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Orthodox Girls in the Turbulence of Revolutions: The Five Ideologies of Beit Yaakov

1. Research plan

1.1 Scientific background

This study investigates the various educational ideologies of Beit Yaakov since 1917, when Sarah Schenirer inaugurated the first Beit Yaakov class, to 1970 Israel, when Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolff, principal of “Wolff’s Seminary” for teachers in Bnei Brak, resigned his post and turned it over to his son, Zev. The Beit Yaakov system, which accommodated tens of thousands of pupils (nearly 40,000) before the Holocaust, was brought under one umbrella (that of Agudath Israel) and, for the most part, applied a standard curriculum in all affiliated schools. This curriculum was administered mainly by female teachers who themselves were alumnae of Beit Yaakov and, to be precise, of its teachers’ seminary. (In this context, a pitched battle was fought over whether Beit Yaakov schools should hire only such alumnae as teachers, to the exclusion of others.) Therefore, to examine the movement’s educational ideology, one needs to turn to the teachers’ seminaries and observe their ideologies and credos. This, in turn, will reveal the values that are imparted to the teachers and, through their mediation, to all pupils in the system.

In the proposed project, I wish to show how, in practice and in contrast to the conventional wisdom, the educational ideology of Beit Yaakov was not uniform and left room for various voices. Disagreements and conflicts have accompanied Beit Yaakov since its inception, albeit sometimes in *sotto voce*. I chose to focus on five different Beit Yaakov ideologues: Sarah Schenirer (1883–1935), Dr. Samuel (Leo) Deutschländer (1889–1935), Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean (1900–1943), Rabbi Meir Shcharansky (1905–1972), and Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolff (1911–1979). All five had firm educational ideologies, were among the shapers of the institution’s educational policy, and served as principals of teachers’ seminaries in important centers in Europe (Schenirer, Deutschländer, and Orlean) and Israel (Shcharansky and Wolff). I chose to conclude the project with the passing of the seminary’s managerial baton to Zev Wolff, Yosef Avraham Wolff’s son, because in many senses the elder Wolff was one of the most influential figures in shaping the path and the character of Orthodox society. His influence, in fact, was so immense as to have brought the subterranean debate surrounding Beit Yaakov’s educational doctrine to an end, and determined where the institution would head. Even if different voices in the educational ideology of Orthodox girls were (and are) still heard, the battle was decided. In fact, Beit Yaakov underwent more than one revolution over the years. The establishment of Beit Yaakov was itself a revolution in conservative Orthodox strongholds that for years had resisted the introduction of Jewish education for girls. This revolution expanded when Deutschländer stepped into the job, slowed when Orlean took over and switched to a harder line, and headed in a new direction when the reins were taken up by Wolff. The latter in fact engineered an additional revolution in shaping the image of the Orthodox woman by making her into the prime source of support in establishing the society of learners in Israel.

Orthodox society in its various aspects has been privileged by being the object of abundant research regarding its origins, its principal leaders, its literary output, its attitude toward modernity and Torah study, the revolutionary shocks it experienced during the twentieth century after the establishment of the State of Israel and the society of learners, the status of women, and other matters. All of these aspects have been discussed in numerable books and articles and have been studied from various angles: historical, sociological, and philosophical.

Just the same, to this day no comprehensive study has been undertaken on the consolidation of the Beit Yaakov school and the twists and turns that accompanied it from its inception until the coalescence of a more conservative ideology in the 1960s and 1970s. Although initial steps in this direction have been taken, full-fledged research has not followed. In the proposed study, I wish to investigate the various educational ideologies of Beit Yaakov from the genesis of the movement to the 1970s. To do so, I chose to focus on the teachers’ seminaries and the personalities who headed them, whose influence spearheaded the entire system.

Among Orthodox Jews, and to some extent outside that society, Sarah Schenirer’s name has long been synonymous with the Beit Yaakov institutions—a single woman who has become literally a constitutive myth in Orthodox society. Hers is indeed an extraordinary success story. In 1917, as World War I was winding down, the first Beit Yaakov school opened at Schenirer’s initiative; it had twenty-five pupils. At the time of her death in 1935, there were more than 250 schools and a total enrollment of some 35,000, spreading far beyond the borders of Poland across Europe and to the United States and the Land of Israel. It was undoubtedly a genuine revolution, something unprecedented in the Jewish world.

