

Finally, a change in the quality and depth of Jewish education in general state schools has cut into the base Jewish knowledge of the secular community and into a common language between the religious and secular communities. In the early years of statehood yearly matriculation exams were required in Bible, Hebrew literature, and Jewish history, and secondary school students were required to take an elective of either Talmud or Jewish thought in latter high-school years.[61] Today these subjects are emphasized less in schools and secular students are not given an opportunity to study Talmud or other aspects of Jewish Oral Law except in 30 select schools in the country. It should also be noted that this has occurred in parallel with a broader base of the Israeli population enrolling in general state schools rather than religious schools, with the former increasing by 6% and the latter decreasing by the equivalent amount.[62] Particularly for the Secular-Haredi relationship the change creates a complete breach in commonality. A direct relationship seems to exist between Jewish knowledge and sense of commonality. Hence, with the Haredi community closed to anything outside tradition and the secular community increasingly isolated from Jewish knowledge, the two communities are becoming increasingly alienated. The change is also having a similar effect on Secular-Religious-Zionist relationships as the latter community moves towards increased religiosity and segregation.

Addressing De-commonality

Working to re-rebuild a sense of commonality can be achieved by bolstering similarities between the various communities. Yet the primary reason for concern for decreasing commonality is the alienation that results.[63] This alienation can also be offset by advancing policies of interdependency and

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[61] Zisenwine, in: Urian & Karsh (eds.), 1999, p. 148.

[62] Horowitz, Dan & Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 53.

[63] Herman, 1977, p.43.

common goals despite the differences. Policy options exist for both routes in various social channels including education, business, and culture.

Re-creating a Common Language

The difficult task of recreating commonalities seems to rely heavily on the rebuilding of a common language. From language, perceptions are formulated, overflowing onto defining operatives and actions, and the potential for intercommunication between the various groups grows. Parameters of the various communities and the additional identity based objectives taken into account, the lowest common denominator is a matter of debate.

- ***Teaching Civics:*** Many in the secular and even Religious-Zionist community want this to include the notion of civics and civic responsibility – a problematic element due to the Haredi ideological dismissal of the state. However, it should be noted that there is room to incorporate this concept that fits inside one vantage point to which the Haredi community abides, the Halachic notion of Jewish obedience to the laws of a non-Jewish state (*dina malchut dina*.)[64] Difficulty will remain however in implementation due to perception of secular interference in the Haredi educational system.

- ***A World Jewish Curriculum:*** Jewish knowledge can also serve as the basis for a common language. It is thus far unclear whether the current trend for secular Jewish learning is having a repairing effect on secular-religious relations. However increasing Jewish knowledge is supported by the various communities and interviewees across the spectrum connote serious potential for the positive impact it could have for rebuilding a sense of commonality between the religious and secular communities.

Thus, a suggested base curriculum of Jewish studies should be formulated by a cross-communities team of Jewish pedagogical experts, determining which

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[64] Problems arise in the approach to the state as under Jewish sovereignty while not abiding by Halacha. In this case, obedience is not required. However, traditional Haredi ideology rejects the notion of Israel governed by Jewish sovereignty, theoretically freeing them from this interpretation.

subjects are taught, leaving the how and to-what-extent to the various systems. The curriculum of Jewish studies, defining a "minimum recommended allowance for Jewish education" should be sculpted for use in Israel; To maximize the effects of this initiative on other objectives discussed previously in this paper, such as identity and alignment, the curriculum should also be geared for use in the Diaspora. Each community in Israel and the Diaspora would teach the minimum curriculum differently – within Israel the secular, Religious-Zionist, and Haredi communities and internationally the various geographical and denominational approaches.

Agreement upon various subjects by the communities would not be a simple achievement, under strong attack from the religious communities (Orthodox in the Diaspora). The latter presumably want more in terms of quantity and basis upon traditional sources by contrast with the secular (and various non-Orthodox denominations in the Diaspora) who want broader interpretations included. Yet the suggested curriculum would create a measuring stick by which schools could determine their own courses of Jewish study and help provide guidelines for recreating minimums of a common language, strengthening similarities. The joint effort would also help reconstruct the notion of Jewish peoplehood by making Jewish learning a unified endeavor.

Improvements in the Face of Dissimilarities

Initiatives working to create a sense of interdependency, built on the pursuit of a common goal and sense of togetherness,[65] can also offset the negative effects of decreasing commonalities despite the maintenance of distinct communities. The current Intifada has helped create this, with religious and secular leaders noting a sense of togetherness brought on by the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet for social stability, Israel should work towards creating an unwavering sense of interdependence, standing on its own accord rather than dependent upon external threat.

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[65] Herman, 1977, p. 44.

What common goal should be created? While open to speculation, one goal of broad consensus is that of working to make Israel flourish – whether economically, socially or culturally – at this more advanced stage in its development. Joint communal endeavors as well as encouraging independent communities to pursue areas of their competitive advantage can both contribute to enhancing the national collective.

- ***Joint Community Efforts:*** Joint community efforts, utilizing people-to-people activities, can advance a sense of interdependence. For Israel, policies of this nature would be particularly effective in the business sector where the Haredi community has a growing need pushing greater involvement and already obtained approval for close interaction with broader society.

  Tax incentives and stipulations in government contracts to subcontractors in order to encourage the hiring of employees and/or businesses outside a primary company's base community can be an effective manner to promote joint community projects. Models of this sort are used to promote minority employment or intergroup relations throughout the world, including in the United States, where the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise requires businesses bidding for governmental contracts on the federal, state, or local level, to give 10% of the work to a minority-owned subcontractor.

- ***Distinct Endeavors:*** Departing from current thought which looks to minimize distinction for the sake of integration, this policy seeks to encourage alignment by supporting the unique interests of each community for the sake of overall national prosperity. It is a multi-cultural approach, implied in the recommended national funding for Haredi and secular yeshivas, that projects Israeli society as a mosaic.

  Here, a national fund for cultural development can be created to provide financial support for innovative projects advancing a specific element of Israeli culture including art, philosophy, religious/secular higher learning, etc. Grants of this kind are available in many countries, in the U.S. for example through the National Endowment for the Arts, encouraging ethnic/cultural development. Such a structure could be created in Israel with wider breath to include various modes of expressions, with art as one

of them. With the establishment of such an institution, equal support and representation need be given to the various religious and secular communities – expressed formally in charter guidelines, carried out in funding distribution, and reflective in the governing board of directors and institution's chief administrators. The structure would itself serve as a national model for religious-secular cooperation for the sake of national advancement.

