

Ultra-Orthodoxy and Nationalism

CAN IDEOLOGICAL OPPOSITES BE RECONCILED?

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bove all else, Zionism has one overarching goal: to establish a Jewish homeland. No national movement could possibly exist without a people to call its nation. For Zionism, the people of the nation are defined by their Jewish heritage. Zionism is inextricable from its roots in Judaism, its purpose being to deliver the Jewish people to the land they were promised in the Torah. And yet, in many ways, the movement could not be more detached from its foundations. While its religious roots are undeniable, the nationalist pursuit has been largely secular, focused on the Jewish people as an ethnic group rather than a religious one. From the time of its founding in the late nineteenth century by secular Jew Theodore Herzl, the driving motivation of the Zionist movement has been the procurement of a cultural identity that can unite and define ethnically Jewish individuals, allowing them to experience their enlightened emancipation

without being forced to assimilate to a nation that is fundamentally not their own.¹

However, this left devoutly religious Jews with a dilemma. On the one hand, their Jewish brothers and sisters were mobilizing for a cause that could potentially benefit all the world's Jews, gaining access to their most sacred land and creating institutions that could advocate for them in the international arena, thus providing a safe haven should the Jewish people ever again be faced with an existential threat like that of the Holocaust. And yet, the human pursuit of this goal directly violated the crux of their fundamental belief: that the redemption of Israel and their delivery from exile would be a divine act of God, that they were to practice quietism until the day of messianic intervention. To attempt to deliver this by human handiwork was seen as a deep religious heresy, an idea born from sin and deeply dangerous to the Jewish faith.²

While some religious Jews were more easily able to reconcile this, it presents an ongoing struggle for the ultra-Orthodox community, who pride themselves in their traditional ways of life and interpretations of the Torah and Talmud. They reviled Zionism, and perceived it as an existential threat to the religion that defined their lives. Thus, a tension arose between the movement created by and in service of the Jewish people, and the people who felt their Jewishness most deeply. Conflict appeared over the way in which Jewishness should be primarily understood—as a religion or as an ethnicity. The nature of this tension has developed throughout time, and the ultra-Orthodox perception of Zionism and the state of Israel, while still ambivalent, has evolved since



Members of the Haredi group Neturei Karta protesting the existence of Israel in Washington D.C. (Wikimedia Commons)

the early days of vitriolic ideological dissent. Thus, a compelling question arises: what factors promote or prohibit the reconciliation of orthodox and nationalist beliefs?

The tension between religious and ethnic conceptions of identity is not entirely unique to Israel, although most Middle Eastern nations closely marry religion and nationalism.³ However, the case of ultra-Orthodox Jews—who call themselves Haredi, taken from the book of Isaiah and meaning “those who tremble before God”—is particularly interesting because the ideologies at play are so fundamentally opposed.⁴ Additionally, Israel's democratic values and the strictly traditional approach of the ultra-Orthodox create pragmatic concerns, such as the issue of army conscription, which are both highly relevant and difficult to resolve. While Haredi participation in government is rightly perceived as a feat for the peaceful and fair coexistence of dissenting interests, their influence is also perceived as posing threats to those very same democratic values. As Israeli society has gradually increased in religiosity since the 1990s, many secular citizens fear that the democratic participation of the ultra-Orthodox will actually corrode Israeli democracy.⁵ Thus, this long-standing issue remains highly salient today, and is essential to understanding the societal and political cleavages of religiosity in Israel.

This paper will seek to understand the conditions under which the Haredi-Zionist relationship has been more or less reconciled. First, I will analyze the current scholarship on this tenuous relationship, examining the competing theories that seek to address this question. Next, I will investigate the nature of the relationship from the early days of Zionism through the founding of the Israeli state in the late 1940s. This will be compared to the nature of the relationship in the late 1990s through today, as religiosity has grown and the ultra-Orthodox community has become increasingly involved in government and society. Finally, I will conclude by analyzing the implications of my findings.

The (Im)possibility of Reconciliation: Competing Theories

There are several compelling arguments about the relationship between ultra-Orthodoxy and Zionism.

