**Abstract**

Waldorf education, based on the spirit of Anthroposophy as introduced by Rudolf Steiner, was introduced in 1919. Since then, it has been disseminated worldwide and revised adapted in each country in accordance with local culture. In Israel, it has been offered for thirty-five years or so and is expanding steadily. A new phenomenon is the effect of Waldorf education on the religious sector, reflected in several schools affiliated with the religious education system that have adopted various elements of the Waldorf method.

This study examines the complex encounter of education in a haredi *Talmud Torah* (an ultra-Orthodox school for young boys) and Waldorf education via ethnographic research that focuses on the Ohel Mo’ed Talmud Torah, which chose to integrate elements of Waldorf education into its program, as a test case. The study examines the integration of the Waldorf method at this school by asking two research questions. The first centers on aspects of practical pedagogy: How does the staff of a State-*haredi* Talmud Torah apply and interpret elements of Waldorf education? The second question looks into theoretical / ideological aspects of the matter: How do staff members of the Talmud Torah regard points of fit or contradiction between the Torah educational outlook and Waldorf education?

To understand how the encounter takes place, I chose an ethnographic research approach that comprised making contact with frontline staff members, observing lessons and various activities at the Talmud Torah, and documenting them in writing and photography. The Talmud Torah is a recognized and official educational institution that operates as part of the State-haredi education system and is affiliated with the Ma’ayanot Rabbi Hiyya network. I chose to focus on the staff of the Talmud Torah because it is they who maintain direct relations with the pupils, link theory and spiritual outlook to the practical world, and shape children’s encounter with the cultural perception. To complete the picture and understand the outlook that underpins the educational endeavor, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven staff members.

The findings indicate that the composition of the Talmud Torah community—made up of newly religious Jews—influences the nature of the institution and its tendency to search for an education path that will preserve values such as aesthetics and connecting with nature in addition to Jewish values. It is this quest that establishes the connection with Ma’ayanot Rabbi Hiyya, which seeks to offer Jewish religious education that also has inputs of art, aesthetics, manual labor, and relationship with the land. The resulting educational method is influenced by Waldorf education. Viewed from the outside, the Talmud Torah has so much in common with Waldorf schools as to verge on identity. This resemblance however, does not necessary indicate that the Talmud Torah operates in the light of Anthroposophy. In the interviews, the staff members presented the Torah as the basis of their work and traced the inspiration for their endeavor to ideas and personalities in the Jewish world and not to Anthroposophy. Their attitude toward Waldorf education is typified by mixed emotions of attraction and repulsion. Namely, they are drawn to the tools that the Waldorf method offers but reject the underlying philosophy and spirit of the method simply because these are foreign to Judaism. In their educational work, they reconcile this acceptance and rejection by “filtering” the Waldorf tools and, where necessary, revising them so as to fit the values and the educational outlook of the Talmud Torah.