- ***Curriculum of Communities:*** To contribute to a new generation working towards improved religious-secular relations, Israel should institute a curriculum of respect for and an interdependency of various communities taught in schools nationwide. Such a curriculum should provide a framework for teaching and application, with recommended hours of instruction, objectives to attain, and application to Israel's various communities.

  Work to create a curriculum of tolerance in Israel is already underway in leading policy institutions. In creating this curriculum, however, it is of utmost importance to identify the varying definitions of "tolerance" amongst the different communities. Any attempt to enforce the teaching or application of one community's definition of tolerance on another would elicit swift, outright rejection.

  For the secular community, tolerance is defined by the notions of pluralism and respect for differences. It is "sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own"[66] and expresses itself in the freedom of an individual to live in a society while maintaining those differences. Tolerance is considered a fundamental element in any democracy.[67] For the religious world, tolerance is a secular notion, and pluralism loaded with preventative taboos. Tolerance expresses itself rather through the concept of Ahavat Yisrael, emphasizing the importance of every Jew, in his/her inherent connection to God, his/her unique purpose in

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[66] Definition provided by *Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary*.

[67] Interview with Prof. Naomi Chazan, July 30, 2002.

the world and the importance of each Jew in the collective purpose of the Jewish people and messianic redemption.

Even with the distinction made, there are questions over the acceptance of such curriculum guidelines, particularly within the Haredi community which remains adamant over its school system's independence. However, discussion regarding a curriculum of tolerance has been raised from within the Haredi community as well,[68] seen as an opportunity to diminish the perceived growing hatred against Haredi society in Israeli society. As with many policies relating to the Haredi community, it is important to obtain leadership approval, and – if possible – their cooperation in the curriculum formation, so as to ease its eventual application.

D) SEGREGATION

The fourth factor underlying the religious-secular divide is the increased segregation of society over the past three decades. Segregation, i.e. the separation or isolation of a community, has been intrinsic to Israeli society since the state's inception. Yet due to diverging trends, with greater secularization on the one side and stricter religious observance on the other, segregation is increasing even further. Segregation, today, is found in the most fundamental areas of Israeli life, including education, neighborhoods, and the army.

Segregation in Education

The status quo dictated education in Israel to be divided into three distinct channels: the Haredi system, the state religious system (*Mamlachti Dati*) and the state general system (*Mamlachti Klalli*.) It intended each community to instruct its youth as it saw fit. Most similar were the state general and state religious

[68] The proposal first initiated to the author by Rabbi Aaron Feldman, President of the Be'ar ha-Torah yeshiva in Jerusalem. Interview July 7, 2001.

systems, sharing common core subjects while differing in the point of emphasis, the former emphasizing socialist values and the latter Jewish ones.

The Haredi educational system has remained segregated as originally structured. Yet, the creation of a Religious-Zionist yeshiva system in the 1950s has taken much of the religious-Zionist community out of the state religious system and into its own structure. The system, promoted in the shift in the Religious-Zionist community towards stricter religious observance, separated the sexes and put renewed emphasis on Jewish subjects. It made the educational experiences of secular and Religious-Zionist youth increasingly different, deepening the schism between them.

Here too, the importance of these new schools, was not only reflected in simple numbers but in the ideological importance and grounds for leadership development as well; while protecting religious observance in the wake of a growingly secular society, it is also cultivating a next generation of religious-Zionist leaders further removed in thought and experience from secular society.

Segregation in Residential Neighborhoods

Segregation has also seeped into Israel's residential landscape. Residential segregation is becoming a trend, encouraging contractors to build with specific communities in mind. Migration into the settlements, particularly common amongst young Religious-Zionists, is transforming the cities into conglomerates of Haredi and secular clusters rather than loci of the religious/secular mixing. The latter is spurring some Religious-Zionist leaders to identify this emigration as a primary reason for increased religious-secular tensions.[69]

[69] Interview with Rabbi Ben-Dahan, August 14, 2002.

Segregation in the Army

Finally, the army – looked to by Ben-Gurion as the key to national integration of various immigrant groups – has also become segregated along religious-secular axes. The primary contributants to this are increased yeshiva exemptions, the introduction of the Hesder program into the army structure, and the shift in female Religious-Zionist participation in national over army service. Much of these shifts are due to the serious challenges army service places on religious observance; included in these are close male-female interaction, limited access to communal prayer services (minyanim), and minimal observance of Jewish dietary laws. Concern is compounded by a conscription age of 18 deemed a vulnerable period particularly by the Haredi community. All of these, along with the historical association of military enlistment to the Enlightenment, have been at the core of Haredi opposition to enlistment. Yet, the Religious-Zionist community, seeing army service as a religious commandment, created the option of segregation and/or pre-training in the army out of religious needs and self-protection in a non-religious environment.

Haredi Yeshiva Deferments

As a condition to joining the Begin government in 1977, the quota limiting the number of deferments to yeshiva students, originally totaling 400 at the establishment of the state, was eliminated. Today, the number has risen to over 31,000, ages 18-41.[70] This amounts to 8% of the current draft, a figure that is expected to rise to 11% by the end of the present decade.[71]

Deferments are often seen as the cause of the divide. They are so only in the degree to which they increased tensions by heightening segregation and alienation between Haredim and Israeli society at large. Rather, deferments are more manifestations of the divide, striking an emotional chord with broader Israeli society which sees them as unfair.[72] It is interesting to note that in this

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[70] Ilan, 1999, p. 9.

[71] Zarembski, 2002, p. 31.

[72] Ibid., pp. 28-37.

area, many among the Religious-Zionists, while understanding the reasons motivating the Haredim, are compelled to join with the secular community in their contempt of this issue. (For further discussion on this subject see: "Specific Issues: Haredi Military Service".)

The Hesder Program

The option of segregation for the Religious-Zionist soldier was introduced in 1965, when representatives of the Religious-Zionist yeshivas convinced the IDF[73] to allow Religious-Zionist soldiers to serve in a combined structure of active duty in religious units and yeshiva study.