"The human pursuit of this goal directly violated the crux of their fundamental belief"

However, each struggles to fully capture the nuanced and ambivalent nature of this dynamic. The best way to understand the evolution of the relationship is to bring together two theories. The first is understanding that the Haredi community is more open to reconciliation when the surrounding society is itself more religious. This theory recognizes the swelling religiosity from the 1990s through today, as well as the increasing role of the Haredi in government and their increased utilization of the services and infrastructure that government provides, coding this as a form of reconciliation.

Connecting reconciliation with the religious climate of the surrounding society has a strong logical basis. A community will take more interest in their nation when their nation takes more interest in them, thus establishing some form of respect and reciprocity. Additionally, it is natural to assume that the Haredi would be more willing to voice their opinions through the government if they believed that the people were willing to listen and likely to respond well. As the national climate further embraces the role of religion, the essential value to the ultra-Orthodox people, it is easy to see why Haredi became more willing to engage with broader society. They would also be more likely to assimilate with the culture of the rest of the Israeli community if that culture was more like their own and recognized the, albeit more limited, importance of piety and Jewish tradition rather than maintaining values that are entirely or mostly secular. Both or either of these developments would be noteworthy movements towards reconciliation, especially compared to the level of opposition that once existed between the ultra-Orthodox community and the early Zionists.

In this study, reconciliation cannot be seen as an all-or-nothing proposition. Instead, there are varying degrees of agreement, marked largely by governmental and societal participation as well as a general lack of hostility toward the State and the secular community. Most scholars agree that complete reconciliation, understood as agreement and assimilation, between

the Haredi and broader society is not attainable so long as the Israeli state remains the handiwork of man. Additionally, reconciliation can be, and likely is, surface level—harmonious relations and government participation merely in order to advance Haredi interests, interests which often deeply conflict with or even undermine those of the state of Israel. For example, Orthodox Rabbi Hazon Ish once granted Jews permission to participate in the Israeli political system while continuing to deny its legitimacy, saying: “if a highway man falls upon me in a forest and threatens me with arms, and I begin a discussion with him, so that he spares my life, does that mean that I recognize his legitimacy? No; for me, he remains a highway man.”⁶ It is also possible that relations could be improved in some ways while worsening in others. For example, some scholars argue that while the Haredi become more involved in government and thus increase their de jure recognition of the state, they become increasingly ostracized from the secular community in the nation.⁷

This ambivalence is an extremely important part of the dynamic, and no theory can be complete without recognizing it. Thus, the most useful framework for understanding the dynamic between the Haredi and the rest Israeli society should account for the impact of increasing religiosity in fostering some reconciliation while also acknowledging that this reconciliation is far from complete. Rather, the theory asserts that the Haredi community has simultaneously moved in several, somewhat contradictory directions. Therefore, the Haredi cannot be deemed quantitatively more or less open to Israel than in the past—rather, their relationship is always taking on new forms of ambivalence.⁸ This is because the Haredi community is subjected to contradictory impulses; their theology forces them to dogmatically seek isolation from the society around them, yet the modern, flourishing Jewish nation is inherently attractive to people who value their Jewishness above all else.⁹ This ambivalence can also be tied to the nature of Haredi social control, which discourages change not only through theology,

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but through collective discouragement of vocalizing dissenting opinions—for example, one that might look favorably upon the state of Israel. Those who might be predisposed toward reconciliation are prevented from acting on the inclination, knowing they will be punished if they do.¹⁰

This presents a methodological difficulty in studying the issue. Researchers' accounts are largely limited to the sentiment of the Haredi community as a whole, but this may not reflect the genuine opinions of the individuals who make up the collective. Since there is no platform to vocalize dissenting views, and doing so would be highly discouraged, there is a distinct possibility that these theories do not accurately reflect the common Haredi person's sentiments. Thus, for the sake of this study, "ultra-Orthodox" or "Haredi" refers to the community as a whole, whatever the majority opinion appears to be at any given time. This shortcoming is another reason that the centrality of ambivalence cannot be overstated—apart from a small but vocal minority who continue to harbor nothing but resentment toward the Zionist cause and the government it produced, most Haredi have neither totally reconciled nor remained totally opposed.¹¹

