**Triumphs of Conservatism: Beit Ya'akov’s role in the paths of seclusion and the Scholar Society in Poland and in Israel**

Every Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) boy and girl in Israel is familiar with the Beit Ya'akov network of schools; an extensive organization of educational institutions spanning kindergartens to seminaries providing professional training to young women, primarily teacher training. The story of this network’s advent is likewise well known, and every Haredi girl has heard the name of its founder Sarah Schenirer (1883-1935), the ‘mother’ of Haredi women.[[1]](#footnote-2) Sarah Schenirer’s name has long been a by-word for Beit Ya'akov – a singular female figure who was transformed into a foundational myth of Haredi society.

Sarah Schenirer was active in Poland during the inter-war period, while the Beit Ya'akov movement, which may have been established prior to the Holocaust, truly flourished mostly in the period following it, in the sovereign state of Israel. As described elsewhere,[[2]](#footnote-4) the ethos of the Bet Ya’akov network in Poland, until the deaths of Sarah Schenirer and Shmuel Deutschländer in 1935, was quite different from that of the network of schools established in Israel: The early Polish network placed a much greater emphasis on the neo-Orthodox doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* – Torah with the way of the land (that is, local culture)*.*

By contrast, Beit Ya’akov in Israel played a key role in the Haredi revolution that created the Israeli “society of scholars:” Some of the movement’s leaders encouraged Haredi women to go out and work in order to support their Torah scholar husbands, thereby sustaining the cultural entrenchment of Haredi society.[[3]](#footnote-6) We ask, then, what brought about this change? Was it the result of the relocation to a different cultural and historical context, or did it begin in Poland, prior to the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel? Is it possible to identify the conceptual and practical continuity between the movement in Poland and Beit Ya’akov in Israel? I attempt to address these questions through a comparison of the figures who founded and led Beit Ya’akov in Poland and those who established the movement and headed it in Israel.

**Beit Ya’akov in Poland (a): The conservative reaction of the late thirties**

Prior to Beit Ya'akov’s establishment, traditional Jewish education in Eastern Europe distinguished between boys and girls unequivocally. Boys went to the ‘*Cheider*’ and later the Yeshiva, while girls attended public schools and received their Jewish education at home. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish public and its rabbis debated the need for Jewish girls’ schools. The conservative position prevailed, however, preserving the existing situation where there were no Jewish schools for girls.

That a Jewish girl should attend public school was not seen to be a problem: there was no fear that that she would be adversely influenced, because the Jewish home was believed to be so influential as to provide an education in Judaism deep and meaningful enough to resist the environment. There was also no fear of ‘*bittul Torah*’ (wasting time which could be better spent studying Torah), since girls were not only not commanded to study the Torah, but were actually forbidden from doing so. Conservative circles were hard pressed to accept the notion that the absence of regular religious education was the cause of girls abandoning religion or for their moral-spiritual decline; after all, it was inconceivable that the Sages in their wisdom had not foreseen, or even considered, that such a problem occur. But where the rabbis of the more liberal factions failed, Sarah Schenirer succeeded. She wrought the necessary change, and not only was she not considered a rebel, she even achieved everlasting glory among the Haredi public.[[4]](#footnote-7)

Sarah Schenirer was born and raised in a family belonging to the Belz Hassidim, one of the most conservative Hassidic sects in Galicia. Despite this upbringing, she was inspired to establish a girls’ school by the sermons of Rabbi Dr. Moshe Dovid Flesch (1879-1944), a disciple of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, which she heard while in Vienna during World War I.[[5]](#footnote-13) Subsequently, Hirsch’s scholarship enjoyed a prominent place in her curriculum, as did his educational doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz.*[[6]](#footnote-14)

Schenirer opened her first school in 1917, with just 25 pupils. She had the support of leading rabbis such as Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach of Belz (1977-1985), Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur (1866-1948) and Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen of Radin, (the Chafetz Chaim, 1839-1933). The Chafetz Chaim permitted women to study Torah retrospectively, in light of the problems facing this generation. This stood in contrast to the doctrine of Rabbi Hirsch, who determined that women were permitted a priori to study the Torah.[[7]](#footnote-15)