The Hesder program involves a five-year period of service, approximately 1.75 years on active duty and 3.25 years studying in yeshiva. The Hesder structure provides the religious soldier with the framework necessary for stricter religious observance in the army, supported by an institutional structure to handle religious concerns, communal prayer services, and visits from yeshiva rabbis. Yet the Hesder program's distinct structure hinders close relationships between its enlistees and secular soldiers. Platoons are all-religious, and the intimate bond and interdependence forged from basic training interaction is practically non-existent between Hesder and non-religious soldiers. Any interaction between them is limited to the company level, forming a much lower degree of intimacy and dependency. [74]

The Hesder program, like many other shifts noted above, does not involve the majority of Religious-Zionist soldiers. In fact, it is relatively small in terms of simple numbers, with an annual volume of fewer than 1,000 potential enlistees.[75] However, most Hesder soldiers are likely to have gone through the Religious-Zionist system all their lives, lacking close interaction with non-Religious-Zionist peers. Moreover, the Hesder program's prestige makes it

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[73] Cohen, Stuart A., *The Hesder Yeshivot in Israel: A Church-State Military Arrangement*, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1993, p. 118.

[74] Ibid., p. 120.

[75] Ibid., p. 119.

outstanding [the program has been nationally recognized for combining ideological beliefs and their practical application, producing some of the most dedicated soldiers on a mass scale. This is encapsulated by its receipt of the 1991 Israel Prize for eloquently uniting various elements of Israeli life and its "unique contribution to the texture of national life"[76]] and deepens the sense that segregation in Israeli society is growing. Moreover, the Hesder organization has grown rapidly since 1965, expanding the number of its institutions to 16 and increasing the student base over 30-fold. Finally, Hesder soldiers are prime candidates for leadership positions and segregation in the army threatens to create potential gaps in understanding similar to those currently troubling Israeli society.

Other Religious-Zionist Military Options

Religious-Zionist soldiers also have the option of deferring service to study in yeshivas of higher learning. While a segment of the community chooses basic deferments for a specified period of time after which it serves a three year term, a growing number of Religious-Zionist soldiers are choosing the option of *mekhinahs* (military academies), which provide religious training while minimizing segregation in the army. The new channel, opened in Eli in 1984, gives enlistees physical, ideological, and halakhic preparation in a yeshiva environment with advanced yeshiva studies during a one or two year army deferment. After participation in a mekhinah, a Religious-Zionist enlistee enters the army as an individual for a regular three-year term. This channel, growing in popularity, minimizes the segregation brought about by the hesder program while still emphasizing religious obligation, learning, and ideology within the army framework.

Religious Females and Military Service

The status-quo agreement gave religious females prima facie military exemptions, as army service was even more problematic in the realm of women and modesty. Haredi females have relied on this for non-participation while

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[76] Ibid., p. 119.

Religious-Zionist females historically still served with a minority choosing the alternative of national service. Today, however, army service for Religious-Zionist females is becoming increasingly taboo and growing numbers choose national service. This is becoming less of a matter of choice by the young females and their families, but one enforced by the Religious-Zionist system: some of the top Religious-Zionist schools in Jerusalem, for example, make girls sign a guarantee promising enlistment in national service rather than the army after graduation and if found to have broken the agreement, younger siblings are denied future acceptance into the school.

The switch to national service contributes to social segregation. Many volunteers live at home and have decreased exposure to members of other communities. Moreover, with ratios of religious to non-religious shifting in national service, the likelihood of religious-secular interaction decreases further.

Addressing Segregation in Education

Policy options are seriously limited in addressing segregation in education, identified as a red-line of the Haredi and Religious-Zionist communities and upheld by all of the communities as the primary tool to shape the younger generation's views. Policy changes with regard to education can only occur, as already stated, on the level of curriculum modifications and the introduction of joint projects.

Addressing Segregation in Residential Neighborhoods

Incentives can be developed to encourage residential desegregation and even the creation of mixed neighborhoods. Financial incentives in the form of low mortgages, tax breaks, and subsidized land purchases should be offered to attract diverse population bases to neighborhoods billing themselves as models of religious-secular interaction. Furthermore, specific areas in cities should be designated for mixed religious-secular housing, offering low-interest loans to residents and business owners. Policies of this kind could be combined with gentrification objectives of neglected neighborhoods, to improve Israel's cities on the level of social cohesiveness and socio-economic development.

Addressing Segregation in the Army

Large-scale Haredi participation in the military is unlikely. (See: Specific Issues: Military Deferments.) Emphasis can be placed, however, in re-encouraging positive Religious-Zionist-secular relations via the military. The mekhinah structure is a preparatory institution and that provides first-rate preparation without furthering segregation. The more comprehensive religious structure provided for by the Hesder program only needs minor organizational adjustment to make a real difference while still maintaining a protective religious environment. Rather than the entire 40 soldier platoon consisting of Hesder soldiers, the platoons can be restructured to include a percentage of regular enlistees (at least 25% is recommended). These units would remain under the auspices of the base yeshiva, continuing the same channels for voicing religious concerns, the same official visits by yeshiva rabbis, and would continue to have the critical mass needed to fulfill religious obligations and provide emotional support for maintaining a religious life in the army. Yet they would provide an opportunity for close religious-secular relations and dependency now absent from the current structure. The shift would ease religious-secular alienation and decrease the gap in understanding between a base of potential leaders in institutions in which many of these soldiers may find themselves playing a key part in the future.

4 SPECIFIC ISSUES

In addition to grappling with underlying factors to address the source of the religious-secular divide, major points of contention need also be addressed to alleviate pressing tensions. Leaders identify Haredi military service, Haredi economic integration, and marriage and divorce laws in Israel as the foremost issues influencing the divide.

Haredi Military Service

Due to its historical associations with the Enlightenment and Ben-Gurion's out stated goals, the Haredi community sees military service as the ultimate vehicle for forced integration. It presses upon the community's primary fear of external influence. Exacerbating this is the 18-21 age of enlistment, years deemed most critical for yeshiva study, as students shift to Yeshiva Gedolah cultivating sophisticated learning skills. Enlistment at this age in particular is perceived as an attack on the red line of the yeshiva, one that if succeeded could damage the cultivation of the "Society of Scholars" and its future leaders.

To the broader Israeli public, however, military exemptions are seen as an injustice, valuing the lives of Haredi men, be it their well being or future development, above the rest of Israeli society. In addition, the secular community views military service as a declaration of allegiance to the state. Haredi non-participation therefore injures the sense of collective effort, hindering the perception of the Haredi community as active, willing partners in the advancement of Israel's well-being.

