

SECULARISM AND DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL: MILITARY SERVICE AS CASE STUDY

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In 1992, with the so-called Basic Laws, Israel was defined as a “Jewish and democratic state.” But according to Dorit Beinisch,¹ there is still no consensus among the Israeli secular (*hiloni*) and religious (*dati*) public as to what it means to be Jewish and democratic, and nobody knows how to balance the two.² In fact, many have wondered to what extent the Jewish religion is compatible with the tenets of democracy. By turning to the Torah and the Talmud, it is possible to quote passages that give the most varied and dissimilar answers: from “if Israel is Jewish, it cannot be democratic,” to “Israel can be democratic precisely because it is Jewish,” et cetera.³ Compulsory military service in Israel represents an emblematic case to illustrate, with some depth, the tensions, scope and nuances of this critical discussion, inasmuch as the notions of secularization and democracy converge intimately here.

OBSTACLE TO SECULARIZATION

Most scholars admit that the typically Western concept of secularism is not adaptable to the Israeli case. For example,

in the definition of secularism by Giovanni Sartori,⁴ in which the separation of religion and state entails the existence of a democratic society based on liberal values, Israel cannot be considered a secular state. According to Uri Ram, a sociologist at Ben-Gurion University, the state of Israel defines “its nation” in ethnic, rather than civil terms. This means that Jewish Israel cannot separate state and synagogue. Under the prevailing form of Jewish ethnic nationalism, it is the synagogue that defines the “essence” and boundaries of the “nation” that dominates the state.⁵ Therefore, the separation of religion and state in Israel will encounter strong opposition, not only from the religious parties, but also from large parts of the traditional and even most of the secular public whose support is significant to the non-religious parties.⁶

Guy Ben-Porat, a professor at Ben-Gurion University, explains that the secularizing process in Israel has been very limited because it has been devoid of a liberal ideology. Ben-Porat tries to illustrate this with terms that refer directly to the theories of secularization presented by Carl Schmitt. What has been crystallized

in Israel is the transfer of religious values and symbols to the political arena, converting Zionist ideology into a civil religion, in a scenario in which Judaism provides a clear framework of legitimacy for political actors.⁷ From this point of view, Howard Sachar maintains that only a secularly presented religious conception could, in the development of Zionist history, unite the Jews within that national movement.⁸ Not for nothing, Ram describes Zionism as “secularism with a skullcap in the pocket.”⁹ Although there are many types of Zionism (ranging from liberal to religious), these merely represent versions of a single creed that has become the civil religion of the state. In its present form, it constitutes a barrier to a complete secularization of Israeli society. This phenomenon explains the broad influence and political power of a minority group, a fact that ultimately calls into question the very democracy of the state.

It is also necessary to aver that Israel is today a much more democratic state than 20, 30 or 40 years ago. Ruth Gavison and Alexander Yakobson, both professors at the Hebrew University, point out that Israeli Arab citizens now have important civil rights and political representation and enjoy reasonable levels of social welfare, education and security. In addition, press freedom has increased considerably in recent years, and parliament can now make a more consistent opposition to the executive branch. However, from the perspective of secularization, it is possible to critically review Israeli democracy today. A religious minority enjoys prerogatives of which a secular majority is deprived. For this reason, the challenges that Israel will face in the future to further separate politics and religion in order to establish a truly democratic regime — and not merely

a functional system of concessions, negotiations and commitments with the most radical Jewish sectors — are enormous.

THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX ON MILITARY SERVICE

The ultra-Orthodox (*haredim*), who now comprise 12 percent of the Israeli population,¹⁰ are exempt from military service.¹¹ In accordance with the Supreme Court of Israel, the exemption of this minority represents a clear violation of the principle of equality.¹² Likewise, Hiddush (Innovation),¹³ headed by the Reformist Rabbi Uri Regev, has been very insistent in pointing out that the principle of equality is at the soul of democracy, arguing that the ploys of the ultra-Orthodox parties that seek to perpetuate the military exemption of young *haredim*, contradict not only this principle, but also the will of the large majority of the Jewish public.¹⁴

This problematic issue dates back to the very foundation of the state. In 1948, David Ben-Gurion reached an agreement with the ultra-Orthodox on the deferral of military service to *haredi* youth as long as they could demonstrate every six months that they were studying in a *yeshiva*, until reaching the age of total exoneration. Consequently, 400 young people (all of them Holocaust survivors) were exempted from conscription on the condition of devoting their time exclusively to the study of the Torah. This agreement soon acquired the legal status known as *Torato Umanuto* (Torah as occupation).¹⁵ Ben-Gurion agreed to negotiate with the *haredi* sector because he desperately needed the support of the religious parties to comprise a coalition and form a majority government.¹⁶ Thus, the first prime minister of Israel inaugurated the tradition of incorporating religious factions into the political arena, a move that

would be followed by all the main parties in shaping majority governments in the Knesset. Therefore, the Torato Umanuto status has remained in force since 1948, despite multiple attempts by the judiciary to reverse it. Indeed, the Supreme Court has constantly pointed out the problematic implications of the fact that what was initially a privilege for 400 students has now been extended to 12 percent of the population of 9 million.

For the ultra-Orthodox leaders, however, to study in a yeshiva is far from being an evasion of the military obligation since their task represents willing “service” in the “people’s spiritual army.”¹⁷ The main argument

presented by haredi in this regard relates to the belief that, without the Torah, “... the Jewish

people would have long been exterminated from the stage of History, not only by assimilating spiritually but by disappearing physically.”¹⁸ In other words, not the existence of an army but the study of Torah and Talmud has guaranteed, for thousands of years, the survival of Judaism in a world that has always been hostile to Jews. The Israeli army is seen as one of these hostile agents because recruitment assumes an unacceptable interruption of studies¹⁹ and the disintegration of a community that, being fragmented, will not be able to perpetuate the authentic practices of Judaism.

The army is the engine of a secular regime,²⁰ a threatening “melting pot” aiming to fuse the genuine Jewish religion with the paganism of a secular world. Indeed, a high percentage of the few ultra-Orthodox

youth who agree to do military service do not return to their community and lose their religious identity. According to Yoelish Kraus, a member of the haredi anti-Zionist organization HaEda HaHaredit, every ultra-Orthodox young man who enters the army becomes secular.²¹ Hence, the army represents a serious threat to the preservation of haredi culture and certainly of the Jewish religion, because only if the community is safeguarded can Judaism be preserved.