However, it is important to note the competing narratives which advocate for something closer to this complete, clear-cut scenario. While not the dominant scholarship, some theorize that the two ideologies are too diametrically opposed to ever be reconciled. These theories have some merit, but the reality is more complicated: while it is true that the two can never be *entirely* in agreement, pragmatic reconciliation remains a worthy and arguably attainable goal. Indeed, the early rhetoric of Haredi anti-Zionists does assert the total ideological incompatibility of these doctrines, essentially claiming that so long as one exists, the other cannot. The Orthodox opposition is not to the nature of the Israeli state, although the secular laws are also reviled, but to its very existence. The late Satmar rebbe, Yoel Teitelbaum, once said, "even if the members of the Knesset were righteous and holy, it is a terrible and awful criminal iniquity to

seize redemption and rule before the time has come."¹² Theories of total incompatibility are often older, dating back to the earlier days of Zionism before the Jewish state had officially been created in 1948. The official founding of Israel in 1948 understandably shifted this debate. Zionism was no longer a refutable ideal, but a reality that no amount of minority dogmatism could change.¹³ Therefore, despite deep-seated ideological differences, the Haredi gradually had to come to terms with the existence of the state, even if they chose not to acknowledge its legitimacy.

Another theory takes the opposite stance, that of Haredi Israelization. This is a largely inductive argument, pointing to Haredi actions which actively engage with the state and asserting that they have reached a post-fundamentalism stage in which they voluntarily interact with broader society rather than isolate themselves. This essentially argues that the ultra-Orthodox community has become increasingly reconciled with Zionism over time, and will presumably one day be almost fully assimilated, at least as much as their internal traditions allow.¹⁴ However, this argument, much like the other extreme of irreconcilable opposition, underestimates the nuance of the relationship. Additionally, it underestimates the steadfastness of the Haredi community, which has held strong to traditional values despite centuries of modernization in the nations that surround them. While Israel does indeed have a unique attraction to them, the notion that they would abandon their ideological principles altogether is too simple for such a devoted and complex population.

These are the arguments that will be evaluated by examining the two case studies. If the Haredi community became more accepting of the Israeli government in the 1990s as religiosity swelled, it would support the argument of Israelization over time. It would also weaken the arguments for irreconcilability and ambivalence. However, if acceptance appears to have taken place prior to or not in accordance with increases in religiosity, the Israelization narrative would be weakened, and the idea of irreconcilability or ambivalence would appear to be correct. Based on the

logic of the theories, it is likely that the relationship will improve with time and increasing religiosity but will also remain deeply ambivalent, pointing to a middle ground of some Israelization over time but dominated by ambivalence.

Zionism Throughout History: Which Theory Holds?

I will be analyzing the ultra-Orthodox relationship to Israel at two distinct times in history. The first is in the early days of Zionism, before the founding of Israel in 1948 and in the very early days of the state, as the Orthodox community remained focused on the ideological underpinnings of their opposition and attempted to prevent the creation of the state. Because this issue is largely philosophical, it is fruitful to pay close attention to the time in which the question was purely about ideals, before practical concerns became involved. Additionally, this is the time when the Haredi would have felt most confident in their ability to meaningfully prevent the existence of the state. Thus, their behavior at this time is demonstrative of their truest feelings, before they had to come to terms with reality and temper their agenda accordingly. The next time period I will examine is from the 1990s through today. Not only does this provide a lens into the current situation, but it also investigates the fascinating phenomenon of increasing religiosity in Israel and the long-term presence of a right-wing government more sympathetic to the ultra-Orthodox cause.¹⁵ Just as an understanding of ideology is essential, so too is an understanding of how the



A group of Haredi men read the Torah (Eliel Joseph Schafner via Wikimedia Commons)

dynamic plays out in practice. This allows for insight into how the Haredi respond to specific domestic and international policy issues, and what their agenda has become since its aforementioned tempering. Together, these two cases allow for a fuller perspective on the relationship and its total evolution, as well as comparisons between a more secular and a more religious time in Israel. They also allow for contrasting between opposition in theory and opposition in practice.