In Germany, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, founder of the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* school of thought (hereinafter: TIDE), established a Jewish education system for boys and girls already in the nineteenth century. In Eastern Europe, however, the situation was different entirely. In Galicia, for example, before Beit Yaakov was established, Jewish education maintained an impermeable boundary between boys and girls. Boys attended *cheder* and yeshiva, whereas girls, including Orthodox ones, even from the finest rabbinical and hasidic families, attended public schools; their Jewish education was based on what they picked up at home, causing religious and spiritual regression among women and creating a wide and sometimes unbridgeable disparity between them and the men. The situation in Congress Poland and Russia was much different. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, a tumultuous debate took place among the rabbinical leadership (1903) and in the pages of the Jewish press on the topic of educating Jewish girls: Should the current state of unresponsiveness continue or should they be cared for within an Orthodox education system, it being clear that such a system would also include Torah studies at some level? The hard-liners’ views prevailed and the status quo held: girls continued to attend public schools. The main argument of the opponents of the change was that girls must not receive Torah education due to the injunction against Torah study for women, whereas nonreligious studies would presumably be given by *maskilim*, proponents of the Jewish enlightenment. Accordingly, they saw no room for a change in the status quo and relied on the strength of the Jewish home to give the girls a meaningful Jewish education. Schenirer, however, broke the logjam and established a formal educational setting for Jewish girls. Not only was she not considered a rebel on this account; she even earned lasting glory and became a paragon in Orthodox society and elsewhere.

The Orthodox literature, true to its usual practice, prefers to present a monolithic picture of Beit Yaakov’s educational ideology, one that mirrors the “correct” and “worthy” perspective. It disregards the disputes and conflicts that have beset the institution all along, especially at its outset, and ignores additional personalities who determined where the system would head. The literature abounds with content about the inception of the Beit Yaakov and, in particular, the exceptional personaliy of Sarah Schenirer. It describes Schenirer not only as the power behind the establishment of the school but as the person responsible for its enormous success and the growth of the system at large, the individual responsible for the school’s educational doctrine, the one who rescued Jewish girls from the ravages of her own era, and the savior of a generation that she never met—that of the Holocaust and the one following (Shaul, 2012).

The image of Sarah Schenirer, however, seems to have been amplified beyond historical reality. Beit Yaakov is the story not only of Schenirer but of others who propelled it to success and took responsibility for it—foremost Dr. Samuel (Leo) Deutschländer, of whom I will have some more to say below. Also, Beit Yaakov has never been, at its outset and later, the story of one dominant ideology. The real Beit Yaakov accommodates several different and often conflicting ideologies concurrently. Indeed, revisiting the history of Beit Yaakov reveals a much more complex picture than that reflected in the recent literature.

It is noteworthy that the opening of the Beit Yaakov school, which received the blessings of the greatest rabbis of that time—Rabbi Israel Meir Hacohen (“the Hafetz Hayyim,” 1839–1833), the Grand Rabbi of Gur (R. Abraham Mordechai Alter, “the *Imre Emet,*” 1866–1948), and the Grand Rabbi of Belz (R. Issachar Dov Rokeach, 1851–1926)—and enjoyed the patronage of Agudath Israel, posed a major challenge because it reflected the existence of forces that collided with each other from several directions. In effect, it was a structural internal conflict. On the one hand, the very fact of an instutiton aimed at educating Orthodox girls is the product of modern influence, as were the circumstances under which the school opened, with Orthodox girls already exposed to, and part of, modernity. On the other hand, the system set itself the goal of fortifying and strengthening tradition against the battering waves of modernity. Furthermore, Beit Yaakov stood at the crossroads between East and West, the conflict between the spiritual and cultural world of the conservative Jews of Galicia and the TIDE philosophy, from which Beit Yaakov derived the inspiration and the ideological infrastructure for its founding. The differences between Eastern Europe and Western Europe found expression in several respects, particularly in the attitude toward religious and secular studies and the difference between men and women in each of them. Given the intersections where Beit Yaakov stood (conservatism vs. modernity, disapproval of secular studies vs. TIDE), naturally we would expect to find various tendencies and debates within the institution over the extent of openness to modernity, the treatment of religious and secular studies, and the end-goal: the education of the Orthodox girl at large.