Addressing the Issue of Haredi Military Service

A national service option should be instituted for Haredi men. The option of community service has often been raised as a compromise vis-à-vis military service. Despite some expressions of dissatisfaction, creating it as an option has real potential for acceptance in both the Haredi community and Israeli society at large. It should include the following conditions to maximize its potential acceptance in both the Haredi community and broader Israeli public:

- Participation in community service would take place prior to entrance into the workforce.

- Community service would offer options within the Haredi world that would allow for continued segregation if desired. This would include Haredi schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, etc.

- Community service would be offered on a full-time one-year basis or a part-time two year basis. The part time structure would be allowed in combination with continued part-time yeshiva studies during the first year, and/or work during the second year.

- The agreement would actively seek the approval of the Haredi leadership in order to gain acceptance. Leaders supporting the Nahal Haredi and underscoring the need to get Haredi men into the job market are potential sources of support that should be pursued.

Haredi Economic Integration

Current policy regarding military service has left Haredim relying on continuous deferments to avoid the draft without a pathway to economic integration. Also lacking is sufficient vocational training particularly for Haredi men, most of whom finish any sort of mathematical instruction in elementary school, and have little-to-no computer literacy, critical for the work force. Haredi leaders are concerned over the threat of economic strangulation and a surplus of yeshiva students not suited for long-term yeshiva study without an alternative. The broader Israeli public is embittered about large-scale Haredi

non-participation in Israel's economic life. Haredi and non-Haredi leaders concur about the need to increase Haredi participation in the workforce.

Addressing the Issue of Haredi Economic Integration

Haredi economic training is an important first step towards economic integration. Vocational schools working within an all male/all female religious environment already exist, such as the Haredi Center for Technological Studies based in Jerusalem,[77] providing mathematical, linguistic, and other training to its students. They provide employment services, mostly in the computer and business sectors, supplying workers to many companies outside the Haredi community and create a support network for Haredi employees and non-Haredi employers to discuss problems or needs. Schools are run by members of the Haredi communities, approved by leading rabbis, and provide evening classes to yeshiva students in order to avoid contravening the army draft law.[78]

Current policy towards these schools, however, acts as a glass ceiling hindering institutional expansion and student enrollment. Classified as adult-education institutions rather than general colleges or universities due to their evening-class structure they only receive government funds for select courses recognized by the Ministry of Labor. This, despite offering a wide range of courses in addition to those approved by the Ministry of Labor as well as having degree programs. As a result, many are dependent on private sources for 40% of their funds, with 30% obtained from tuition and the other 30% from the government. Despite demand, a lack of financial resources has prevented schools of this kind from opening campuses or being able to provide for more students.[79]

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[77] Current enrollment is 2,000 students and the Center is looking to expand further.

[78] The law provides for military exemptions to yeshiva students only when yeshiva learning is their full-time occupation. Evening classes avoid contravention of this law, for they are considered after-work activities.

[79] The Haredi Center for Technological Studies, for example, was prevented in 2002 from opening a campus in Ramat Beit Shemesh, an area with a large Haredi population, due to economic limitations.

Government funding for these schools should be expanded by categorizing them as colleges or universities, and putting them under the broader auspices of the Ministry of Education rather than leaving them tied to the narrow funding channels of the Ministry of Labor. Shifting schools off their heavy reliance of fluctuating private funding would allow these institutions to respond to the growing demand of Haredim seeking the skills needed to enter today's job market and transitioning them into the workforce.

Marriage and Divorce Laws

Interviewed secular leaders also identify marriage and divorce laws as negatively influencing religious-secular relations in Israel. Complaints concerning the system are generally cast under the banner of religious coercion. Yet many participating leaders pinpoint two core primary complaints with the current system: restrictions over whom one can and cannot marry, deemed injurious to civil liberties in Israel, particularly amongst members of the secular liberal community,[80] and gaps in understanding between the courts and the public at large. Identification of these problems is important to make adjustment space while maintaining the system of marriage and divorce governed by Jewish law – a red-line of the Religious-Zionist community thought to be a key mechanism protecting Israel's Jewish character. Though improvements are thus limited, adjustments within the current framework are recommended to improve the system's reception while avoiding inflaming Religious-Zionist fears.

- ***Restrictions:*** As directed by Jewish law, marriage in Israel is prohibited between a Jew and a) a non-Jew; b) a mamzer (illegitimate offspring); c) a married person until both Jewish and civil divorce proceedings have been completed; d) one's own divorced spouse after marriage to another individual and the latter's death or divorce; e) a widow of a childless husband who is survived by a brother until after the halitzah ceremony is preformed; f) certain relatives (primary and secondary incest). Finally, a Kohen cannot marry a divorced woman, a halitzah widow, a convert, a

[80] Zarembski, 2002, pp. 38-39.

zonah (a woman whose sexual relationships violated Jewish law), or a halalah (Levirite widow.)[81] Unofficial practices have already risen to satisfy some of the demands of the secular community, such as civil marriages constructed by lawyers and the trend of marrying abroad. Despite this irritating the Religious-Zionist community and seen as eroding the status quo, changes in the official and unofficial structure are not recommended while Israel is still without a constitution defining the Jewish-democratic balance.

- ***Gaps in Understanding:*** Secular leaders note the gaps in understanding between the rabbinate and rabbinical courts and their public along two planes, religion and gender. On the religion plane, most rabbis on the rabbinical courts having grown up in a segregated, religious society, are unfamiliar with the concerns, lifestyle, mentality and sensitivities of the broader Israeli public. Interactions between the rabbinical courts and the public are thus often marked by insensitivity. A gap in understanding on the basis of gender, is due to the all-male nature of the rabbinate with rabbinical courts perceived as insensitive to women's issues, particularly evident in the issues of agunot and domestic violence. Rabbis are deemed oblivious to the harsh face the system presents to women. Both gaps in understanding harm the public's reception of the courts and their decisions.[82]

Addressing Marriage and Divorce Laws

The responsibility for addressing defects in the system seems to lie with the religious establishment, including the rabbinic courts and the office of the Chief Rabbinate, the latter of which governs most of the infrastructure of the current system. Insensitivity and the gap in understanding should be minimized to ease the functioning of the system in society.

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[81] Lamm, Maurice, *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage*, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1980.

[82] Interview with Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Dahan, July 18, 2001. See: Zarembski, 2002, p. 39.