The ultra-Orthodox additionally point out that the secular world negatively influences a young haredi in the army, exposing him to spiritual dilemmas, as he is forced to perform tasks contrary to the teachings

of the Torah.²²

The rabbinical authorities vehemently claim that the state does not have the right to impose on true Jews

rules that violate the basic principles of the scriptures. Furthermore, if the Jewish people managed to survive 2,000 years in the Diaspora, it was precisely because they had no state.²³ Therefore, several ultra-Orthodox groups have come to define themselves as Jews only, not as Israelis,²⁴ since they are linked to a land whose holiness is recognized but not to a state that, without divine legitimacy, represents only occupation and opprobrium.²⁵ The statements directed by Rabbi Yisrael Eichler to the political leaders of Israel were famous at the time (1992):

You are not members of our faith and we do not belong to your people. You are foreign occupiers in the land of our Fathers and your state is not

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our state. Your flag is not our flag.... Perhaps we need to ask Bolshevik Knesset members this: "What do we have to do with you? Would you serve in a Haredi army if the government were in our hands?... By what right do you require a Haredi Jew to join the army of the secular state?"²⁶

THE "HILONI" POSITION

Among secular parties, the one that stands out the most when dealing with this subject is Yesh Atid (There is a Future), a center party led by Yair Lapid, who claims to represent the interests of the Israeli secular middle class. In 2013, Yaakov Peri, member of parliament for Yesh Atid, established a committee that proposed the following recommendations to the government: given that 70 percent of ultra-Orthodox youth were eligible for recruitment, this percentage must be integrated into the ranks over a period of three years. If this objective were not met, the haredim who evade conscription would be imprisoned.²⁷

The threat of imprisonment was not a deterrent for the ultra-Orthodox; on the contrary, they became more entrenched in their positions. In an interview with TRT World in September 2017, Yitzhak Pindrus, a member of the United Torah Judaism (Yahadut HaTorah) coalition, said that the Jewish people had sacrificed absolutely everything for 2,000 years so that their young people could study the scriptures, and if the parliament considers that it is unconstitutional to exempt the haredim from military service, "... we will see then how the state manages to imprison 80,000 yeshiva students."²⁸ This event allowed the ultra-Orthodox groups to bring into question, once again, the Jewish nature of Israel: if the government with its parliament and its "courts of gentiles"²⁹ consider

that studying the Torah is a crime, the state might be very democratic, but it is under no circumstances a Jewish state.

Contrary to most of the theocratic analysis presented by the ultra-Orthodox authorities, a large proportion of liberal arguments appealing to the principle of equality have arisen among the secular public, mainly represented by certain journalists, the Supreme Court, Hiddush and independent centers of research such as the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI). First, in the interest of ensuring that young haredim serve in the military³⁰ and thus become integrated into the rest of society, it is counterproductive for the state to use coercive measures that would ultimately, according to Yedidia Stern, generate a civil war.³¹

The members of the IDI and Hiddush have repeatedly proposed that, instead of threatening to put thousands of ultra-Orthodox behind bars, it would be more sensible to reduce state funds for yeshivas. Moreover, these subsidies should follow a logic of positive and negative incentives, reducing the "community of Torah scholars" but fostering the formation of an academic community composed of high-quality students.³² In other words, only outstanding yeshiva pupils should be exempted from conscription; many students do not devote themselves full-time to the study of the scriptures and seek refuge in the *yeshivot* simply to avoid going into the army. It is also well known, according to IDI columnists Yedidia Stern and Haim Zicherman, that two-thirds of the haredim who have postponed their military service are interested in joining the workforce. Therefore, the government must promote democratic measures within the haredi community, to impose the general will of the vast majority of ultra-Orthodox youth on their ultra-Orthodox leaders.³³

Indeed, one of the most effective ways to achieve haredi integration into civil society is through military service. Nearly 90 percent of the ultra-Orthodox who go to the army later join the workforce, as during their service they learn practical skills and acquire a different education from the exclusively religious one they usually receive.³⁴ This is not just an economic argument; it appeals as well to democracy and the concept of social inclusion. If the ultra-Orthodox integrate themselves into the rest of society, they will be able to escape poverty, improve their condition and reduce social inequality. “The message isn’t ‘Be secular,’ it’s ‘Study Talmud, but support your family with dignity.’”³⁵

In a society in which religion is the marker of national identity, however, liberal arguments do not seem to be

convincing enough. Some liberal scholars and political leaders representing secular parties are regularly forced to dust off their skullcaps and quote Torah in order to counter theocratic haredi stances. This is why religious figures such as Rabbi Uri Regev (president of Hiddush) and Rabbi Dov Lipman (a member of the Knesset for Yesh Atid 2013-15) went public by picking up the reins of the conscription debate. Lipman, for example, appeals constantly to traditional religious values. In an interview, Yitzhak Pindrus argued that in the days of King David, 50 percent of the Israelite population was devoted to studying the sacred texts and the other 50 percent to taking up arms to defend the state. Lipman retorted that at the time

of King David, when a war broke out, all Israelites, including religious, were forced to take up arms.³⁶

Not only rabbis representing secular forces have had to resort to religious arguments. In 2013, Ruth Calderon, in her first speech in the Knesset, repeatedly quoted passages of the Talmudic Haggadah to defend the secular principle of equality: “Equality in the burden,”³⁷ which is the slogan of her party, Yesh Atid.³⁸ This shows how inescapable religious references are in the political debate, making everyone cite the names “King David,” “Moshe Rabbeinu” and “Abraham Avinu,” whether in the Knesset or the media. Ulti-

mately, the so-called liberals have to perform as clerics or call rabbis for assistance, invoking

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religion for legitimization. These people do not represent the political mainstream but the forces of opposition, yet once in power, are forced to adapt to the system: a mainstream that has to kowtow to the ultra-Orthodox political factions. The case of Yoav Kisch reveals quite well that the government is ready to act against members who dare to defy the status quo (the agreement reached by Ben-Gurion and the ultra-Orthodox).³⁹