Indeed, a new look at the history of Beit Yaakov shows that the institution has been buffeted by disagreements and conflicts since the very beginning. Two of my recent articles (now in press) fill in some of the missing content. The more deeply I probed this issue, however, the more convinced I became of the need for more thorough and comprehensive research that would investigate the wealth of sources on all aspects of the topic—especially since the matter has been researched only in part and my conclusions revise the views that have prevailed thus far. Below I dwell briefly on the revolutions that Beit Yaakov experienced in a relatively brief period of time in Poland and, later on, in the Land of Israel, as my aforementioned studies illuminate.

Sarah Schenirer does in fact have the unchallenged right of primacy as the leader of Beit Yaakov from its first days and was an intensive proponent of its success throughout her lifetime. Credit for the great triumph of Beit Yaakov, however, should be shared with additional players, foremost Dr. Samuel (Leo) Deutschländer, an exponent of TIDE and a prolific educator. At the age of twenty, Deutschländer established a branch of Agudath Israel in Berlin. In World War I, he and Rabbi Dr. Joseph Hirsch (Tsvi) Carlebach, later to become the Chief Rabbi of Hamburg, founded the Reali Gymnasium in Kovno on the basis of the TIDE method. During his stay in Eastern Europe, Deutschländer managed to draw the Jews of Western Europe closer to those of Eastern Europe and a visit to the East by important Western personalities took place at his initiative. After returning from Eastern Europe, he attended the University of Berlin, where he wrote his dissertation on Goethe and Biblical stories. After the first Kenesiyya Gedolah of Agudath Israel in 1923, he was invited to be the director of Keren haTorah, and about a year later, in September 1924, the Agudath Israel Council resolved to bring the work of Beit Yaakov under the Keren haTorah umbrella. (This was a portentous decision because it meant, in practice, that Beit Yaakov would receive budgeting at the “expense” of yeshivas.) Immediately aware of the importance of the matter, Deutschländer pledged all of his energy to the advancement of Beit Yaakov—largely a local enterprise at the time—and undertook all tasks related to it, economic and administrative and also, no less, educational. For example, he wrote Beit Yaakov curricula and instituted a summer course for women teachers at the seminary (conducted at camps in the mountains). His role, however, has been downplayed if not totally disregarded in Orthodox literature.

Between the lines of the various testimonies about the onset of the Beit Yaakov revolution, one sees that the obscuring of Dr. Deutschländer was no accident. The main reason for it had to do with differences between Deutschländer’s educational outlook and Schenirer’s and, more so, between him and Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean (1900–1943), who succeeded him as principal of the Beit Yaakov seminary in Kraków when Deutschländer and Schenirer died in 1935. Orlean, a member of the Gur Hasidic court and a broadly-educated autodidact who wrote pamphlets and articles on educational and social topics, was an educator and president of Po’ale Agudath Israel in Poland and head of the seminary in Warsaw. After the deaths of Schenirer and Deutschländer, he was placed at the helm of the seminary in Kraków. His tenure there, however, was brief due to the outbreak of World War II. He and his family perished in the Holocaust.

To a great extent, Orlean was Deutschländer’s mirror image. Deutschländer attributed great importance to methodology, and sought to promote an explicit educational ideology of Jewish studies of a profoundly neo-Orthodox spirit along with exposure to the finest contents of European civilization. For this purpose, he even encouraged studies of languages such as German and Polish so that the relevant writings could be fully understood. Orlean, in contrast, sought to gradually reverse several of Deutschländer’s most conspicuous moves. He deemed methodology a matter of secondary importance at best, complaining that “We’ve been trapped in the snare of the Haskala psychosis,” and resolved to put the matter right. To his way of thinking, the goal of abstract Haskala*,* Enlightenment-style education, should be replaced by the imparting of *da’at,* the capacity of counsel, that could be acquired only by the performance of the religious commandments.