During its early years, the school was strictly a local venture.[[8]](#footnote-16) It prospered and expanded significantly after 1923, when Agudath Israel granted its patronage and appointed Rabbi Dr. Shmuel (Leo) Deutschländer, director of Agudath Yisrael’s Keren Hatorah (Torah Fund), to lead the school and help it expand.[[9]](#footnote-17) Deutschländer’s efforts on behalf of Beit Ya’akov were crucial and he probably deserves most of the credit for the network’s incredible expansion and growth until 1935, the year both Deutschländer and Schenirer died.

Once Schenirer’s modest enterprise had expanded to open new schools beyond Poland’s borders, Beit Ya'akov was unable to supply enough teachers. The organization did not have an official teachers’ seminary before 1924, nor did it have a clearly defined pedagogical system or, for that matter, even basic textbooks. Deutschländer is the one who formulated the curriculum and envisioned the intensive summer courses for experienced and new teachers alike, where they were provided a broad and comprehensive foundation in pedagogy.[[10]](#footnote-18) He viewed the shortage of skilled teachers as the most acute problem facing the rapidly expanding education network, and thus advocated for a teachers’ seminary that would offer a two to three year training program (or at least a whole year).. Judith Grunfeld (nee Rosenbaum), was one of the first Jewish teachers recruited by Deutschländer from Germany to teach in the new schools and worked closely with Deutschländer and Schenirer.[[11]](#footnote-19) She expresses great esteem for Schenirer’s pioneering efforts, but describes Deutschländer as the author of Beit Ya'akov’s transformation from a successful local enterprise to a global phenomenon: “from a dream of a dressmaker, from the vision of an untrained enthusiast, to the level of a systematic, well-planned organization.”[[12]](#footnote-20) She describes his responsibilities and efforts on behalf of Beit Ya'akov: he oversaw finances and the founding of the teachers’ seminary in Krakow; he transformed the school into a professional institution that could compete successfully with others; he developed the curricula, exams and summer programs; and he is the one who obtained recognition from the Polish Ministry of Education.[[13]](#footnote-21) In other words, when Deutschländer assumed the organizational and pedagogical reigns of Beit Ya'akov, he transformed it into an international success.[[14]](#footnote-22)

Although Schenirer did not formulate an ordered curriculum for her school, she read and taught from the writings of Rabbi Hirsch and other German Jewish authors, such as Rabbi Dr. Marcus (Meyer) Lehmann.[[15]](#footnote-25) She believed these books had a place in every Haredi library and made sure they were available in her school library.[[16]](#footnote-26) All the same, Schenirer was the product of the very heart of conservative Hassidic society in Poland, the Belz Hassidim, and certainly knew her audience better than Deutschländer. As such, she was more cautious and restrained, and certainly more conscious of “the rules of the game” in Eastern European Jewish society than Deutschländer.[[17]](#footnote-27) Deutschländer, by contrast, incorporated pedagogy and psychology into teacher training, as well as general studies of languages (Polish and German), literature and general history, including the greatest works of German literature, and the history and geography of Poland.[[18]](#footnote-28)

Indeed, an examination of the curriculum prepared by Deutschländer for the Beit Ya'akov teachers’ seminary reveals a preponderance of material written by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, as well as his grandson, Dr. Isaac Breuer.[[19]](#footnote-29) Thus, for example, six weekly hours were devoted to Bible studies (*Chumash*) using the commentaries written by Rashi and by Rabbi Hirsch. Additional books by Hirsch, such as *Horeb* and *The Nineteen Letters,* and writings by Isaac Breuer on the history of the Jews and the Messiah, were also part of the curriculum. Deutschländer also incorporated language studies, to ensure seminary students mastered Polish. An additional, no less remarkable and somewhat surprising feature of the curriculum was the ambitiousness of the program in German language and literature. Deutschländer wanted his students to be able to read Hirsch’s writings, as well as classical German literature, in the original. The German syllabus for the Beit Ya'akov seminary included, together with Deutschländer’s own book *Schem VaJephet: Westöstliche Dichterklänge,[[20]](#footnote-30)* works by great German poets and authors – in German. For example: lyrical poetry by Schiller, plays including Goethe’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Christian Friedrich Hebbel’s *Herodes und Mariamne*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*’s Nathan the Wise*, Stefan Zweig*’s* Jeremiah, and Beer-Hoffman’s Jacob’s Dream.[[21]](#footnote-31) These highlights of classical German culture aimed, according to Deutschländer, at helping students achieve a proficiency in German that would enable them to fully comprehend classic German literature.