To a large extent, religious discourse and symbols continue to be used (often with populist overtones) by the political leaders in the government coalitions. It is an unbeatable method to move the masses and gain supporters. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly resorts to

religious references. In 2015, for instance, he gave a speech in the U.S. Congress in which he addressed the meaning of Purim and spoke about Moses as if he had been a being of flesh and blood — all in order to condemn the Iranian nuclear project.⁴⁰

ATTEMPTS AT INTEGRATION

Perhaps the most remarkable attempt proposed by the Israeli government to promote haredi integration into the workforce was the 2002 enactment of the Tal Law, authorizing the continuation of military-service exemptions for yeshiva students but with the following innovation: every yeshiva student, upon reaching the age of 22, would be allowed to study for a profession or seek a job without losing his *Torato Umanuto* status.⁴¹ At the end of the year, the young man could decide whether to return to his Bible studies or continue his journey in the practical world.⁴² Years after its enactment, however, the Tal Law proved ineffective; it failed to change the conditions of conscription for the ultra-Orthodox, and very few were recruited. In 2007, in spite of objections raised by the Supreme Court, the validity of the Tal Law was extended for another five years.⁴³ In 2012, however, the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.⁴⁴

Many political leaders endorsed the court's decision. Meretz chairwoman Zehava Gal-On said, "Meretz's petition and the decision that the law is unconstitutional is a victory for the principle of equality." Tzipi Livni, then leader of Kadima, also hailed the decision:

Justice has been served. Social justice necessitates sharing the burden. Kadima will initiate tomorrow a set of bills that will make military or civil service compulsory. We won't

allow the Zionist majority to become a minority that carries everyone else on its back because of Netanyahu's coalition preferences, and his natural allies. The Zionist majority must oust the Government that enslaves our future to certain sectors that damage the general public.

Likewise, Shaul Mofaz welcomed the decision, adding that the Knesset now has "an historic opportunity to fix this demented law once and for all." Even some Likud members agreed with the law's abrogation. Tzipi Hotovely said the decision was morally correct and that, "...due to the consecutive failure of Israeli governments to guarantee mutual responsibility within Israeli society, it was the High Court's duty to stand firm and guard social consolidation, especially in such fateful times."⁴⁵

Hopes for change were dashed again, however. Right after the Tal Law was ruled unconstitutional, the government established the Commission for Equality in the Burden, better known as the Plesner Committee, which was composed of representatives from all coalition parties (except religious parties, which boycotted the committee). In July 2012, Netanyahu dissolved the committee because the representatives of both Israel Our Home (Israel Beitenu) and The Jewish Home (HaBait HaYehudi) withdrew from it. Kadima's representative, Yohanan Plesner, was then left practically alone.

Nonetheless, Plesner published, on his own, a report disclosing all the recommendations made by the committee before its dissolution. One of the conclusions was the goal of recruiting two-thirds of the ultra-Orthodox fit for military service within five years⁴⁶ and making it compulsory for all young haredi to serve in the army

until the age of 22, except for a very select group of 1,500 yeshiva students.⁴⁷ Netanyahu preferred to dismantle the committee before putting its recommendations into practice, presumably to avoid losing the support of the religious parties in parliament. Immediately after the dissolution of the committee, Yesh Atid harshly criticized the prime minister. In an interview for Channel 2, Lapid stressed that Netanyahu had a unique historical opportunity to fix the problem of conscription but preferred to take refuge in political pettiness, a move the Israeli people would never forgive.⁴⁸

In 2014, the Knesset approved Amendment 19 of the Security Service Law, expanding the participation of ultra-Orthodox youth and yeshiva students in military and civil-national services.⁴⁹ But, again, history repeated itself. In 2015, the ultra-Orthodox parties managed to form a coalition with the Netanyahu government and water down Amendment 19, thereby indefinitely postponing military service for yeshiva students.⁵⁰ Miriam Naor, president of the court at the time, declared that this alliance seriously harmed the principle of equality.⁵¹

By the same token, Hiddush, through the Rafi Smith Polling Institute, tried to determine what Israeli Jews thought after the government revoked Amendment 19. According to the survey, 76 percent of Israeli Jews opposed the amendment of the Service Law in 2015 and 82 percent of non-Orthodox Israeli Jews disapproved of the maneuver. Based on this data, Rabbi Regev fiercely criticized the government's decision:

Israel's politicians have deliberately chosen to pursue legislation which is not only immoral but also unconstitutional. . . .None of the Zionist coalitions

MKs were willing to stand up against their ultra-Orthodox coalition partners. The responsibility for this betrayal of Israel's voters lies clearly with the Likud, Kulanu and Jewish Home parties, for whom no price is too high for maintaining their hold on power, not even the lives of Israeli soldiers and their families — not even the lives of the voters who supported them. . . . The Zionist parties of the coalition trampled not only equality of civic burden among Israel's citizens, but also their own voters. . . . It's hard to think of a broader consensus among the nation than the opposition to this new law.⁵²

It seems clear that, contrary to the government, the Supreme Court (which certainly adopted Yesh Atid's slogan "share in the burden") is truly committed to the defense of the principle of equality. Most of the attempts sponsored by different governments to foster equality by bringing young ultra-Orthodox to the army, have been ultimately deceitful, given that nearly all the parliament's projects have been dismantled by government coalitions. The many Israeli governments have always seemed to be more worried about not contradicting religious principles than promoting equality and democracy. This phenomenon, as we will see, has profound sociological roots. The Israeli secular majority lacks coherence and commitment regarding a secular project⁵³ and maintains an ambivalent position towards religion and religious authorities. This situation is exploited by the government in order to perpetuate laws favorable to the haredi parties, who consider religion the main legitimacy provider for politicians. Ultra-Orthodox parties have thus been able to preserve Ben-Gurion's status

quo, which not only consists of military exemptions but the strict interpretation of religious matters, namely Shabbat, Kashrut, marriages and education. In other words, Israel has been kidnapped by ultra-Orthodoxy and can hardly be considered as a secular state. This is not a secret. It is very well known by the secular public and political parties. Not without reason, Lapid opened his famous conference addressed to young haredim with the sentence “Atem nizahtem” (you won).⁵⁴