Education of Rabbinical Officials to Heighten Sensitivity to Public Concerns and Needs

Instruction in social issues, including an in-depth look at pertinent problems in Israeli society, such as domestic violence, drug abuse, and family counseling, should be included in pre-*dayan* (rabbinic court judge) training to decrease the current gap in understanding. Training on these issues currently occurs in annual four-day conferences for dayanim, instituted in recent years under the direction of Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Dahan, Director of Rabbinical Courts of Israel. Yet more thorough study is needed to properly address the issues as they come before the court. Social issues should be incorporated into the exam to become a dayan in order to help ensure a dual focus on halakhic and social issues.

- ***Recruiting Rabbis with Diverse Experience***

  Effort should be made to recruit younger rabbis who have worked with the secular public, whether through general military service, a general educational background, past employment or social involvement, etc. This would help bridge the religious/non-religious gap in understanding as life-experience will bring understanding of the broader constituency to service and/or the bench.

- ***Public Education about Prenuptial Agreements***

  Prenuptial agreements guaranteeing the granting of a *get* (bill of divorce) can help reinforce women's standing before the court and, as one example, prevent the problem of *agunot*.[83] Policies encouraging these agreements should be arranged as part of the public's education provided at the time of marriage registration. While it is halachically problematic for the rabbinic courts alone to encourage these agreements, deemed coercive, and thus unacceptable at the time of divorce, Rabbi Ben-Dahan suggests partnering with women's advocacy organizations to educate women at the time of marriage registration about the rabbinic courts system, potential problems that could arise and the advantages of prenuptial agreements in case of

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[83] Interview with Prof. Alice Shalvi, July 12, 2001. See: Zarembski, 2002, p. 43.

divorce.[84] This structure could also create a unique partnership between Israel's rabbinate and the women's organizations, often at odds with each other on religious-secular issues, working together towards a common goal.

Maximizing Halachic Options

Finally, while maintaining the system, it is important to provide for any flexibility in it, empowering the public and particularly those feeling imprisoned by the system. The rabbinate should look to incorporate the work of independent organizations now offering an array of options within the Halachic parameters.

At the forefront of these independent organizations is Tzohar, funded by the AviChai Foundation, which works to shape "a new kind of interaction" between officiating rabbis and the public. Tzohar's work, dealing primarily with marriage and, to a more limited degree, burial ceremonies, is currently limited by its competitive relationship with the rabbinate (with members of the public now needing to request Tzohar's, implying awareness of them, and applicants are known to have been dissuaded from this option by the rabbinate) and lack of government funding (Tzohar's budget from AviChai is $1.5 million over a period of two years, requiring its 350+ rabbis to work on a voluntary basis.)

A shift in the structure towards full or partial incorporation of Tzohar's work with that of the Rabbinate would be mutually beneficial. The reaction of the broader public to Tzohar has been positive, reducing the sense of coercion felt with the system in marriage. Its incorporation could help direct the same positive feedback towards the Rabbinate. Tzohar can benefit from the would-be increased budget and broader constituency's awareness of its services. Options range from full incorporation by establishing a Tzohar unit under the rabbinate structure to partial funding and incorporation including public education of Tzohar as a rabbinic option and joint training/conferences for Tzohar and non-Tzohar rabbis.

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[84] Ben-Dahan, August 14, 2002.

5 Exogenous Variables: Dealing With Outside Influences

Israel's security situation, the mass media, and the Supreme Court are the identified exogenous variables most impacting religious-secular relations.[85]

Israel's Security Situation

Religious-secular relations intimately respond to Israel's security situation due to its close correlation to the underlying factors of the divide. When Israel is under threat, the common concern for survival and a common enemy heightens a sense of commonality. Common dedication to the land is also exhibited, foremost in military efforts, reconnecting the Religious-Zionist and secular once again. Identity is temporarily boosted by granting the negative-based identity of "Not Arab" as a minimum for self-definition.

However, to avoid vast fluctuation, religious-secular unity should be based on positive rather than negative based factors such as security crises. Israel should work to increase a sense of cohesion within those Jewish population variables it can control and be proud to perpetuate. Recommendations are suggested throughout this paper.

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[85] For further discussion see: Zarembski, 2002, p. 50-55.

Media

The media is seen as one of the most harmful variables impacting religious-secular relations. This is in particular, though not solely, in regard to Haredi-secular relations. Leaders explain the media's contribution to the demonization of and alienation between the two communities. The written press in particular, each community with its own, has been transformed into a battleground for religious-secular tensions. Inflammatory remarks and photographs are commonplace. Leaders express the need to address the problem of media coverage in order to create an atmosphere where improved religious-secular relations are viable.

National and Haredi Press

Israel has three major daily newspapers. They are controlled by a secular elite. The Haredi community has developed extensive media outlets of its own with over 20 newspapers disseminating information of its own world view. Haredi noninvolvement in Israel's mainstream media structure is primarily voluntary, evident for example, in the limited Haredi participation in such national media bodies as Israel's Press Council, a body which brings together the journalists, publishers, editors, and members of the public to ensure free access to information and to maintain professional ethics.[86]

Impact of Segregation on the Media's Influence

The extent of media is intensified because of extensive segregation. The media is the almost exclusive information provider for the Haredi and secular communities, shaping opinions via mediation rather than through direct interaction. As a mediator the media garners a tremendous amount of power[87]

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[86] Limor, Yehiel, "The Printed Media: Israel's Newspapers," *Spotlight on Israel*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oct 16, 2000. www.mfa.gov.il

[87] Caspi, Dan, & Yehiel Limor, *The In/Outsiders: Mass Media in Israel*, Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999, p. 4.

and both communities feel helpless in the face of the messages being communicated to the other.

Addressing the Media

Joint Media Watch should be created to monitor language and stories impacting religious-secular relations in the various communities' press. While a media watch currently exists under the auspices of Israel's Press Council dealing with all complaints against newspapers including religious-secular relations, its multi-task nature makes it less attuned to religious-secular sensibilities. Its member composition, for example, is perceived as unbalanced, including only one Haredi representative from its body of journalists, editors, members of the public. Composition is a critical component to obtain the trust and acceptance of various communities. Therefore, the current body is seen as an arm of the secular elite system. This may contribute to Haredi journalists making light of the Press Council's rulings, claiming that both the body and its decisions are biased.