Early Days of Zionism

Before delving into the Haredi response to the conception of Zionism, it is important to first understand the underpinnings of Haredi thought. While nationalism was a modern development, so too was this theology, despite its emphasis on century-old tradition. The Haredi theology was itself reactionary, beginning as a response to the eighteenth century Jewish enlightenment which sought to modernize Jewish culture in Europe. Where advocates of the enlightenment movement wanted to end segregation between Jews and gentiles and engage with modern, secular society, these traditionalists sought to preserve the centrality of their religious identity.¹⁶ This attitude would influence their later actions, including their response to Zionism: total, diametrical opposition.

Like the Jewish enlightenment, Zionism was a quest for modernization, which religious Jews such as Boaz Evron called "the negation of Judaism," as their conception of Jewish tradition is largely rooted in an idealization of the biblical past.¹⁷ The relationship was inherently hostile, and mutually so, as many Zionists themselves disdained religious Judaism. The fight was taken up by, and largely catered to, secular Jews who wanted modernization. Although their heritage lay in the religious tradition of Judaism, their modern values compelled them to re-evaluate the centrality of their spirituality. They were not sympathetic to those who had not done the same, especially since Orthodox individuals actively attempted to block modernization, expecting that all Jews would follow suit. Thus, the Zionist leadership felt hindered by this community, and by their tradition as a whole. For example, "Ben-Gurion saw Judaism as the historical misfortune of the

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Jewish people and an obstacle to its transformation into a normal nation.¹⁸

Indeed, a "normal" nation was the exact opposite of what devout Jews wanted for themselves and their fellow Jews. Fulfilling national aspirations would put the Jewish people on par with other nations, the quest of the Zionists, but directly opposed the idea of Jewish uniqueness which is central to the theology of Judaism. Orthodox Jews insisted that the Jewish people and their eventual divinely delivered, nation would be far superior to other nations, an ideal and inspired state that would stand out from all others in the world.¹⁹ Orthodox Jews criticized Zionism for being nothing more than assimilation into the non-Jewish world, arguing that this process was inherently "de-Judaization."²⁰ This staunch opposition to the secular nature of the general Zionist community favors the theory that societal religiosity drives the ability to reconcile orthodoxy and nationalism.

Despite the hostility that Zionists felt toward these religious Jews, they had to respond to their criticisms. In doing so, they sought to prioritize an ethnic, secular conception of Judaism, but they had little choice but to maintain a connection to the religious roots that characterized Judaism in the minds of most Jews and non-Jews alike. Thus, "Zionism remains supportive of the principle that, while many Jews may be alienated from the Jewish faith, *this people has only one religion, and this religion has only one people*. Without this assumption, Zionism would cut itself off from the very collective to which it refers."²¹ Therefore, to preserve their ties to the collective, Zionists had to strategically respond to the vitriolic criticisms of the Haredi people. They found a way to preserve the ideal of Jewish exceptionality in a secular context, highlighting their aspirations to make Israel a utopian society that would fulfill "Jews' moral and universalistic calling."²²

However, this was not enough to pacify the Haredi community, which did not want to settle for secular exceptionality. They demanded the continuance of their total ideological separation from the rest of man, removed from "causal laws governing nature and

history," and instead "exclusively bound by another set of religio-ethical laws within a causal process of reward and punishment, exile and redemption."²³ Regardless of any justifications concerning the nature of the state, the mere existence of the state denied their hope of redemption, and betrayed their belief in Israel's unique destiny.²⁴ Essentially, the Orthodox community felt that there was nothing the Zionists could do to justify their cause. The only way to satisfy the ultra-Orthodox would have been to abandon the cause altogether and "wait for the heavenly, complete, miraculous, supernatural, and meta-historical redemption that is totally distinct from the realm of human endeavor," for which they had waited over two millennia.²⁵ To the Haredi community, this was the only true way to express their belief "in divine providence, in the assurance of the prophets, and in messianic destiny."²⁶ Founding a state would amount to abandoning the faith and thereby abandoning the Jewishness that defined the very collective that Zionism claimed to protect. This staunch opposition and its deep philosophical roots favor the argument that Orthodox Judaism and Zionist nationalism are fundamentally irreconcilable.