The Supreme Court, Hiddush and Yesh

Atid agree, pointing out that the influence of the ultra-Orthodox parties and the way they manage to affect

political life, threatens Israeli democracy. According to Lapid, the religious parties have not only eroded the democratic dynamics of the state; they have caused much harm to the ultra-Orthodox community by creating more and more barriers and increasing hatred between haredim and hilonim. Therefore, if the religious want to participate in politics, they must incorporate themselves to the political system by joining parties such as Likud, the Labor Party, et cetera.⁵⁵ This seems to be a proposal aimed at keeping religion from defining political positions. But how much has this suggestion been welcomed by the Israeli public? For scholars like Ruth Gavison, preventing religious parties from participating in the political arena can be very harmful to democracy.⁵⁶ In any case, the figures apparently support Lapid: When Shas and United Torah Judaism came back to conform to the government coalition in

2015, the survey conducted by the Smith Polling Institute showed that 81 percent of Jews were dissatisfied with the government’s approach to issues of religion and state, and 83 percent of Jews wanted ultra-Orthodox to share the burden of national service.⁵⁷ The question is how conclusive these numbers are. Even though the secular Israeli public complains about the impositions of the haredi minority on the entire nation, this same public agrees that Israel should have a Jewish identity. Here lies the ambivalence towards religion from a secu-

lar majority. A considerable proportion of Israeli Jews who opposed the amendment of the Service Law and the

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participation of religious parties in the Knesset look for a rabbi to perform the *berit milah* of their children or to marry. In fact, according to a poll carried out by the Guttman Center in 2009, only 3 percent of the Israeli hilonim declared themselves both secular and anti-religious.⁵⁸ Lapid is not only mistaken about the hatred aroused by the religious parties towards the haredi sector; the vision of Israeli society facing a culture war (*Kulturkampf*) is misleading.

Israeli governments have had to cope with (and have also taken advantage of) the legacy of Ben-Gurion, namely the fusion of religion and politics; however, some of those governments have tried at the same time to seek alternatives to attract and increase recruitment among haredim. Back in 1954, the first Yeshivat Hesder, a program that combines intensive study of Torah and Talmud with military service, was founded in Israel.⁵⁹ In 1999, the

more famous hesder, Netzah Yehuda, was founded.⁶⁰ The number of ultra-Orthodox draftees has not yet reached the expected figures, but the number of young *hardal* (*haredim leumim*: national ultra-Orthodox or religious Zionists) conscripts is dramatically increasing, a fact that is challenging the state democracy as well.

THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

Contrary to the ideology of most of the haredi factions, religious Zionists (mainly inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook) reject the belief that only God's Messiah could establish a state for the Jews. For them, the founding of Israel, despite being the consummation of a secular project, was carried out by the will of God.⁶¹ In this sense, the *hardal* approach diverges from that of the *haredim* regarding the military; religious Zionists believe that Torah study must be integrated into daily life and can be perfectly combined with army service. In fact, one of the ideas constantly repeated among *hardalim* (even by one of their representatives in the Knesset, Naftali Bennett, head of the right-wing Jewish Home)⁶² is the one set out by Rabbi Shlomo Aviner: "serving in the army is a *mitzvah*."⁶³ This motto has been used by the Jewish Home when trying to convince *haredim* to serve in the army.

It is advisable to bear in mind that a good proportion of the *hardal* groups are remnants of the proscribed Kahanists and Kach party (1971-94),⁶⁴ condemned as a terrorist organization by several states, including the United States and Israel itself. According to the ideology preached by Meir Kahane and his disciples, only yeshiva students who devote their full time to the study of Torah can be exempted from the army. The rest will have to be integrated into bases specially designed for

the ultra-Orthodox.⁶⁵ Although the leaders of religious Zionism have all served in hesderim, they nonetheless criticize the rhetoric of "equality in the burden" brought by Yesh Atid.

Ben-Zion Gopstein, a political activist of Kahanism, has stated that a student of yeshiva contributes more than someone who performs his military service in, for example, the army radio station. Appealing to theocratic arguments, Gopstein declared that the army station acts against all sacred principles of Judaism, Eretz Israel and Zionism, because it daily conducts interviews with terrorists and traitors, enemies who have jeopardized the security of Israel. Gopstein defies the principle of equality by adding that the Israeli army no longer worries about defeating the enemy and being feared on the battlefield, because it has made serious mistakes, such as promoting women and financing its radio station.⁶⁶

With the growth of *hardal*'s activities, the IDI has set off alarms. One of the facts that most worry the press and the secular academy is the increase of officers in the army from the religious Zionist sector. This growing phenomenon represents an existential threat to democracy; the values of an institution that belongs to and defends a democratic state are being replaced by religious ones. It is an attack against democracy because the more *hardal* soldiers who join the army, the more women will be excluded from military service. Additionally, Mordechai Kremnitzer explains that a soldier imbued with religious fervor will be subject not only to the authority of a military order but to the authority of the sacred Torah. This type of indoctrination endangers the reasoning capacity and freedom of individual conscience. The enemy will inevitably be demonized, which will increase the use of excessive force in

operations.

If the religious discourse legitimizes the army, illegal actions can easily be carried out, and this represents a threat to democracy. If the army belongs to God, it no longer belongs to the people, effacing the difference between the Israeli army and the Islamist armies.⁶⁷ The sociologist Yagil Levy agrees with Kremnitzer: if there is a conviction among soldiers that a divine task is being carried out, there will be less attention to human rights and greater harm will be inflicted on the Palestinian population.⁶⁸ The more religious Zionists in the army, the more extremism; religious values clash with democratic principles.

Significant portions of the national religious sector, who once served as intermediaries between the government and the ultra-Orthodox, have shifted toward

the haredi end of the spectrum. A considerable proportion of the hardal rabbis who teach in the hesderim openly declare that the *Halakha* precedes any military order.⁶⁹ This makes it difficult, for example, for the army to evacuate a settlement established by people who mostly belong to the hardal community. An evacuation order given by a democratically elected government cannot, therefore, be carried out.⁷⁰ This phenomenon represents, once again, a suspension of democracy.