It is almost certain that this curriculum far exceeded what Sarah Schenirer had in mind when she established her first girls’ school. However, despite this vast gulf between the two in terms of educational philosophy, Schenirer and Deutschländer worked together productively and, in spite of certain tensions, continued to collaborate until their deaths. Beit Ya'akov provided an open Orthodox education, very much in line with the German *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine—albeit somewhat more restrained—and encouraged a combination of Judaism and general culture.

It is Deutschländer’s work alongside Schenirer which enabled the Beit Ya’akov schools to stand up to the scrutiny of potential teachers, particularly those who hailed from the more educated and well-to-do sections of Jewish Orthodox society and expected a serious and thorough education. Similarly, they were able to comply with the demands of the Polish government.

All this changed, however, in the next chapter of Beit Ya’akov’s history. After Deutschländer’s passing in 1935, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean (1900-1943), a Gur Hassid with no academic background, assumed leadership of the network. The new director sought to reverse the reigning approach to the curriculum instituted by Deutschländer and reshape education at Beit Ya’akov in the spirit of Eastern European Jewry; that is, to respond to their objection to Rabbi Hirsh’s *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.[[22]](#footnote-33)

Orlean condemned Beit Ya’akov for having become “enmeshed in the Enlightenment psychosis,”[[23]](#footnote-34) and determined to extricate the movement from it. He believed that rather than a vague ‘education,’ students should be provided with ‘wisdom’ (*da’at*), which could only be acquired through the practice of religious commandments.[[24]](#footnote-35) While Deutschländer put much store in methodology, Orlean believed it to be of minor importance:[[25]](#footnote-36) he hints in his own writings that the incorporation of methodology in the curriculum was aimed at supporting Beit Ya'akov’s image as a serious educational institution rather than as a goal in and of itself.[[26]](#footnote-37)

Who was Orlean? Yehuda Leib Orlean, a Hassid from birth, was a loyal disciple of Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur (1866-1948)[[27]](#footnote-60) and, although he began his adult life in trade, he always set time aside for Torah studies. Orlean was one of the founders of Poalei Agudath Yisrael and its first president (1922-1932) and served as the headmaster of the Beit Ya’akov school in Warsaw. He eventually decided to dedicate himself to education and took over the Beit Ya’akov seminary in Krakow after the deaths of Schenirer and Deutschländer. He served in that capacity until the beginning of WW2, when the Beit Ya’akov schools were shuttered, and continued his educational work throughout the Holocaust, corresponding with his students and establishing five alternative Beit Ya’akov schools with his colleagues. Orlean was eventually shipped to the Bergneu extermination camp where he is presumed to have perished. His wife and six children were also murdered during the Holocaust. He is described as “A Hassidic Torah scholar who never studied at a secular school or teacher’s seminary and never set foot in a university. Despite all this, he became one of the great educators of Poland and was named the ‘educator of the generation.’”[[28]](#footnote-61) Orlean did nonetheless, study the ideological treatises of German Jewish Orthodox leaders, including Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Jacob Rosenheim, Nathan Birnbaum (Orlean counted himself one of his followers), and Isaac Breuer. He mastered the German language well enough to read general scholarship, pedagogy and philosophy. In addition to his educational endeavors, Orlean wrote and published extensively in the press. One of his best known essays, for example “For the Sated and the Hungry” (צו זאטע און צו הונגעריגע) tackled social issues in Jewish light.

