

English Abstracts

“I Shall Work”: Justifications for and Consequences of Ultra-Orthodox Women Shouldering the Burden of Breadwinning

Iris Brown (Hoizman)

From the early 1960s, ultra-Orthodox society, and particularly its “Lithuanian” component, gradually adopted a socioeconomic model in which women became the primary providers. Ultra-Orthodox women took upon themselves the financial responsibility for the family, as if to say: “I shall work, sustain, provide, and support.” Yet, in addition, they continued to declare: “I shall educate, deal with the day-to-day running of the house, and take care of my husband.” The entry of the ultra-Orthodox woman into the workplace enabled the “society of learners” to function (i.e. enabled the husbands to dedicate their time exclusively to Torah study), but it also threatened the patriarchal structure of the ultra-Orthodox family. Ultra-Orthodox leadership tried to prevent this undesirable consequence, in essence seeking to set a social revolution into motion without paying the price. In the first generation of the revolution, the process was promoted as “self-sacrifice” for the sake of Torah, combining the desire to aid in the building of the “Torah world” in the Land of Israel and to give honor to the husband-Torah scholar. As the revolution progressed, however, the innovative development demanded justification and defense.

This article examines how ultra-Orthodox leaders and educators have dealt with the fundamental difficulties posed by the “woman as provider” paradigm, such as the blurring of masculine and feminine roles and the perceived progressive increase in the status of women versus the sanctified ultra-Orthodox theological principle that posits the inherent decline of progressive generations. In addition, the article deals with how the leaders and educators have faced the practical challenges posed by this paradigm, such as men who do not take their Torah studies seriously enough, men who take on roles in the home, and women who assume authority at their husbands’ expense. In spite of this significant social revolution, ultra-Orthodox texts have tried

to present the change as a direct continuation of the spirit of a longstanding Jewish tradition. These efforts are grounded in sources and texts from the past, but it is questionable whether these sources indeed provide the desired basis.

In light of these facts, the article examines the degree to which it is possible to see the entry of ultra-Orthodox women into the workplace as an “invention of tradition.” It seems that while the ultra-Orthodox exegesis of the sources is tenable, it tends to expand the role of the traditional woman, to threaten other core values of the community (primarily that of modesty), and to damage the prevailing ethos of the unassuming and pleasant ultra-Orthodox woman. The article concludes that this process is indeed the continuation of an existing tradition, but is based on a relatively liberal reading of its sources.

Karl Löwith and Hans Blumenberg: “Neither Jewish nor German”

Pini Ifergan

This article deals with some aspects of the intellectual biographies of two prominent German philosophers of Jewish origin, Karl Löwith (1897–1973) and Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996). The details of these two intellectual biographies are described and analyzed in order to shed light on the way in which these two philosophers dealt with the issue of their self-identity. The issue of identity was forced on them as a result of the historical and political circumstances prevailing in Germany during the 1930s. The two thinkers, who had considered themselves to be German in identity, were forced to confront the violent exposure of their Jewish origin — of which they were either unaware or which had never played any significant role in their lives. The article’s main premise is that both thinkers tried to come to terms with the identity problem that had been forced on them through their philosophical works. It would be a mistake, however, to attempt to reduce the entire philosophical work of these two thinkers to the problem of their Jewish identity, since neither makes such a claim and also because such an approach ignores the scale and richness of their unique philosophical works. Nevertheless, and despite this important reservation, the article would like to argue that something important concerning the issue of Jewish identity can be learned from the way it was challenged by both thinkers. We also

learn the important lesson that we may be attributing to these thinkers a problem that might not have been their problem at all.

Secular Israeli Intellectuals on Judaism

Gideon Katz, Nir Kedar

Secular Israeli intellectuals are profoundly occupied by the question of the possible meaning Judaism may hold for the secular Jewish public in Israel. Their thinking on the subject touches on many issues: the Jewish identity of secular people; the Jewish canon; the Jewish roots of Israeli culture; estrangement from the past and ignorance of religious sources; the Jewish character of the State of Israel and its laws; and others. These intellectuals worry that the secular public, and in its wake all of Israeli society, ceded its cultural heritage, and in doing so also unwittingly ceded its future. Of course, not all intellectuals make this argument. There are those who argue that the practical formation of Israeli society depends on breaking free from the religious heritage burdening it. However, all the intellectuals who espouse these positions — drawing closer to Judaism or breaking free from it — share a theoretical focus: they are concerned with the possible meaning that Judaism holds for the secular public in Israel. The aim of this article is to describe these ideas and to analyze them.