A large part of the Haredi resistance was rooted in the theology of the Gemara, which, together with the Mishnah, comprises the Talmud. According to the Rabbis who wrote the Gemara, three oaths were taken



Haredi Jews in Jerusalem protest against Israel's conscription of Yeshiva students (Wikimedia Commons)

upon Jewish people's exile in the second century AD: that the Jewish people would not ascend as a wall (i.e. all at once, through force), that they would not rebel against the gentiles, and that the gentiles would not oppress the Jews too much.²⁷ In the face of this argument, the Zionists responded not by undermining the importance of the Jewish faith and its commandments, but instead by asserting that the Gemara did not truly qualify as such. These oaths are in verses from a poetry book that, unlike the Torah, is non-historical. There is no record of any oaths being taken upon exile, and certainly if the gentiles had been made to swear on anything, they had not followed through.²⁸ This strong counterargument enabled many religious, but non-Haredi, Jews to reconcile their religious beliefs with the desire for a Jewish state built by human hand. This begins to hint at the ambivalence that some theorize would go on to define the relationship between Zionists and religious Jews, as some religious people began to soften to the idea of reconciliation, although the Orthodox perspective was still diametrically opposed.

Thus despite their best efforts, Orthodox Jews were unable to stop the force of Zionism. The movement grew and new settlers arrived, appearing to many of the existing devout residents to be no different from the individuals they and their fathers fled in Europe.²⁹ In these early days, during the period of the British Mandate, some in the Orthodox community believed that an alliance with the Arabs might be their last chance to successfully oppose Zionism. Their relations with the Arabs had been cordial during the Ottoman Empire, and they often muttered the slogan "better Abdullah than Ben Gurion."³⁰ They made some vague attempts to create this alliance, but the Arabs made no distinction between Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. Indeed, Orthodox settlers often were the greatest victims of violent outbreaks.³¹ The hoped for alliance never materialized, and in 1948, the state of Israel was founded against both groups' interests.

Initially, the Haredi remained strictly opposed to the creation of Israel. While they did not have enough influence to decrease its legitimacy in the international arena, they were committed to domestically denying its legitimacy as a part of their religious belief. They accepted the state only as a *fait accompli*³² and refused

even to call it Israel, instead referring to it as the realm of the Sadducees.³³ Unlike religious Zionists, who viewed the creation of the state as a miracle demonstrating divine approval, the Haredi believed that satanic forces had created the state to test Jewish piety.³⁴ Thus, they ordered their communities to stand firm and refuse to give the state any form of legitimacy. This was a difficult objective, as it meant "they must not pay taxes, vote in elections, accept ration books, register for military service, recognize the courts or any branch of the administration and, if they are sent to prison for disobedience, they must gladly accept any sufferings which they may be called upon to endure."³⁵ However, for a people who had long separated themselves from the modern norm, civil disobedience came naturally.

1990s-Present Day

Since several of the theories concerning the interactions between the Haredi and Israeli state largely depend on the evolution of the relationship over time, the period between 1990 and today will be most fruitful in demonstrating the strongest causal argument. Given the early staunch opposition toward Zionism, the strongest theories appear to be total irreconcilability or dependence on societal religiosity. However, the possibilities of ambivalence and Israelization over time remain plausible, depending on the modern state of affairs. Diametrical opposition would predict no change in hostilities over time, while each of the other theories would predict movement toward some form of reconciliation. Israelization would predict greater reconciliation than hostility, while ambivalence and religiosity arguments leave room for some mixture of both.