The *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine was not just the inspiration for Beit Ya’akov’s founding, but also fundamental to Beit Ya’akov’s educational philosophy and curriculum. In order to fully comprehend Orlean’s position regarding the doctrine and its implementation in girls’ education, we must first examine his position on the question of girls’ education and his attitude to science and technology, and only then analyze his attitude toward *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.

Orlean lay out his principles of education in his introduction to Rabbi Hirsch’s *Foundations of Education* (part 2), together with his approach to the occupation with science and technology he witnessed in Judaism and the world at large.[[29]](#footnote-62) In Hirsch’s book, *In the Year’s Cycles* (part 4), Orlean added introductory chapters dealing directly with the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* philosophy and its role in the Jewish world. Certainly, it was not by chance that Orlean chose to lay out his approach to these issues in the introductions to the books of Rabbi Hirsch, the founder of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. Eastern European Orthodox Judaism (like present day Haredi Jews) was ambivalent about Rabbi Hirsch. On the one hand, there was much admiration for his actions to ‘save’ German Jewry from the Enlightenment and assimilation. On the other hand, much effort was expended in delimiting his philosophy to a specific time and place and preventing its implementation in Eastern Europe. By electing to write the introductions to Rabbi Hirsch’s treatises, Orlean both professes his admiration for Hirsch’s activities and signaled that the publication and teaching of these books by Beit Ya’akov did not indicate agreement or endorsement of the doctrine as a whole.

Orlean’s introduction to *The Foundations of Education* lays out in detail traditional Judaism’s approach to secular studies, as well as the effects of the Enlightenment process; a process which in his opinion undermined the proper balance between secular and religious studies and instilled doubts even among the devout. Orlean argued that, in the past, Judaism had reservations about ‘external’ knowledge and science for their own sake, but admitted them as a means of better understanding the Torah or as a vital source of livelihood.[[30]](#footnote-63) With the advent of the Enlightenment movement, this approach changed and reservations Jews had about secular education transformed into a great attraction. Some consequently disassociated themselves completely from Judaism, while others felt torn by a dual commitment to Judaism and Enlightenment. This situation created “confused minds and initiated a chaotic and psychotic [!] pursuit of ‘culture’ and ‘education’”.[[31]](#footnote-64) This state of affairs had a decisive effect on curricula of Jewish schools and gave rise to patchwork programs that combined Jewish and Enlightenment educational approaches. According to Orlean, it created “spiritual cretins, degenerates and actual cripples.”[[32]](#footnote-65) This merciless attack was undoubtedly aimed at the curriculum instituted at Beit Ya’akov by Orlean’s predecessor, Dr. Leo Deutschländer.

Orlean argued that the pursuit of science and knowledge is fundamentally wrong, since Judaism lacks nothing. Judaism need not feel inferior and ashamed of what it is. Indeed, by any objective measure, Judaism is far superior to any other culture. Orlean systematically analyzes the concept of ‘culture’ and the requirements it must meet. Using two different measures, he demonstrates the superiority of Judaism: The Jewish people were, he claims, the first to develop writing and the first to extend the idea of schooling to the general population rather than an upper class minority (citing Yehoshua ben Gamla’s edict)[[33]](#footnote-66) Moreover, he argues, the term ‘culture’ can only be used to denote something that is diverse and that enables the realization of the full range of human needs; material, social, moral, and spiritual. Judaism fulfills these criteria by contributing to the inner spiritual strength of man, by developing social sensitivity, commanding a spiritual connection to God, and developing mankind’s moral character.[[34]](#footnote-67) Europeans even stand to learn from the Bible and Talmud in the realm of manners and etiquette.[[35]](#footnote-68) Judaism shapes men’s personality, instilling strict discipline and precision in both emotions and intentions. Thereby, it forestalls the dangers of ossification and stagnation, and the mechanism imposed by the modernity that has transformed living people to automatons – creatures without spirit, without heart, without life.[[36]](#footnote-69) Orlean admits that. as a people, Jews have largely neglected science and technology, but this was done deliberately, he claims, rather than out of some inferior position reflecting inability or misconceptions. Judaism has preferred to leave them for others out of an understanding that everything must be enlisted towards the achieving spiritual perfection. He explains that, just as a musician who invests all his time and energy into his music is admired ‒ no one would think to accuse him of neglecting the economy or the construction of bridges, since his contribution is precisely that focus on the art of music – one must not accuse Judaism of neglecting the sciences, but rather recognize its spiritual contributions to humanity as a whole.