The Limits of Victimization and the Molding of a Hierarchy of Bereavement: The Victims of Terror in the Context of the Waning and Waxing of the Republican Bereavement Discourse in Israel

Udi Lebel

With Israel's exposure to the postmodern climate, the public rhetoric of military bereavement assumed elements of privatization, postnationalism, politicization, and most of all victimization — which presented the fallen and their bereaved families as victims of the social order and security policy. Bereaved opinion-leaders worked toward cultural "liberation" from the "binding ethos" of the hegemonic bereavement model. They exploited the special status they had gained by being part of the official

military “bereavement family” and promoted anti-establishment messages through a range of social movements and political protest organizations. In parallel, the heads of their representative bereavement organizations worked for instrumental-financial liberation of the bereaved families from bureaucratic dependence on the rehabilitation and compensation institutions, and campaigned to annul several conditions for entitlement to state support. With the onset of frequent terror attacks a new bereavement category made its appearance, comprised of the families of terror victims who also sought to become part of the official “bereavement family”, which until then had been reserved for the families of fallen soldiers. In reaction to this development the spokespeople of the military “bereavement family” ceased to echo the post-national-liberal rhetoric, and instead reclaimed the discourse grounded on the foundations of republican citizenship and cultural militarism — the same organizational values they had previously undermined. The heads of the representative bereavement organizations, as well as bereaved leaders of public opinion, erected cultural barriers and charted symbolic boundaries to exclude the families of terror victims from their orbit. These groups attempted to circumvent Israel’s “silver platter” by closing off the borders of the national “bereavement family” to the families of the victims of terror and by stressing that official commemoration was to be reserved only for those who had fallen in uniform. This resulted in the interesting paradox discussed in the article, demonstrated by the activity of the bereaved military families toward preserving their exclusive right to define themselves as the victims of Israel’s wars. This paradox represents a combination of globalism and localism, and is characterized by an inherent desire to adopt postnational subversive behavior while simultaneously conferring national societal prominence on those adopting it, as long as they conform to national-republican-militaristic parameters.. Thus the attempts to integrate civilian bereavement into the overall national-military bereavement domain have paradoxically reawakened the hegemonic ethos of bereavement and the republican-militaristic discourse of bereavement. Notwithstanding the prevalent perception in recent years that “bereavement is dead” and that Israeli society has abandoned military bereavement as a significant component of identity and politics, the article demonstrates the “return” of military bereavement as a significant component of Israeli political culture.

The Cassette is the Message: Fundamentalism, Communication and Political Recruitment in the Shas Movement

Nissim Leon

About three months before the 1999 Knesset elections, Aryeh Deri, the political leader of the Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox party Shas, was convicted by a district court of taking bribes. Instead of disowning its charismatic political leader, Shas chose to deal with the conviction by producing a cassette, the title of which conveyed an emotionally charged historical message: “*J'accuse!*” On the tape, Deri appeals personally to Israelis with his version of the events for which he was convicted. Analyses of the rhetorical and symbolic content of the tape have been used by scholars of Shas and of the development of ultra-Orthodoxy among Mizrahi Jewry in discussing the essence of the ethnic and ultra-Orthodox narrative of the party and the circles it represents. One topic that has not been mentioned in the scholarly discussion, however, is the medium itself: the cassette. One might think that there is nothing of interest here. Functionally, the use of cassettes is understandable: they were a quick, inexpensive, efficient means of conveying Deri's claim of innocence, in his own voice, to as much of the country as possible in a relatively short time. But, in addition to this aspect, which should not be dismissed, it is worth discussing the “*J'accuse!*” tape as a cultural item belonging to the counter-politics of the Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox *baal teshuva* (return to religion) movement in Israel. This approach can illuminate one of the alternative political interpretive spaces from which Shas views the world — the culture of the ultra-Orthodox *baal teshuva* movement. For instance, years of training of *baal teshuva* movement activists and preachers associated with Shas circles have structured the “cassette culture” of the Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox *baal teshuva* movement as a critical medium that reveals the truth that the establishment is hiding from the public. The “*J'accuse!*” cassette was designed and distributed in a form similar to the *baal teshuva* movement cassettes, and basically adopted their style for its own purposes. The content was not the only message. The tape itself was the message.

Has Zionism Concluded its Role? A Religious Zionist Perspective

Dov Schwartz

The article deals with the question of the relevance of the Zionist idea and Zionist institutions following the events of the mid-twentieth century. The Holocaust proved that it was impossible to achieve international cooperation to realize the Zionist idea while, on the face of it, the creation of the State of Israel gave effect to the Zionist vision, it questioned the need for and relevance of the Zionist movement. This article examines religious Zionism's response to these doubts. The central attitude is that the (secular) Zionist idea is the first phase in a process that will finish with messianic redemption. However, another religious Zionist principle is of some relevance, namely, responsibility for the Jewish nation wherever it is located. The unity of Israel is a metaphysical basis of religious Zionist ideology. Zionism is relevant to preserving world Jewry and preventing assimilation. The article analyses several religious Zionists' reflections on these subjects.

The Crisis of Identity of the State of Israel

Yedidia Z. Stern

The Jewish state has become the central arena for the pursuit of the controversy on the character of Jewish identity in our generation. The article reviews the main lines of the dispute regarding Jewish Israeli identity. Is the state the evolutionary continuation of Jewish existence or does it signify a new revolutionary beginning in which the "new Jew" takes on a leading role? What is the proper place of religion in the state? What do the two parts of the accepted definition of the state — "Jewish" and "democratic" — signify? What strategies can be utilized so as to survive in circumstances of normative ambiguity in which a Jewish-traditional set of values on the one hand competes with a liberal-western set of values on the other? These and other questions have motivated internal conflicts in Israeli society which some seek to resolve by applying the law of the state or by applying Jewish Halakhah. What are the consequences of this state of affairs? At the conclusion of the article the writer proposes a general outline delineating possible balances between the various elements that influence the Israeli identity crisis — religion, nationhood, culture.