Although the Holocaust cut short Orlean’s influence in Poland, a policy similar to his steadily developed in the Land of Israel at the Beit Yaakov seminary in Bnei Brak, headed by Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolff (1911–1979). Although Wolff was a product of the TIDE school of thought, after he immigrated to the Land of Israel (in 1939) he was influenced by the Lithuanian way of thinking represented by the dominant rabbi of that generation, R. Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (“the Hazon Ish”). Initially, he served as a class head teacher at the Beit Yaakov seminaries in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; in 1952, at Rabbi Karelitz’ initiative, was named principal of the Beit Yaakov seminary in Bnei Brak—a post that he held until 1970, when illness forced him to pass it on to his son, Zev. Rabbi Wolff championed a conservative educational policy that found expression in a critical attitude toward TIDE and in his views on the proper make up of girls’ schools. Knowledge acquired in school, he stressed, should serve only as a bridge toward correct counsel and not as an end in itself. Furthermore, he stated, “All studies at Beit Yaakov are but an ad hoc necessity […] and if no circle that rules out education for girls in a school setting is known today, it is merely evidence of decline” (Wolff, 1984, p. 176). The proper goal of teachers at Beit Yaakov, he asserted explicitly, is to educate girls in fear of God and appropriate conduct.

Even in the Land of Israel, however, there was no single dominant ideology. Twelve years before the establishment of the State of Israel, a teachers’ seminar in Tel Aviv was established under Rabbi Meir Shcharansky (1905–1972), a Gerrer Hasid who had engaged in education and teaching for Beit Yaakov in Poland. After he reached the Land of Israel (1933), he settled in Tel Aviv, where first he established a primary school and then, in 1936, the city’s Beit Yaakov teachers’ seminary. This institution took a more moderate and open-minded attitude toward the country’s Jewish society, TIDE, and modernity. The two seminaries represented different and almost clashing educational directions. “Wolff’s Seminary” embraced the “society of learners” educational ideology, which preaches the ideal of an Orthodox home in which the wife bears the burden not only of household duties but also of earning income, so that her husband could devote his life to Torah study. “Shcharansky’s Seminary,” in contrast, favored a more moderate and open-minded policy toward the evolving Israeli reality. Even many years later, after “Shcharansky’s Seminary” fell in line with the hegemonic spirit of Israeli Orthodoxy, it maintained a relatively moderate tone.

In fact, one can divide the years of growth and development of Beit Yaakov in Europe into three periods, and in this study I wish to relate to a fourth period, that following the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, including reference to the continued ideological polemics over the Beit Yaakov path in Israel.

In the first period, 1918–1923, Beit Yaakov grew under the sole influence of Sarah Schenirer. In the second period, 1924–1935, Agudath Israel adopted Beit Yaakov and Dr. Leo Deutschländer took the system under his wing and gave it his professional guidance. Pursuant to this, the school received enormous momentum and became increasingly attractive. The signal event of this period was a turn toward TIDE in the system’s educational outlook.

In the third period, 1935–1943, after the deaths of Schenirer and Deutschländer, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean took over as director of the Beit Yaakov. The key event of this time was Beit Yaakov’s conservative turn.

In the fourth period, set in Israel (1936–1970), systematic educational ideologies evolved in two institutions that turned out cadres of teachers for the next generation: the seminaries in Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak. In the Orthodox argot, both seminaries were eponymous with their founders (“Wolff’s Seminary” and “Shcharansky’s Seminary,” respectively) and they represented different educational directions. In short order, however, Rabbi Wolff became one of the most important ideologues in Orthodox society, wielding enormous if not overarching influence on shaping the image of the Orthodox girl and the establishment of the society of learners. Key to this era, therefore, was the fortification of the conservative stance that had made first inroads already in Poland with Rabbi Orlean’s appointment as principal of the seminary in Kraków.