Jewish genius in science and technology, he argues, is an individual accomplishment rather than an accomplishment of the people as a whole. All the same, despite the fact that Jews focus exclusively on sacred studies in the realm of education, they successfully nurture skills that lead to excellence in all fields. That is why one finds Jews leading many disciplines and the number of Jewish inventors is not inconsequential.[[37]](#footnote-70)

Orlean explains that not only is intensive occupation with science not an advantage. It might, in fact, be a flaw that places all of humanity at risk by neglecting mankind’s other abilities; it would inevitably bring about a decline in interpersonal relations. At the root of all scientific endeavors is a materialist perspective. The goal of science, be it conscious or unconscious, is to benefit mankind materially. Science serves this goal quite well, but the focus on science has come at the expense of investment in other abilities. The consequent deterioration in spiritual connections among people is inevitable. Men have “erected thick barriers, iron screen, between one person and another. Is it any wonder that European lightning and the American skyscraper are under an existential threat as a result?! This is but the natural outcome, which must arrive.”[[38]](#footnote-71) Orlean concludes:

A single Sabbath has instilled more culture in the [Jewish] People than the most important of inventions or discoveries; One page of the Talmud has fortified [them] more than a thousand sports champions; The Yom Kippur prayer has cleansed the [People’s] souls more than the finest and most noble art; the Halakha provided resilience that cannot be found in all the research put together. […] Clearly such [science] education cannot create a whole person. The whole person as perceived by the Jewish way of life cannot grow out of anything but the soil of the original Jewish education – education based in the Torah.[[39]](#footnote-72)

Orlean also directly criticizes the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine and ascribes to it significance as a method of education only in the specific extreme circumstances of German Judaism, for which it served as a lifesaver. These circumstances are unique and thus, the system is not appropriate for Eastern European Jewry. He claims that not even Rabbi Hirsch himself viewed it as a worthy system of education in and of itself: rather it was “system appropriate only for the ossifying and decaying portion of the People,[[40]](#footnote-73) and he was forced “against his will” [!] to adopt into it European elements that are foreign to Judaism in order to revive German Jewry from its “deathbed.” [[41]](#footnote-74) In other words, *Torah im Derekh Eretz* was appropriate for that minority, and only that minority, of the people of Israel among which he implemented this approach. Rabbi Hirsch first made sure to strengthen Jewish perspectives and culture, and only then introduced elements foreign to Judaism, working on the assumption that this education could do no harm once their Jewish attitude was reinforced.[[42]](#footnote-75) In practice however, despite his great efforts, German Jews were barely able to maintain their Jewish spiritual culture and avoid the influence of the streets over their inner essence. The implications of this interpretation of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* for the curriculum of Beit Ya’akov are self-evident.

Orlean argued that this philosophy starves the Jewish forces of creativity, since it is impossible to invest one’s energies in the Enlightenment and in Judaism simultaneously. Investment on one front means abandoning the other: “Judaism cannot be dismembered and split up.”[[43]](#footnote-76) This is the reason Western European Jews lost their “force of creativity in the realm of Judaism itself.” In other words, they produced no illustrious institutions of learning or sages of the same caliber as Eastern Europe. He concludes by stating that Rabbi Hirsch’s philosophy provided relief and deliverance to Judaism, but this relief was not constructive.[[44]](#footnote-77)