Today, the situation is in some ways more easily understood, yet also more complicated. While access to survey data more precisely illuminates the Haredi perspective, that perspective is far more ambivalent than it once was. According to the Pew Center in 2016, nine percent of Haredim said the term "Zionist" described them very accurately, with thirty-eight percent saying it did not describe them at all, a clearly quantified insight into Haredi attitudes, but one that leaves a majority somewhere in between.³⁶ It is evident that the extreme theories of irreconcilability and major

Israelization are both incorrect, given the presence of those who feel totally reconciled as well those who remain totally opposed. Thus, these theories are virtually disproved from the outset. Despite many non-Zionists, the number of active *anti-Zionists*, those who continue to argue that the state is a product of Satan and that Israeli society has traded real Judaism for plastic Judaism, is empirically marginal.³⁷ They are a prominent minority because they are highly vocal and practice unqualified social and political isolation, but their ideology does not represent the mainstream ultra-Orthodox perspective.³⁸ The fact that the majority of Orthodox Jews find themselves somewhere in between Zionism and anti-Zionism, supports the theory of ambivalence.

Most scholars agree that recent years have shown “the relinquishing of extreme positions” in which “anti-Zionism has been replaced with a-Zionism and on occasion even proto-Zionism.”³⁹ This is a form of reconciliation, although it is admittedly an ambivalent one. The path to reconciliation appears to have begun with the acceptance of Israel as a *fait accompli*, and ideological arguments have faded into the background of mainstream Haredi thought due to the simple fact of Jewish sovereignty. Many now take the existence of Israel for granted, or even “hesitatingly celebrate it.”⁴⁰ The official line of Haredi leaders is still critical, but there is significant *de facto* recognition of the state and some *de jure* legitimization through institutional cooperation.⁴¹ As a community in need of services normally offered by a state, they have largely resigned to working with the government. In fact, ninety-seven percent believe that Jews deserve preferential



Women and girls in Mea Shearim, a predominantly Haredi neighborhood of Jerusalem (Wikimedia Commons)

treatment in Israel, and they take advantage of available benefits accordingly.⁴² Although they see no religious significance in the state, they behave as citizens of any nation would, participating in government and participating in society to a limited degree.⁴³

While acceptance of Israel’s existence has grown more common, there are still some ways in which many in the Haredi community continue to demonstrate their opposition. They reject Zionist thought, and avoid contact with the secular majority where possible. They do not observe any official holidays, especially the Independence Day that celebrates the establishment of Israel in 1948. Their sons do not serve in the army, and their daughters do not perform any obligatory service. Each year, when sirens prompt the observation of a minute of silence to commemorate soldiers who died for the state of Israel many of the Haredi ignore it.⁴⁴ They continue to keep a separate education system that opposes Israeli curriculum.⁴⁵ They still believe that secular culture is “amoral at best,” and choose to isolate themselves from it to avoid contamination.⁴⁶ While they used to live in mixed neighborhoods with both Haredi and secular residents, there are now Haredi-only cities and markets, where gender separation is practiced more than they have historically.⁴⁷ These examples of continued resistance to assimilation again disproves the narrative of Israelization.

And yet, there are also many ways in which the Haredi have reconciled themselves with broader Israeli society. The Haredi media defends Israel when it is criticized internationally, and celebrates some of its accomplishments. While they refuse to be drafted into the army, due to an to violence and their belief in the impossibility of proper observance while serving in the IDF, they have found another way to participate: the system of *hesed*, in which they study the Torah as a part of the Jewish army’s defense and offense, believing this allows for betterment and preservation of safety.⁴⁸ They have founded charitable organizations that provide services for non-Haredi Israelis, and some of the men have taken on modern ideas, such as the sensitive “new man.”⁴⁹ Politically, in addition to increasing participation by ultra-Orthodox people in government, a surprising percentage of Haredi ballots actually go to non-Orthodox parties in general elections.⁵⁰

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Thus, it is evident that the Haredi are not moving in one primary direction, but rather are experiencing great ambivalence. However, it is also clear that there is more reconciliation, both *de facto* and *de jure*, than in the days before Israel’s founding or in the early days of total non-acknowledgement. Thus, the question remains, what has driven this increase in participation? Even with the self-interested argument of the highway man analogy in mind, considering their early opposition, there is no question that some change in Israeli society occurred that helped bring the ultra-Orthodox into the fold. Here, the religiosity argument again comes into play.