From our perspective, the criticisms raised by Kremnitzer and Levy cannot address the fact that the military units integrated exclusively by haredim (non-

Zionists) are combat battalions. First of all, we agree that in order to comply with the principle of equality, young haredim must serve in the army. We agree as well that these ultra-Orthodox should be transferred to hesderim so they can keep the mitzvah of avoiding contact with the opposite sex. But for the sake of democracy, we are against the idea of using religious Zionists as intermediaries between the haredim and the government. The Israeli army will not change its values and dynamics simply because some haredi soldiers serve in combat units. But if these soldiers receive their Torah lessons from hardal rabbis or are under the command of religious Zionist officers,

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the framework of the army might negatively change, as we are witnessing today. We have to bear in mind that, given their background,

young ultra-Orthodox can be more susceptible to indoctrination, so a reasonable distance must be established between haredi soldiers and hardal rabbis and officers.

In general, the IDI and other secular sectors have expressed strong criticisms of the anti-democratic activities of the hardal groups. Like Kahane, many hardal factions wish to turn Israel into a theocracy ruled by the *Halakha*. Gopstein, uses for example, Talmudic arguments to oppose democratic principles, arguing, like Kahane, that democracy contradicts the precepts of Judaism.⁷¹ Gopstein's political activism was even denounced by the president of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, who defined Gopstein as "a

rodent gnawing under the shared democratic and Jewish foundation of Israel.”⁷² Shuki Friedman similarly states that the hardal want to impose, at all costs, an ultra-Orthodox Judaism, outright rejecting any liberal and democratic values defended by the majority of secular Israelis.

The ultra-Orthodox rabbis have declared an all-out war against pluralism (their version of Judaism being the purest and only acceptable one), against any attempt to separate the religious sphere from politics, against liberalism, against feminism and against the LGBT community. The hardal also claim that the sanctity of the army is being undermined by adopting Western and liberal combat values. Although ultra-Orthodox nationalists do not represent a very large community, their influence exceeds their number; the positions they have earned in the army and in the defense establishment in recent years is alarming.⁷³ Professor Stern’s naïve assertion that “the religious Zionist community has internalized the principles of democracy”⁷⁴ not only seems contradicted by the facts, but runs contrary to the thinking of most of his IDI colleagues. Even if we agree with the assumption that Judaism and democracy do not oppose each other and both share values in common, evidence indicates that civic democracy is failing because the implementation of a secular project has failed. This can be better understood by reviewing thoroughly the practices of Zionism.

CONCLUSIONS

Professor Stern explains that ultra-Orthodox society has significantly changed in the last decade. The current haredi leadership is less concentrated and hierarchical today, and members of the community have direct access to the Internet.

Recent years have seen an important rise in the participation of ultra-Orthodox men in military and civilian service, university and professional studies, and the labor market.⁷⁵ In the last 20 years, the religious community’s Messianic fervor has cooled,⁷⁶ and the ultra-Orthodox authorities are gradually losing their monopoly over religious services.⁷⁷ Similarly, some of the most militant and intransigent haredi leaders, like Yoelish Kraus, are already showing signs of fatigue.⁷⁸ In 2016, 2,800 ultra-Orthodox men joined the army, but the target number was 3,200. Even though the army is not meeting its induction goals, it is advisable to keep in mind that this is an increase of almost 15 percent compared with 2015. And this upward trend is continuing.⁷⁹ Taking a close look at the figures, it seems quite plausible that the integration of the ultra-Orthodox into the military requires a process of evolution, not revolution.⁸⁰ For this reason, the IDI has strongly criticized Yesh Atid’s plan to unleash chaos by putting thousands of young ultra-Orthodox deserters behind bars.

This process of transformation is not occurring within the Knesset, nor among the political leaders who are not interested in contradicting the religious tenets of their haredi coalition fellows, so draft exemption will presumably continue. This evolution is taking place at the very heart of the haredi community, which, as we have seen, does not seem to be in line with its leaders, as was the case some years ago. More and more young ultra-Orthodox are becoming aware that they need a different kind of education, that the only way to survive is through integration, and that military service allows them to achieve it. Will they be able to effectively challenge the religious establishment? We are witnessing, alongside the drafting of increasing numbers,

that some yeshivot have been founded with the goal of teaching not only religious but general subjects such as mathematics and English.⁸¹ These positive changes allow us to predict that integration can be reached in the future.

Stern again emphasizes that, on the one hand, the principle of equality is not an absolute value. On the other hand, the study of the Torah, which provides the Jewish nation-state with a unique identity, is not an absolute value either. According to Stern, the principle of equality must be balanced with the study of the Torah to conform, this time, to the absolute value of social solidarity.⁸² But how can this be accomplished? Will the rabbinical authorities, the Supreme Court and the leaders of Yesh Atid give up a little to achieve “social solidarity”?

Reality has shown itself to be far more complex than some of the IDI’s assumptions suggest. The Jewish religion is still an essential element of national cohesion, so attempting a complete separation of religion and politics might be perceived, in the Israeli context, as an extremist position. We have already observed that even some the most liberal characters in Israel, such as Stern or Calderon, have to resort to religious arguments.⁸³ In this non-liberal democracy (as defined by Ben-Porat), an Orthodox minority continues to maintain its positions thanks to the bipolar, ambivalent, love-hate relationship that a secular

majority maintains vis-à-vis religious institutions. In this non-secular democracy, a secular majority votes for secular parties knowing that, in any case, religious parties will have their share in parliament. In this non-secular democracy, the secular majority of the population disagrees with the government decisions based on religious pressure but still feels a reverential and to some degree superstitious fear towards religious authorities, so their willingness to undermine the status quo always lacks commitment. The anti-clerical feeling of Hiddush, Yesh Atid and the Supreme Court is not shared by a high proportion of the secular population.

Reality, with all its complexities, evolves. We are witnessing among the ultra-Orthodox community signs of positive change. We cannot state the same about the religious Zionist communities, which have turned the Knesset into a hostage. The above-mentioned social ambivalence is also obvious concerning the hardal sector. While their political representation grows, more settlements appear in the West Bank, and no one can effectively oppose them. To return to the “Jewish-Democratic” equation mentioned at the beginning of this article, we can see clearly how the scale remains tipped towards the religious side. This has, so far, prevented the achievement of an “Israeli Spring.”

¹ President of the Supreme Court of Israel from 2006 to 2012.