Orlean goes on to emphasize that Hirsch’s educational system was not suitable for Poland, not even “retrospectively.” Poland, unlike Germany, was still “a center of life” rather than a dying corpse. One may “experiment on a minute part, on its deathbed [i.e., Germany], but the center of life [Poland] should be treated with extreme care.”[[45]](#footnote-78) He reiterates that the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine must not become the original path of world Judaism or the foundations of Agudath Israel.[[46]](#footnote-79) Orlean does not rule out Jewish participation in science and technology at the abstract level, but he believes such participation would be possible only in “normal” circumstances, when Judaism is not under threat. Indeed, it is natural and necessary that we produce competent mathematicians, technicians, physicians, and the like, since it is best not to become dependent upon any given profession. Moreover, spiritual development requires material independence; after all, “without bread there is no Torah.” However, the current situation, where most of the people turn to material concerns while Orthodox Judaism is left alone to maintain the flame of the Torah, is impossible: Such intense participation in the material world can stifle our spiritual fertility or kill it all together. On the other hand, Orlean emphasizes (in line with his socialist inclinations), Agudath Israel does not believe in “idleness”; The path of the Agudah is a necessary ‘golden mean.’ Orlean does not altogether reject general education, like “our opponents from the right [!]” (referring the rabbinical leaders of Hungary), but neither does he believe it has intrinsic value, like the neo-Orthodox and other agents of modernity. General education is permissible only in retrospect, because of the needs of the times and within the limits of those needs. He reiterates that we must preserve our best strength for the Torah while participating to the minimal necessary extent in material culture.

Orlean made similar statements regarding the implementation of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* in Israel. As the influence of German Jews in Palestine grew in the wake of the Fifth Aliyah (1930-1939), and especially after the rise of Nazism in German in 1933 (and possibly also in light of the failed initiative to move Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer’s famed rabbinical seminary to Palestine), Orleans sought to clarify his position:

Should the most gifted and useful segment of German orthodoxy be forced to settle in the Land of Israel, it would not be healthy for them, in my opinion, to bring the Hirsch- Hildesheimer method there with them. This system would be completely superfluous, a diasporic heritage devoid of effect for the Jewish people added to the chaotic mess of the many systems and sects among the generation in the Land of Israel today.[[47]](#footnote-80)

In contrast, Orlean poses the Eastern European model as encouraging the Aliyah of Torah scholars to the developing Land of Israel. He emphasizes, “all who believe in the eternity of Judaism, all who truly appreciate the great potential of the Jewish diaspora in Eastern Europe, must surely also believe in this possibility.”[[48]](#footnote-81) Rabbi Orlean brought these stong opinions with him to his position as director of Beit Ya’akov and affected a drastic change in its path.

**Beit Ya’akov in Poland (b): the internal Haredi debate about the legacy of Sarah Schenirer**

The controversy regarding Sarah Schenirer’s attitude towards *Torah im Derekh Eretz* arose in Haredi circles soon after her death. The debate focused on how much she had been influenced by the doctrine, and to what the extent she adopted it into her curriculum during the early years of Beit Ya’akov. Moreover, there were disagreements over the question of whether she had adopted the system for ‘lack of an alternative,’ by force of circumstances, or whether she had viewed it as the preferable system of education from the outset.[[49]](#footnote-82)

Following Schenirer’s death, Deutschländer published an obituary discussing her legacy and the secret to her success in the neo-Orthodox German-Jewish periodical *Nachlath Z'wi*.[[50]](#footnote-83) He ascribed her success to the fact that she introduced Hirsch’s philosophy and writings to young Eastern European women in a thorough and thoughtful manner, thereby paving the way to their acceptance. He noted that Schenirer had insisted that Rabbi Hirsch’s philosophy was a sort of revelation, and that she had sought to impart that sense of discovery and enthusiasm to her students. Deutschländer wrote that no other intellectual or spiritual force had a greater effect on Sarah Schenirer’s personality than Rabbi Hirsch’s philosophy, and that deep in the soul of Beit Ya'akov’s founder there was a harmonious synthesis of her early Hasidic upbringing and the teachings of the Neo-Orthodox leader of German Jewry. Deutschländer viewed Sarah Schenirer’s life story as proof of the lasting, immortal, legacy of Rabbi Hirsch, extending beyond the country where he lived and worked to affect Jewish history and destiny as a whole. The fact that one cannot describe the phenomenal growth of Beit Ya'akov without referring to the writings of Rabbi Hirsch, he argued, is a sign of divine providence and testimony to the broad impact of the ideas of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.[[51]](#footnote-84)

Interestingly, Orlean also composed an obituary for Schenirer, which he published after he assumed leadership of the seminary in Krakow—and he presented Schenirer’s life-work very differently.[[52]](#footnote-85) In contrast to Deutschländer, Orlean argued that Schenirer would have preferred not to rely on the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* system, and did so for lack of an alternative.