Once the state of Israel was securely established and the Zionist vision had been realized, an identity and culture vacuum formed. This seems to have led Israelis to return to the values of their religious past, prompting a wave of revival.⁵¹ The extent of this revival was unprecedented, and allowed the ultra-Orthodox to take on a greater role in government. Where they had once been Knesset participants, but preferred managerial offices without state responsibility, they became increasingly popular as elected officials. The Shas ultra-Orthodox party, founded in 1984, gained 10 seats in 1996—the same year that Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister and ushered in a new era of right-wing governance. The success of the Shas Party was partly due to the religious revival, which had given the party a wider electorate it could appeal to.⁵² Responding to its success, the Haredi community began to pivot from its position of quietism to more active participation in the government, supporting right-wing approaches including the maximalist settlement policy and hawkish positions on sovereignty in Palestinian territories.⁵³

A particularly striking example of the tension between Israelization and religious radicalization is the ZaKA, a Haredi volunteer organization that helps Israeli victims of Palestinian bombings. ZaKA is seen as the epitome of “two contradictory trends... being

absorbed in the initiatives of the very same agents... it is doubly subversive: an authentic extension of Jewish super-religiosity successfully imposing Haredism on the Israeli scene, [yet] also a Jewish super-religious initiative to open the borders of Haredism from within.”⁵⁴ Thus, it can be argued that the Haredi people opened to reconciliation as the surrounding population moved more toward religiosity, requiring less sacred sacrifices for societal and political participation. Thus, it appears that the most apt theories to describe the relationship are indeed those of ambivalence and religiosity.

Conclusion

Still, it is worth noting that there is a high potential that the pendulum will swing in the other direction, with increasing religiosity creating greater tension between religious and secular Jews. Secular Jews are indeed panicked about the growing political clout of their religious counterparts, and hostility has exploded in violent confrontations over Sabbath road closures and proposed religious laws.⁵⁵ The issue of conscription continues to create great tension, as the government stalls for the Haredi by extending their exemptions and the secular public calls for change.⁵⁶ Indeed, it appears that the ultra-Orthodox have not reconciled ideologically, and their goals are not to assimilate to Israel, but rather to have Israel assimilate to them. One former secular Jew claimed that in “five or ten years, the religious people will be the majority... we will do a religious law in the Knesset... and we will give more money to the yeshivas... if we are very strong, we will do all the life in Israel only by the Torah.”⁵⁷

This is an understandably daunting proposition for secular or less religious Jews, who would not take this lying down. They value modernity and would likely challenge ultra-Orthodox and anti-democratic ideas, especially those involving the secular court system.⁵⁸ However, resistance will become increasingly difficult as religiosity continues to grow and the

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Haredi community naturally expands. Currently, only ten percent of the population is ultra-Orthodox. However, the current birth rate is about six children per Haredi mother, meaning they could make up as much as twenty-five percent within a few decades.⁵⁹ This does not bode well for general reconciliation, but rather suggests a turning of tables in which the secular minority is expected to do the reconciling. Thus, this issue is particularly salient, not only for policy questions such as conscription and settlement status, but for the future prosperity of Israel. The Zionist movement has drawn much of its strength from its general unity, to which the ultra-Orthodox minority did not pose an acute existential threat.⁶⁰ However, as demographics shift, the possibility of a meaningful confrontation between two significant groups could pose an internal threat the likes of which Israel has never seen. Thus, studies of ultra-Orthodoxy and increasing religiosity are highly valuable. In conclusion, partial reconciliation is possible when the surrounding community is more religious and therefore more accepting of the Haredi, but ambivalence toward the Zionist enterprise on the part of ultra-Orthodox Jews is ever-present. However, if religiosity swells beyond a certain point, the norms may shift to where it is the secular Jews who are expected to reconcile their ideology. Should this possibility of this inversion being realized further increase, future studies will be necessary to establish the best techniques for creating meaningful and lasting reconciliation on both sides.

ENDNOTES

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