² Steve Linde, “Fertile Ground for Growth: The Jewish State’s Balancing Act,” The Israel Democracy Institute, March 14, 2018.

³ Yedidia Z. Stern and Jay Ruderman, “Life under Two Suns: When Human Rights and Jewish Values Collide,” The Israel Democracy Institute, September 10, 2013.

⁴ “Secularization occurs when the realm of God and the realm of Caesar — the sphere of religion and the

sphere of politics — are separated. As a result, politics is no longer reinforced by religion: it loses both its religion-derived rigidity (dogmatism) and its religious-like intensity. Out of this situation arise the conditions for the taming of politics. By this I mean that politics no longer kills, is no longer a warlike affair, and that peace-like politics affirms itself as the standard *modus operandi* of a polity.” Giovanni Sartori, “How Far Can Free Government Travel?” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 101–111. In this sense, the theoretical paradigm adopted by Sartori is that of the “annihilation” presented by Hans Blumenberg and on which is based what the German jurist calls “the Legitimacy of the Modern Age.”

⁵ Uri Ram, “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 21, no. 1-4 (2008): 57-73.

⁶ Yair Sheleg, “No to the Separation of Religion and State in Israel,” The Israel Democracy Institute, September 22, 2013.

⁷ Guy Ben-Porat, “Are We There Yet? Religion, Secularization and Liberal Democracy in Israel,” *Mediterranean Politics* 18, no. 2 (2013): 242–258.

⁸ Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 36-43. Given its purpose of returning Jews to the Promised Land and the terms it uses to describe this redemption, ingathering of the exiles, and the third kingdom, secular Zionism itself is a form of messianism. See Ilan Troen, “Secular Judaism in Israel,” *Society* 53, no. 2 (2016): 153-162.

⁹ Ram, “Why Secularism Fails?”

¹⁰ Lee Cahaner, Maya Choshen and Gilad Malach, “Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel,” The Israel Democracy Institute, December 31, 2013.

¹¹ The normal length of compulsory service for all Israeli citizens except haredim is two years and eight months for men and two years for women. Deserters are punished with imprisonment.

¹² Ori Lewis, “Israel’s Supreme Court Cancels Conscription Exemption Law,” Reuters, September 12, 2017, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-law-ruling/israels-supreme-court-cancels-conscription-exemption-law-idUSKCN1BN2PU>.

¹³ Hiddush — For Religious Freedom and Equality is a nonprofit organization founded in 2009. Supported by Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform Judaism movements, one of Hiddush goals is to deprive the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox authorities of the monopoly on the regulation of marriages and the funeral company in Israel, and to cancel the benefit that excuses haredim from enlistment. All of this is with the aim of promoting equality among the citizens of the state.

¹⁴ Regev, Uri. “Neshef masekhot vespininim: asur leheianot ledrishot hacharedim,” *Globus*, March 12, 2018, accessed March 25, 2018.

¹⁵ Isabel Kershner, “Israel’s Military Exemption for Ultra-Orthodox Is Ruled Unconstitutional,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2017, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/world/middleeast/israel-ultra-orthodox-military.html>; Daviv Green, “1952: Ben-Gurion Visits a Wizeden Torah Sage,” *Haaretz*, October 20, 2013, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/1952-ben-gurion-visits-a-torah-sage-1.5276483>; Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Theocratic Democracy: The Social Construction of Religious and Secular Extremism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 113-114.

¹⁶ Joan Culla, *La tierra más disputada: El sionismo, Israel y el conflicto de Palestina* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005), 203-204; Walter Laqueur, *Historia del sionismo* (México: Instituto cultural mexicano Israel, A.C., 1982), 311-312.

¹⁷ Shlomo Fischer, “Burden Sharing and the Haredim,” *Annual Assessment 2013-2014*, no. 10 (JPPI).

¹⁸ Menachem Friedman, *The Haredim: Who Are We Really? A Personal Recorded Document on the Conflict That Appears Unsolvable* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2000), 139.

¹⁹ Mitch Ginsburg, “Jerusalem Protest Unites Haredim against Army Service,” *Times of Israel*, March 2, 2014, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-protest-unites-haredim-against-army-service/>.

²⁰ Jennifer Richler, “What Happened to Israel’s New Haredim?” *Tablet*, February 1, 2018.

²¹ VICE News, “The Ultra Orthodox vs. The IDF: Israel’s Other Religious War,” online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me4FqdrnVBs>.

²² Fischer, “Burden Sharing and the Haredim.”

²³ True Torah Jews, “Clearly Explained Why Orthodox Jews Refuse to Serve in IDF,” online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3SJYRki2hM>. A large part of the ultra-Orthodox groups declares itself

anti-Zionist and considers the founding of the State of Israel heresy, since only the Messiah can indicate to his people the right moment for the establishment of the state. See John Esposito, Darrell Fasching and Todd Lewis, *Religion and Globalization: World Religions in Historical Perspective*. (Oxford University Press, 2007), 113-114; and Neta Sela, "Orthodox Sector Curses Gay Pride Parade," *Ynet News*, May 10, 2007.

²⁴ VICE News, "The Ultra Orthodox vs. The IDF: Israel's Other Religious War," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me4FqdrmVBs>.

²⁵ 24news, "INSIGHT-ULTRA ORTHODOX JEWS: IDF OR TORAH-05/19/14," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mv0NOmFXYo>.

²⁶ Yisrael Eichler, "Editorial," *The Haredi Camp*, March 11, 1992. Following Daniel Gamson, Israeli secular authorities have to be aware that before the British Mandate there were Jews in the Land of Israel and they were all religious. That is why secular Israeli society has to respect the minorities who came to the Holy Land hundreds of years before them. See Daniel Gamson, "An ultra-Orthodox perspective on army service," *Jerusalem Post*, March 2, 2014, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/An-ultra-Orthodox-perspective-on-army-service-344046>.

²⁷ IsraelDemocracyIns, "Prof. Yedidia Stern on the Peri Committee Recommendations," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYSPQSp4DZk>.

²⁸ The Newsmakers, "Israel's Ultra-Orthodox conscription," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyeN9tM3Jug>.