A Joint Media Watch, however, would consist of an equal number of Haredi, religious-Zionist and secular journalists whose sole job would be to monitor the press for inappropriate portrayals or language with regard to the secular and religious communities. Fines and public apologies/corrections would be used as corrective measures, albeit with adherence voluntary, so as not to interfere with freedom of speech. Again, this collaborative religious-secular endeavor would itself serve as a national model for increased cooperation and dialogue.

The Supreme Court

Due to the absence of a constitution and the vague characterization of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, Israel's Supreme Court has broad leeway in its interpretations. As in most democracies, judicial review allows court interpretation where clarification is necessary. In Israel, the Supreme Court has traditionally served as the foremost protector of civil liberties, though great differences in interpretation have resulted from court to court, whether in the direction of Israel as a liberal democracy or as a Jewish state.

Current Supreme Court Chief Justice Aharon Barak identifies functional lawmaking as one of the Court's roles.[88] In turn, this Court is perceived, by the Religious-Zionist community in particular, as usurping the Knesset's power to legislate, yet without public mandate. Together its long-standing role as the "protector of democracy"[89], the assertive nature of this court magnifies the Religious-Zionist fear that Israel is losing its Jewish character, and grows in the context void of a counterbalancing institution which protects the state's Jewish identity. The rabbinate, designed to govern Jewish issues relating to the state, does not wield the "functional lawmaking" and its decisions, rather, yield to those of the Court. The Haredi community, on the other hand, while to some degree concerned with a perceived diminishing of Jewish content to the state, are cautiously open to a more democratic Israel sensing it would also allow for greater religious freedom and community independence. The behavior of the current Supreme Court is exacerbating for both the Haredi and Religious-Zionist communities, however, in the sense that Israel is becoming more secular.

Addressing the Supreme Court

A policy to address tensions brought between a liberal court and the religious community should be able to withstand the vacillating nature of the Supreme Court. Aforementioned codification of Israel's democratic values and Jewish identity can also work to address the specific issue here. Increasing the national visibility, importance, and legal standing of both elements equally would regulate fears that one is gaining standing above the other. Moreover, including Jewish character definition in Israel's basic laws and/or possible constitution would raise a degree of cautiousness around Israel's Jewish character from the currently aggressive judicial review. Parallel legal protection to Israel's Jewish and democratic nature would establish them as equal national priorities, advancing cohesiveness and cross-community relations by securing a place for all.

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[88] Barak, Aharon, "The Role of the Supreme Court in a Democracy," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 3, No 2, September 1998.

[89] Ibid., p.10.

6 Various Negotiation Models

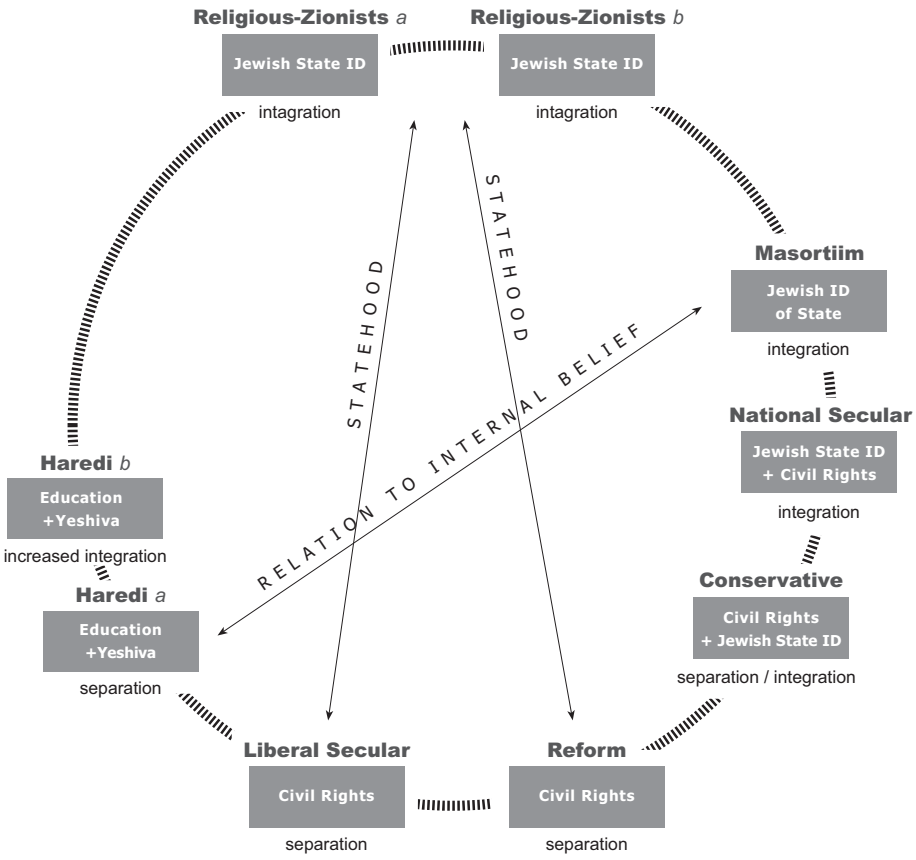
In the complexities of intragroup relations, negotiation models often help to visualize the relationship between the involved parties and the multitude of issues to facilitate negotiation or policy formation. The three negotiation models below highlight one option for the positioning of the religious and secular communities in Israel today as well as the potential impact of select policy recommendations discussed in this paper on the current environment.

Red Lines, Coalition Positioning, and Negotiation Space Model

This model depicts the various communities' relationship to each other on the basis of sentiment towards religion and state integration or separation (or the notion of "Jewish statehood" as a reflection of religion and state integration) on a vertical axis; the means by which a community and its members relate to its internal belief system (stringency versus accommodation) on the more horizontal axis; and the red lines of each community along the circumference. Communities are broken down in a more nuanced form to provide for some of the subtleties important to understanding possible (and often surprising) coalition buildings, overlapping in communities' shared outlook on various issues, and breaking old stereotypes. Moreover, the dynamic between positions on statehood and members' relation to internal belief is important particularly in scenarios when personal belief conflicts with state policy, a variable that is changing particularly in the Haredi and Religious-Zionist communities yet is little documented.