Description of the proposed study

The run-up to the establishment of Beit Yaakov has been described in research at relative length, in both its historical and its conceptual senses, including presentations of the voices that took part in the polemics. The most conspicuous studies are those of S. Scharfstein, A. Greenbaum, S. Stampfer, and others. The establishment of Beit Yaakov and its functioning as an educational enterprise, however, still entails thorough description. Research has largely failed to provide a full picture of the overt and covert conflicts and polemics that accompanied this institution during and after Schenirer’s life, and has not assessed the divergent, if not contradictory, ideological forces that have been part and parcel of Beit Yaakov from its very inception, as explained in detail above. Instead, research has focused on, and magnified, the role and deeds of Sarah Schenirer. Prominent among the existing works are those of Etkin, Debbie Weisman, and, recently, Naomi Seidman’s book-length study. Seidman not only turns focal attention to Sarah Schenirer but also claims that Schenirer is under-appreciated due to excessive emphasis on other personalities who demanded their share of “honor” at Beit Yaakov (Seidman, 2019, pp. 62–63). Researchers who sensed and remarked on the important roles of other players in the success of Beit Yaakov (e.g., Bakon, 2005; Menkin, 2004; Friedman, 1988; and Lissak, 2014) invested little attention in Dr. Samuel (Leo) Deutschländer, who, as stated, was a senior partner if not an even more important player in the endeavor. They have not appreciated his unique contribution to, and his important educational role in, the success and dissemination of Beit Yaakov. Deutschländer is mentioned mainly in the organizational context due to his position as chair of Keren haTorah but the educational and intellectual aspects of his work are overlooked. Studies on Beit Yaakov do not pause to explore the tense relations that existed between Schenirer and Deutschländer and between Deutschländer and Orlean. Orlean, too, has not been researched in the context of his educational outlook. Several studies consider him only in a socio-historical context, given his role as President of Po’ale Agudath Israel and a person who dealt with and wrote about the labor movement and social justice (e.g., Fund, 2018), his ramified activities during the Holocaust (e.g., Piekarz, 1990), and his indefatigable attempts to keep studies at Beit Yaakov going (e.g., Farbstein, 2002). As stated, however, no reference has been made to his outlook on educational ideology and the ideological revolution that he set in motion at Beit Yaakov.

Research is also deficient in understanding the image of the Beit Yaakov educational ideologues in the Land of Israel, Shcharansky and Wolff. It is true that Shcharansky’s role in the establishment of Beit Yaakov in the Land of Israel has been noted more than once, but his educational conceptions have hardly been analyzed it all. His writings have been researched mainly in regard to the history textbooks that he wrote for Orthodox schools (Caplan, 2017; Caplan doubts that Shcharansky actually wrote them) and his stance on the question of Torah studies for women (Brown, 2013). As stated, however, his ideological conception has eluded the lens of comprehensive research. As for Wolff, although the state of research is better, some supplementation is needed here as well. In two previous studies of mine, I devoted a detailed discussion to his intellectual outlook. In one of them (Brown, 2013), I examined the Orthodox ideology and the limits of Torah education for girls and reserved a chapter for Wolff’s conceptual viewpoint on the nature of man and woman, their calling in the world, and the implications of these for the extent of Torah knowledge that women should acquire. (In this article, I also briefly discussed Shcharansky). In the other study (Brown, 2012), I examined from a philosophical point of view (as distinct from a historical or social perspective, as has been researched thus far; see, for example, Friedman, 1991) the establishment of the Orthodox learners’ society in Israel, for which, in its practical implementation, Wolff was largely responsible.