²⁹ Some rabbis have repeatedly expressed that no state, nor any political authority, has the right to impose on the Jewish people laws that contradict the most basic precepts of the Torah. According to Pindrus, the ultra-Orthodox community cannot be subject to the laws of a court or laws that are different from those of the Bible. See The Newsmakers, "Israel's Ultra-Orthodox conscription," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyeN9tM3Jug>. In this sense, nearly all religious authorities have ruled that litigants should not appear in front of Israel's "courts of gentiles," warning that anyone who uses the services of these courts "does not have a portion in the world to come." The late Rabbi Ovadia Yosef asserted that "anyone who turns to the secular courts is raising his hand against the Torah of Moses our teacher." See Yedidia Z. Stern, "Judicial Appointment Highlights Dramatic Changes among Israeli Haredim," *The Israel Democracy Institute*, March 17, 2016.

³⁰ An idea constantly stressed by the IDI columnists is that exempting an entire sector from the draft is intolerable because it is discriminatory. Equality is both an ethical goal and a fundamental right in the Jewish and democratic state. See Yedidia Z. Stern, "How Can We Draft the Ultra-Orthodox with Consent?," *The Israel Democracy Institute*, August 27, 2013. Ultimately, the ultra-Orthodox must serve in the military—not in national civil service—at rates that are similar to those of the rest of Israel's population. This is the only way to meet the legal, moral, and even religious imperatives of sharing the burden of sovereign existence. See Yedidia Z. Stern and Haim Zicherman, "The Ultra-Orthodox Draft: Crossing the Third Rubicon," *The Israel Democracy Institute*, August 18, 2013.

³¹ IsraelDemocracyIns, "Prof. Yedidia Stern on the Peri Committee Recommendations," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYSPQSp4DZk>.

³² Stern and Zicherman, "The Ultra-Orthodox Draft."

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Army service is an extremely powerful "employment engine" for most ultra-Orthodox men whose religious education does not provide them with the general background or professional training necessary for joining the workforce outside the ultra-Orthodox sector. See Asaf Malchi, "Springboard to Employment: How Ultra-Orthodox Men Benefit from IDF Service," *The Israel Democracy Institute*, September 10, 2017.

³⁵ The haredim cannot afford not to integrate. In 2015, 52 percent of Haredim lived below the poverty line (compared with 19 percent of the general population), and a quarter of ultra-Orthodox families suffered from food insecurity. See Richler, "What Happened to Israel's New Haredim."

³⁶ This is in fact a very powerful reasoning given that, since its foundation, Israel has been in a permanent state of war and under a persistent existential menace. See Dov Lipman, "Should the Ultra-Orthodox serve in the IDF," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NS-rn5rJ7sw>.

³⁷ Meaning, no more draft exemptions to the ultra-Orthodox population.

³⁸ Erez Luzon, "Neum habekhora shel chaver kneset Dr. Ruth Calderon," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktDfdxLcUtk>.

³⁹ Yoav Kisch, member of the Likud, was punished by his party with his removal from a committee chairmanship because he refused to vote for the military draft bill for 2018. Kisch, who is an opponent of the exemptions for yeshiva students, was practically considered a defector by the coalition government after his political move. See Shmuel Smith, "Likud Punishes MK Yoav Kisch for Defying Coalition on Draft Bill," *Hamodia*, March 14, 2018, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://hamodia.com/2018/03/14/likud-punishes-mk-yoav-kisch-defying-coalition-draft-bill/>.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, "Benjamin Netanyahu Speech to Congress 2015 [FULL] | Today on 3/3/15 | New York Times," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRf1cdw4IAY&t=1294s>.

⁴¹ One of the problematic issues posed by the past legislations prior to the enactment of the Tal Law was that as full-time yeshiva students, the ultra-Orthodox young were unable to work legally.

⁴² Fischer, "Burden Sharing and the Haredim;" Haim Zicherman, "The IDF and the Ultra-Orthodox," The Israel Democracy Institute, March 12, 2014.

⁴³ Fischer, "Burden Sharing and the Haredim."

⁴⁴ The president of the Supreme Court, Dorit Beinisch, said that originally the legislation harbored the hope that the Tal Law could carry out a non-coercive social process that would encourage ultra-Orthodox people to serve in the military or take part in national civil service. As such hope was not fulfilled, it can only be determined that the Tal Law is unconstitutional. See Yair Ettinger and Gili Cohen, "Israel's High Court Rules Tal Law Unconstitutional, Says Knesset Cannot Extend It in Present Form," *Haaretz*, February 21, 2012, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5188663>.

⁴⁵ Ettinger and Cohen, "Israel's High Court Rules Tal Law Unconstitutional."

⁴⁶ Attila Somfalvi, "Plesner Committee Member: Historic Opportunity Missed," *Ynet News*, July 3, 2012.

⁴⁷ Mitch Ginsburg, "My Proposal Is the Only Realistic Basis, Says the MK Who Tried to Solve Israel's Ultra-Orthodox Conscription Crisis," *Times of Israel*, August 20, 2012, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/my-way-is-the-only-way-says-the-mk-who-tried-to-solve-israels-ultra-orthodox-conscription-crisis-plesner-netanyahu/>.

⁴⁸ Arutz haknesset, "Arutz haknesset- Netanyahu mefarek et veyidat Plesner", 2.7.12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toksEud405I>, online video, YouTube.

⁴⁹ Ruth Levush, "Israel: Amendment Law Imposes Military Draft and National Service Obligations on Yeshiva Students," Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ Ori Lewis, "Israel's Supreme Court Cancels Conscription Exemption Law," Reuters, September 12, 2017, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-law-ruling/israels-supreme-court-cancels-conscription-exemption-law-idUSKCN1BN2PU>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Uri Regev, "Zionist Parties Kowtow to Haredi Coalition Parties," *Hiddush.org*.

⁵³ Guy Ben-Porat and Yariv Feniger, "It Takes Two for a Culture War," *Social Science Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (2012): 838–857.

⁵⁴ Hakirya haakademit Ono, "Yair Lapid bekampus hacharedi-haartzaa hamelea," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNJZJw1ZE9A&t=809s>.

⁵⁵ Hakirya haakademit Ono, "Ma choshev Yair Lapid al hamiflagot hacharediot," YouTube, online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM0sm3tfkSE>.