The model reveals polarity between the Religious-Zionist community and the Secular Liberal and Reform communities along the statehood axis. This is

Red Lines, Coalition Positioning, and Negotiation Space Model



reflective of community red lines and the degree to which they seek religious integration into the state. Both parts of the Religious-Zionist community give religious sanctity to Israel as the Jewish state and hold at its core the Jewish identity of the state. As a result they ideologically seek maximum religion and state integration. The extent of the "maximum integration" somewhat varies practically however, as the populous diversifies, with those following the trend of the leadership started in the 1950s towards increased strictness and segregation (connoted by Religious-Zionist a) and those who continue to lean more towards compromise for leveling out contradictions in the state (Religious Zionist b). The Secular Liberal and Reform communities share the red line of civil rights in the country and stress separation of religion and state as the means of ensuring those civil rights. They are on the opposing end from the Religious-Zionist community in relation to religion and state integration. On the bottom left side, are the two segments of the Haredi community, united by the shared red line of education and yeshivot. Both segments are on the lower end of support for Jewish statehood, yet the community is diversifying on the issue and the degree to which they want religion and state integration. This is an important misperception that needs adjusting. While common belief in the secular community perceives the Haredi community as wanting a theocracy or promoting a high level of religion and state integration, many in the Haredi community, as Haredi a on the model, seek full or heavy separation of religion and state in the country. To them, this will minimize the attack on the Haredi lifestyle and allow them to live as an undisturbed community as they wish. How would this work practically in terms of financial support to yeshivas and their students? It is left unclear by the leadership yet could be understood on the level of support for these individuals and institutions as an element of national culture discussed in this paper. This is an outlook that is viable as Haredi ideologically does not sanctify to Israel as a Jewish state until messianic redemption. On the ground, however, there has been developing over the past several decades an element of the Haredi community, connoted as Haredi b, which seeks more religion and state integration. Explanation for this seems to be the impact of a practical shift in the approach towards and involvement in the state. Increased national involvement has upped the effort to create a more religiously comfortable country. Yet this move seems also to have influenced the sentiment of this sub-section towards the notion of Israel as the Jewish state. It is evident in such new activities as some level of participation in or religious

acknowledgement of Israel's Independence Day in an increasing number of communities that self-identify as part of the Haredi or "black" community.

On the right hand side of the axis you have several communities and subcommunities. The masortim who too have the red line of the Jewish identity of the state and seek integration of religion and state are closest to the religious-Zionist community. For this community, however, the stance is not based on ideology but rather a practical approach toward the state. They distinguish themselves by the degree to which they assert this notion in policy formation as opposed to compromise. Under them you have the Secular National subcommunity, which though part of the secular community maintains both Jewish state identity and civil rights in the country as redlines, placing the former as priority above the latter. For that reason they generally support religion and state integration, yet are even more willing than the Masortim to compromise on this notion for the benefit of other pressing issues. Finally you have the Conservative community, who stand close to the Reform community on issues of integration and redlines. However, the Conservative community maintains to some degree the redline of Jewish state identity with the redline of civil rights, though civil rights takes heavy priority. For this reason they seek religion and state separation foremost, though acknowledge a desire for some level of integration.

The horizontal axis describes how a community relates to its internal belief system, independent of whether that system is religious or secular based. At the left polar end is the Haredi community, particularly Haredi a, most adamant about applying unbending stringencies to belief based issues. On the right opposing end you have the Masortim who apply little stringencies in relating to belief based issues. The two subcommunities of Haredi b and the Religious-Zionists are moving closer together on this issue, evident above the axis. Though still very distinguishable, Haredi b is moving slightly away from the most adamant application of stringencies, while Religious-Zionist a is increasingly applying additional stringencies than its counterpart. Moreover, interestingly, this definitional analysis places the Secular Liberal community once again close to the Haredi community. Though maintaining a very different system of belief, one religious based and the other secular, they approach their system with equal adamancy and application of stringencies. This could be an additional reason the two groups share a similar perspective on separation of

religion and state; to promote a society, either internally or externally, with minimum restrictions to the manner they choose to live in.

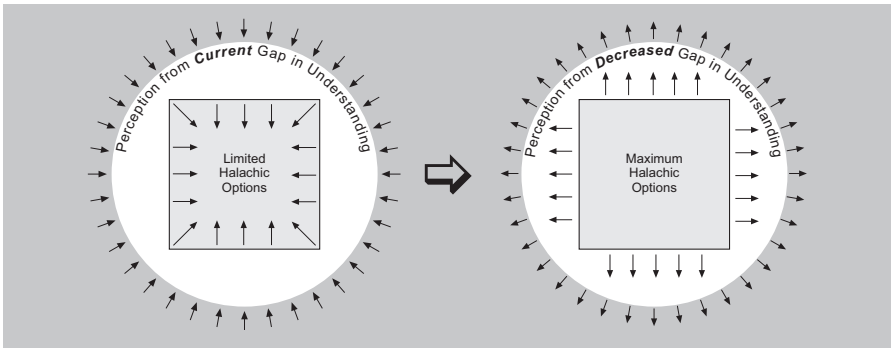
The analysis drawn from the interaction of the two axes provides an interesting look into what happens within each community when issues of internal belief conflict with state policies. The Haredi a and Secular Liberal are least willing to accommodate protective stringencies protecting for the sake of the state. The Masortim are most willing. Also revealed are the developments on this issue that arise as a result of the diversification of the Haredi and Religious-Zionist communities, and how that impacts their willingness to remain staunch in internal belief despite clashing with state policy. Segments of the Haredi community (located in the Haredi b category) are becoming more willing, though still quite grudgingly, to downplay a religious hardline to facilitate policy making. On the other hand, segments of the religious-Zionist community (located in Religious-Zionist a) are becoming less willing to do so. For the Religious-Zionist community this has become increasingly polemic (dependent upon various interpretations of Jewish law) in such matters as land concession and following military orders to evacuate or dismantle a given settlement. It is important to note that for both of the Haredi and Religious-Zionist communities as a whole accommodation is very difficult when it clashes directly with a basic religious law as opposed to a stringency applied to safeguard the law.