Adopting the terminology of Zvi Lamm, a leading researcher into the philosophy of education, in his book *Pressure and Resistance in Education* (Hebrew) (Lamm, 2010), one may say that Deutschländer strongly favored an eclectic approach that kept three goals of education in mind: acculturation, socialization, and individuation, whereas Schenirer devalued indivuation and placed acculturation front and center. Things changed in the third period of Beit Yaakov, beginning with Orlean’s assumption of the helm, and did so with greater intensity during the term of Wolff, who reinforced Rabbi Orlean’s stance. All the other ideologies—socialization and more so individuation—were crowded out by one dominant ideology: acculturation. Even though socialization had been one of the most salient goals of Orthodox education, it now became just another medium for the advancement of acculturation. This outlook has become entrenched and dominant in Orthodox society.

1.2 Goals and importance of the study

**The proposed study is important in several respects:**

1. **Filling lacunae, adding new research, and correcting scholarly neglect:** The study proposes to fill missing gaps in two senses: history and educational ideology. **With respect to history,** I intend to elucidate several matters that remain opaque in the annals of Beit Yaakov. For example, I will reveal Deutschländer’s strained relations with Schenirer and Orlean in order to determine how much of the stress was personal and how much it concerned educational ideology. In another example, Rabbi Benjamin Zev Jacobson, the Hamburg rabbi who worked closely with Deutschländer, alludes in his memoirs (Jacobson, 1967) to tension between Deutschländer and Schenirer on ideological grounds. I assume that I will be able to find additional material that may yield a fuller picture of these disagreements—their content, their nature, how they were resolved, how they affected the atmosphere at Beit Yaakov, how Orthodox historiography has treated them, and so on. I also wish to probe in depth the factors that prompted Orlean, Orlean’s successors, and Orthodox historiography, to disregard Deutschländer’s endeavors and his immense contribution. I will also look into the process that led to Orlean’s appointment, which seems to have been somewhat bumpy and was impeded by the Grand Rabbi of Gur (as insinuated by Seidman, 1970, who offers no further explanation for it). In my new articles (in press) I focused mainly on the seminary in Kraków; now I wish to broaden the discussion by including the seminary in Vienna and explaining the differences between the two institutions in terms of curriculum, the great success of the seminary in Kraków as against the relative failure of that in Vienna, Orlean’s role at the seminary in Kraków, where he taught, before he became principal there after the death of Schenirer and Deutschländer, and the path chosen by the seminary in Vienna. Turning to **ideology**, I wish to fill in the missing voices of various ideologues who were present at Beit Yaakov from its genesis, describe the covert and overt polemics among the leading personalities, and assess Orlean’s second revolution and its reinforcement by Wolff in the Land of Israel. Although I take up these aspects in my recent studies, here I wish to intensify the inquiry by bringing in additional sources such as the Beit Yaakov journal, published in Poland between 1924 and 1939, to which Deutschländer and Olean contributed; memoirs; the local press; and so on. To access these materials, much work in archives abroad, particularly that of YIVO in New York, will be necessary. I also know of the existence of unpublished transcripts of lectures that Wolff gave his students at the seminary, in addition to his series of published books, *The Era and Its Problems* (Hebrew), in which he unfurls his conceptual and educational teachings in various matters. I intend to find these transcripts and integrate them into the project.
2. **Analyzing the dynamic of educational ideologies that target diverse populations:** Educational ideologies are supposed to create systems of beliefs and values by which a given education system should comport itself. In its efforts to reach diverse population groups, however, Beit Yaakov sometimes had to relax its ideology, at least for appearances’ sake. The sources that I have examined thus far do show that Beit Yaakov tried to appeal to a very broad population: the conservative Orthodox public and the more modern religious one. Each of these sides treated Beit Yaakov suspiciously, one considering it “too open-minded” and liable to expose their daughters to forbidden Torah study and overly extensive secular studies, and the other frowning on it in the belief that it was “too closed-minded” and would fail to prepare their daughters for participation in the larger world. Thus, Beit Yaakov had to deflect criticism from both the Right and the Left. In its efforts to do so, for example, I found a dramatic difference among various versions of a pamphlet in Yiddish, *Vos Dorf Zayn Mit di Yudishe Tokhter* [What should become of the Jewish daughter]? that was eventually translated into German and Hebrew: the contents of study and Torah and secular studies were specified differently depending on the population targeted. I assume that there are additional documents that give evidence of outreach to different population groups. I intend to hunt down these documents and examine and analyze the ways these appeals were made. I also wish to dwell on the ideological concept that proposed to appeal to the broadest possible target population, a non-puritanical one that is willing to take the risks of cultural integration. I will also ask what happened in the Land of Israel: Were different target populations approached there, too? When did this outlook change, and why? What concept of educational ideology underlies the process that is making Beit Yaakov more elitist and puritanical, effectively giving up on girls who might “ruin” their conservative friends?
3. **Adding a new element to research on *Torah ‘im Derekh Eretz*:** Research has had quite a bit to say about Beit Yaakov’s attitude toward TIDE. The most prominent studies in this respect are those of Mordechai Brauer (1969), David Ellenson (1985, 1990), Eliezer Stern (1987), Yaakov Bar-Or (1987), and Mordechai Eliav (1987), among others. Thus far, however, research has focused on the various interpretations that the TIDE method has been given, the diverse responses that it attracted during Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s lifetime and afterward, its literary harvest, and the secessionist community dispute. Also researched are the attitudes of East European rabbis toward the movement and its teachings (Friedman, 1987; Bloch, 2015). In the proposed study, I intend to augment this corpus by presenting the lively polemics that surround the question of TIDE and its place in Eastern Europe in the context of girls’ education and the implications of the dispute for their schooling.