⁵⁶ Ruth Gavison, "Puede Israel ser un Estado judío y democrático a la vez," *Revista de Historia Internacional* 14, no. 55 (2013): 93-133.

⁵⁷ JTA, "Ultra-Orthodox Parties Are Back in Power and Israelis Aren't Thrilled About It," *Haaretz*, October 5, 2016, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/the-ultra-orthodox-parties-are-back-in-power-and-israelis-arent-thrilled-about-it-1.5446106>.

⁵⁸ Luke Howson, "The Role of Ultra-Orthodox Political Parties in Israeli Democracy," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2014.

⁵⁹ "KBY History," Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavne.

⁶⁰ Yoav Zitun, "An Insider's Guide to IDF's Haredi Regiment," *Ynet News*. What is special about Netzah Yehuda (and most of the hesderim) is that it is a combat unit. This is explained by the fact that the majority of the few ultra-Orthodox who enter the army request to be placed in exclusively male battalions to avoid contact with the opposite sex and not transgress the mitzvah of not touching women other than the wife. That is why haredim are generally transferred to combat units where there are no women.

⁶¹ Esposito, Fasching and Lewis, *Religion and Globalization*, 114-116.

⁶² Naftali Bennett, "Naftali Bennett benehum chok hagiyus: achai hacharedim, gam shirut batzava zohi mitzva," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwOulVmi4I4>.

⁶³ Jeremy Sharon, "National Religious Leader: Don't Enlist in Army Because of Men and Women Mixing," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 16, 2018, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/National-Religious-leader-Dont-enlist-in-army-because-of-men-and-women-mixing-536912>.

⁶⁴ Sharon Weinblum, *Security and Defensive Democracy in Israel: A Critical Approach to Political Discourse* (Routledge, 2015), 10.

⁶⁵ Michael Ruark, "Kahane Chai," Wordpress;

⁶⁶ Benzi Gopstein, "Shivaion banetel? Talmid yeshiva torem yoter michaial bagalei tzahal-lisgor et galei tzahal, online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M7n4oikTks>.

⁶⁷ Mordechai Kremnitzer, "The IDF: Army of the People or Army of God?" The Israel Democracy Institute, September 14, 2014.

⁶⁸ Nachshovi, Kobe, "Yesh panika mirivui hakzinim hadatiim batzahal", *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 14, 2009, accessed March 5 2018, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3664976,00.html>.

⁶⁹ Yair Sheleg, "Decade in Review: Religion and State in Israel," The Israel Democracy Institute, January 30, 2010.

⁷⁰ Kremnitzer, "The IDF."

⁷¹ Benzi Gopstein, "Benzi Gopstein: Hayim harov tamid tzodek? Hayim hademokratia matima layahadut? Leparashat mishpatim," online video, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uldFprP0xLw>. As stated above, Talmud can be quoted to reinforce the link between Judaism and democracy (i.e., Ruth Calderon) or to deny this relation and make opposition to democratic values.

⁷² Stuart Winer and Melanie Lidman, "Over Vocal Protest, Arab-Jewish Wedding Goes Ahead," *Times of Israel*, August 17, 2014, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/over-vocal-protest-arab-jewish-wedding-goes-ahead/>.

⁷³ Shuki Friedman, "A Holy War Over Israel's Character," The Israel Democracy Institute, August 3, 2016.

⁷⁴ Yedidia Z. Stern, "Is There a Place for God in the Israeli Army?" Israel Democracy Institute, November 9, 2014.

⁷⁵ Stern, "How Can We Draft the Ultra-Orthodox with Consent?"

⁷⁶ Yedidia Z. Stern, "The Rabin Assassination and Religious Responsibility," The Israel Democracy Institute, October 26, 2015.

⁷⁷ Friedman, "A Holy War Over Israel's Character."

⁷⁸ In 2017, Kraus declared with resignation that all yeshiva receiving subsidies from the government have to send their students to the army. Being a member of one of the most extremist anti-Zionist haredi groups, HaEda HaHaredit, Kraus has never accepted any kind of financial assistance from the state or even an Israeli identification card. Following Kraus if you take funds from the government, "you'll be theirs" and you will be committed to rendering a service for them in return, such as military service. See "Anti-Zionist Hasidic Father of 16 Pays Hefty Price for Rejecting Israel," *Haaretz*, May 15, 2017, accessed April 5, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-hasidic-father-of-16-pays-hefty-price-for-rejecting-israel-1.5471131>. We must admit that, from our view, the fact of coming to one of the most radical stances allowed Kraus to develop more sensible judgment than many of his haredi fellows. Indeed, if the state is not religiously legitimized, and if it is composed by a bunch of heretics and therefore not Jewish enough (even described as "gentiles"), what then is the logic that allows yeshivot to receive state subsidies?

⁷⁹ Malchi, "Springboard to Employment." Indeed, the year 2015 represented a setback when meeting recruitment targets given that the ultra-Orthodox parties returned to government as members of the coalition, and yeshiva budgets automatically increased. Thus, the number of yeshiva students rose by 10 percent and the number of haredi draftees simultaneously waned. See Yohanan Plesner and Gilad Malach, "Supreme Court Strikes Down ultra-Orthodox Exemption From Military," The Israel Democracy Institute, September 13, 2017.

⁸⁰ Yedidia Z. Stern, "The Haredi Draft: Is the Shaked Committee's Bill Destined to be Overturned?" The Israel Democracy Institute, February 16, 2014.

⁸¹ Dov Lipman, "Hasidic Yeshiva in Israel with General Studies," online video, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4as_UwcXIU.

⁸² Stern, "How Can We Draft the Ultra-Orthodox with Consent?"

⁸³ For instance, Stern has argued that serving in the army with the purpose of saving lives is considered a mitzvah. See Stern, "How Can We Draft the Ultra-Orthodox with Consent?" In another article, Stern states that "Israel's commitment to civic equality derives not only from democratic values, but also from Jewish values." See Yedidia Z. Stern, "Jewish, Democratic and Equal," The Israel Democracy Institute, April 14, 2016.

⁸⁴ Nachshovi, Kobe, "Yesh panika mirivui hakzinim hadatiim batzahal", *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 14, 2009, accessed March 5 2018, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3664976,00.html>.