Specific Issues Model: Marriage and Divorce Laws

Under the current system, marriage and divorce are enclosed in a Halachic framework. Pressure directed inward further encloses the framework due to a specific, more limited approach to Halachic interpretation by the Rabbinate. On top of this is an inward directing pressure that results from the perception of the secular populous, due to the gap in understanding between the Rabbinate and Rabbinic courts and the general Israeli public, that seems to enclose the system even further. Resulting is an already limited system, created to preserve Jewish identity of the state and provide for the Religious-Zionist redlines, that is even further minimized in its potential size. By introducing both an approach to Halakhic interpretation receptive to providing options to the current system, as discussed in this paper, and reducing the gaps in understanding, pressure is directed towards maximizing the potential boundaries. Though still enclosed,

reversing pressures from a minimizing to a maximizing approach may help alleviate some of the sense of imprisonment and hostility felt particularly by the secular community on Israel's marriage and divorce system while providing for the red lines of the Religious-Zionist community.

Specific Issues Model: Marriage and Divorce Laws



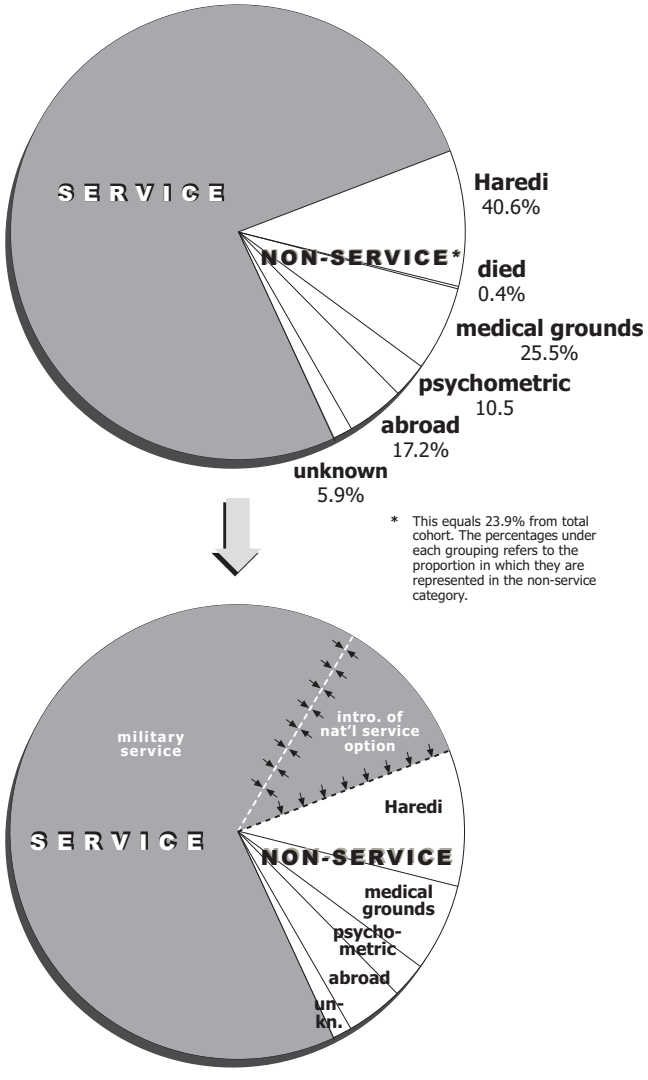
Specific Issues Model: Military Service (Males)

The current military service structure provides little option for Haredi potential enlistees. Though strides have been made in this area via the creation of Nahal Haredi, the channel is still little utilized. In its stead, though not necessarily prohibitive to the former, is now a trend for more stringent Religious-Zionists to use the option that would allow them stricter kashrut provisions and time each day to study religious texts rather than a strong increase in the Haredi population. As a result, Haredim remain an estimated 40.6% of those who don't serve each year, or 9.6% of the total cohort[90] in 2002. By broadening the notion of service to include national service and introducing the additional option of national service for Haredi men that would allow for various civic volunteering inside or outside the Haredi community, Haredi participation in service to the country could increase further. Blurring the line between types of service and including an additional percentage of the Haredi population that would involve itself in national service via volunteer work, could also have implications on the

[90] Prof. Stuart Cohen, personal communication, October 10, 2002.

acceptability of the notion of service in general inside the community. As a critical mass gradually develops, members of the community will slowly know someone involved in service. Leaders are also likely to see it as a more efficient method of getting their communtiy into the increasingly important job market. Tipping the scales towards a critical mass involved in service could have implications for military service as well, paving the way for broader enlistment in Nachal Haredi or other avenues of military enlistment.

Specific Issues Model: Military Service (Males)



Conclusion

Relations amongst the various religious and secular communities in Israel are tenuous. They have grown increasingly fragile over the past three decades, edged on, and encouraging even further, by a growth in the underlying factors of fear, decreased commonality, insecurity of identity, and segregation. Yet Israel's religious-secular reality is a complex matrix, with a range of Jewish belief and practice. It is this that has remained relatively stable, particularly in terms of self-identification, though some degree of movement towards increasingly religious or secular poles is evident from the center.

This work seeks to place before the reader, in historical context, a glance into the various communities and a better understanding of the contributants increasing religious-secular tensions in the face of this relatively stable religious behavior. It offers policy suggestions aimed at addressing contributants, as well as some of the divide's manifestations, while being sensitive to the needs and concerns of the various communities involved.

The policy recommendations presented can be divided into four basic categories: ***Policies looking to develop further Israel's minimum framework as a democratic and Jewish state***. These efforts look to make confident the religious and secular communities of their place in Israeli society and ease overall tensions; ***Policies increasing a sense of cohesiveness and interdependence amongst communities***. These look to counteract the declining sense of commonality by creating joint endeavors and promoting common objectives; ***Policies using the realm of education to formulate a positive common denominator for identity, relative to one's self and in relation to the other***. These look to using Jewish bases to strengthen identity, each community on its own terms, and reinforce bases of commonality for Jews in Israel. This would likely spill onto relations with the Diaspora, as well, furthering Jewish-Israeli understanding of community and identity; and ***Policies aimed at***

respecting the differences of each community and varied ways of life. These involve shaping policies specific to the needs and red lines of each community, working to encourage the distinct interests of each community individually for betterment of the country at large and seeking to transform the current environment from one of conflict to that of mutual appreciation.

The goal of all of these recommendations is to encourage nuanced policy proactive in combating corrosive elements detrimental to religious-secular relations. It is in an effort – central to the effort of the entire two part series – to address basic internal tensions currently deferring to other crises and expected to either initiate self-repair or implode. The suggested path, rather, is for Israel to actively work towards improving religious-secular relations, recognizing its importance in the well-being of the nation and the Jewish people as a whole.

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