**Abstract**

The international environmental movement is considered one of the most significant global revolutions in existence. In the 1960s, the environment was described as a tragic arena in which private interests would bring about ecological disaster. In Israel, several decades later, environmental organizations are taking up more and more space in Israeli public life, and environmental causes are growing in visibility and significance. However, despite the existence of a clear ecological crisis at hand and the amassing of a broad body of environmental knowledge, much of society is far from adopting quotidian changes and patterns of action that may be helpful in coping with the environmental threat.

Israel’s *haredi* (“ultra-Orthodox”) population is considered a cultural group to which environmental approaches and practices are alien. *Haredim,* accounting for roughly 11 percent of Israel’s population and composed of various groups, are typified by strict observance of a religious way of life in the spirit of the *halakha* (rabbinical law) and acceptance of rabbinical authority as supreme in broad family systems, including high fertility rates. Within haredi society, women are an optimal group for the development of environmental consciousness due to their growing influence within the family cell—in view of changes under way in women’s status in haredi society and escalating tension between the extent of women’s commitment to traditional roles, such as homemaking and child-raising, increasingly becoming breadwinners.

This study examines the distance between indifference to the environmental cause and the possibility of creating environmental consciousness among haredi women in two neighborhoods in Beit Shemesh, a city that has recently become a powerful magnet for the haredi population. It traces the “practical logic” of using halakhic patterns of action that haredi women maintain at home and particularly in the kitchen. The study examines how they organize their personal world through these practices and the extent, if any, of their familiarity with and internalization of the environmental world.

It is found that few haredi women consider environmental protection a value in itself, let alone a top priority in daily life. A relation is seen between economic status and the possibility of maintaining environmental practices. While women in neither neighborhood identify with environmentalism, most show that they are aware of its value in the public discourse.

Many environmental issues are conspicuous in their absence and are of no concern to haredi women in their environmental context. The few who relate to matters such as water and radiation, for example, do so for reasons of economic saving and demonstration of knowledge of the kind that is perceived as cultural capital.

The question of identifying the women in this study and understanding their changing preferences in various areas of daily life may become key for applying an environmental agenda in haredi society and among other groups in Israel that have similar characteristics.