d. **Understanding the processes underway in Orthodox society:** It is noteworthy that Beit Yaakov has been, almost since its inception, the largest Jewish education system ever established. This alone makes it important to study the system’s underlying educational concept. I also wish to observe the alumnae of the Beit Yaakov system as a case study of women’s place in revolutions in a conservative society, given that such women are considered a good prism through which the dynamics of the society at large may be understood. Also, it is important to plumb the roots of the dispute in the Beit Yaakov ideology in order to understand thoroughly the society of learners and the debates about it that engage the Orthodox to this day. First and foremost, the study can demonstrate the ability of conservative societies to accommodate revolutionary stresses in both directions—toward openness and toward insularity—when these revolutions are perceived as existentially crucial for the societies at issue. This understanding may even help to determine whether and how schoolgirls became gatekeepers of Orthodox society and not necessarily agents of path-breaking change even though they engaged in secular studies and joined the labor force. Attitudes toward women’s academic studies, earning degrees, shouldering the burden of family income, and other matters all tie into the contents that these women absorbed at Beit Yaakov. Similarly, I wish to explore the formation of a new tradition with the help of the education system. In my earlier study on Orthodox women’s acceptance of the role of breadwinner (Brown, 2012), I showed how the new “tradition” of women as the main income earners came about. Here, too, I wish, by means of the Beit Yaakov story, to investigate the way other new “traditions” evolved and took hold in the Orthodox world.

1.3 Detailed description of the proposed study

1.3.1 Working hypothesis

In this study, I wish to present Beit Yaakov as an arena of spiritual forment among various educational ideologies. These ideologies, grounded in worldviews and outlooks in diverse matters, were intrinsic to the movement at the time it was founded and remained so through its consolidation in the 1960s and 1970s. I will examine this through the prism of the four-period structure described above and the main personalities in each, who influenced the shaping of the pupils and the public consciousness.

Several working hypotheses underlie the project; they are itemized in the previous section (b) of this proposal.

1. **A wealth of source material exists:** Beit Yaakov started out in Kraków but quickly spread to many additional centers in Europe and elsewhere. Accordingly, I expect to encounter rich and copious source material in documents, the press, memoirs, curricula, newsletters, journals, halakhic writings, and philosophical works by the personalities in question. Recently, too, a new database was inaugurated of the Historical Jewish Press archive, which includes more than fifty different Orthodox newspapers from Belgium, Poland, and the Land of Israel, among other places. (The software costs NIS 12,000 and the Israel National Library is unlikely to buy it anytime soon.) I am also aware of the existence of additional materials, such as unpublished transcripts of talks that Wolff gave at his seminary.
2. **Beit Yaakov was a crossroads of spiritual foment that reflects diverse educational ideologies:** In my project, I will focus on the five main personalities who shaped the Beit Yaakov educational ideology and examine the most important teachers’ seminaries—those in Kraków, Vienna, Tel Aviv, and Bnei Brak.
3. **Relations at Beit Yaakov were ramified:** Ideological, tactical, and even personal motives figured in the internal conflicts at Beit Yaakov. Therefore, awareness of the need for historical analysis (social and personal), on the one hand, and for conceptual analysis, on the other, is necessary.
4. **The story of Beit Yaakov’s educational ideologies may provide a case study on the application of general educational theories.** I intend to apply theoretical models of education to Beit Yaakov in Europe and the Land of Israel. I will discuss several models that exist in the literature and determine which of them is suited to each of the methods that appeared on the Beit Yaakov agenda.

1.3.2 Work plan and methodology

The work will be carried out in the following stages:

1. **Locating and collecting materials:** This stage will comprise three main activities, undertaken concurrently. The first is a search for the writings of the personalities involved, both in their books and articles and in talks that their listeners recorded in writing. The second is an extensive hunt for written materials in journals and leaflets, including newspapers in private and public archives in Israel and abroad; contemporary journals; textbooks and curricula; memoirs; and halakhic and philosophical works. All of these shed light on the personalities and on Beit Yaakov. The work will be done by systematicly searching of information bases, archives, and private collections. The third activity, relating to Beit Yaakov in Israel, concerns the immense value of making witnesses’ voices heard. Therefore, I will try to contact people who knew and were active in the surroundings of Wolff and Shcharansky, and may be able to enlighten me on the research questions.
2. **Classifying the materials by periods, geographical areas, and individual:** I expect the material that will accumulate in Stage 1 to be so capacious as to require systematic cataloging.
3. **Analyzing the findings:** As stated, the analysis will be divided into historical and ideological cross-sections, and for the purposes of the latter I will avail myself, where necessary, of various educational theories.
4. **Describing the five educational ideologies:** In this stage, the writing itself will take place and the accumulated material and the conclusions that it yields will find expression.

1.3.3 Preliminary outcomes

I have already amassed a great deal of material— journal articles, archival documents, and press clippings— for the writing of my earlier articles, and some of this material did not yet find expression in these articles. As for outcomes, I already developed several initial insights about Deutschländer and Wolff and have outlined them in the aforementioned articles. At the time, I felt that I was articulating only a small portion of the material that I had brought together and that even more copious material awaited discussion. Furthermore, several of my studies in recent years dealt with matters that may provide a methodological framework for the proposed study. They investigate, among other topics, the perception of human nature and its connection with attitudes toward Torah study by women in Orthodox society (2013), the approach to Bruria’s act (2017), Orthodox women assuming the burden of earning income (2012), and my two latest studies, which describe, in an initial outline form, the struggle over the educational ideology of Beit Yaakov (in press).

1.3.4 Conditions available to the investigator

a. **Personal expertise and experience:** I have spent my entire academic life dealing with various aspects of Jewish Orthodoxy, including those relating to gender and ideology. In many of my studies, I have placed new materials and not-yet-discussed angles of observation on the research agenda. These skills will be of great utility in the proposed project.

b. **Libraries and archives:** Much material is available in libraries and archives in Israel and abroad.

c. **Databases:** An abundance of material is available in digital databases. Recently, as noted, the existing databases have been augmented by a new one, belonging to the Historical Jewish Press archive, which is expected to transform the state of research on the Orthodox Jewish world.

d. **Witnesses:** I am able to be in touch with eyewitnesses, particularly women, who can shed powerful light on the ways of Beit Yaakov in Israel.

1.3.5 Conditions that I will need for the project

To carry out the project successfully, I will need two research assistants at one-fourth position, office equipment (including computers and scanning equipment), travel abroad in order to search archives and libraries, and access to professional literature in history, education, and philosophy—a diverse literature that includes both original material and studies, much of which is unavailable in ordinary university libraries. At the present writing, I do not have the requisite funding for these necessities.