He does not refute her source of inspiration, nor does he deny her encounter with Hirsch’s philosophy through Dr. Flesch’s lectures in Vienna, but he argues that Schenirer was drawn more by the Neo-Orthodox rabbi’s rhetoric and oratory skills than by the actual content of his talks. Orlean argues that Schenirer thought these teachings would appeal to Jewish Polish girls who had grown apart from Jewish traditions: “Was it the content of the speech which so pleased her? Certainly not! The old book with Ivri-Teitsch [Yiddish] was more than sufficient for her. Her only concern was for the girls of Krakow. For them the old book had no appeal…”[[53]](#footnote-86)

Throughout the obituary, Orlean reiterates his argument that Sarah Schenirer understood that the books by German Rabbis such as Hirsch and Marcus Lehmann would appeal to Jewish girls in Krakow who had grown apart from traditional Judaism as a result of their attendance in public schools. She understood that, just as these writings successfully affected German Jews on the verge of assimilation, they would work with the Jewish girls of Krakow. All the same, he argues, she was aware of the dangers this educational doctrine posed: she shared the fear that “this modern spirit” would introduce foreign values and harm the “original” nature of the people of Israel. Orlean claims that Schenirer never believed that the Torah im Derekh Eretz was fully appropriate for Polish Jewish women in the same way that it was for German Jews, and that she therefore set clear limits and acted cautiously: “with her healthy sensibility she was able to tell where to set the border marker […] she fought for true Hasidic comportment with all her might, for modest clothing, for the living Jewish language, for the simple Judaism of home.”[[54]](#footnote-87) The secular schooling instituted at Beit Ya'akov, he explains, is “a life necessity,” a means of linking peoples and lands, as is all general knowledge imparted at its institutions.[[55]](#footnote-88)

Another essay by Orlean focuses specifically on Beit Ya’akov and lays out his educational creed. Orlean attacks those who present the establishment of Beit Ya’akov as a remedy for the neglect of Jewish girls’ education, a sin ostensibly originating in the inferior status of women in Judaism.[[56]](#footnote-115) He states that the Sages’ proclamation on different educational paths for girls and boys was not some historical error that requires remedying, nor was it a random choice. It certainly was not driven by an agenda to deprive and exclude women; rather it is the outcome of deep consideration. He argues that pedagogical leaders of the day reached a similar conclusion: that education at home is most important and that schooling can only support the influence of the home.[[57]](#footnote-116) Orlean distinguishes between schooling and education. Schooling is rooted in wisdom and instills knowledge regarding the content of the commandments as well as greater knowledge of the Halacha. Education, in contrast, appeals to the emotions and motivation to observe the commandments. In the past, the home was the only place for boys’ education and schooling, but as circumstances changed the responsibility for schooling shifted from the father to the community; education was acquired from the community in any case. Girls, on the other hand, remained at home, since they did not require schooling in a deeper sort of knowledge and, thus, they benefitted from greater, more fundamental education. In this sense, girls gained more than boys, even if they could not partake of more profound studies in the Torah. When a girl witnessed her father and brothers excitedly debating the Torah at home, she benefitted even if she did not understand a thing, for the scene penetrated her heart and influenced it. “Educationally, this surely had a far greater effect.”[[58]](#footnote-117) Orlean reiterates that there is no reason to take girls out of the home and place them in an external educational framework. There was no point in “replacing the home in exchange for a few hours of artificial life in school […] Not only would the school not contribute anything, but it would overshadow the light of the home and obscure the homely ideal. Even if it has no pedagogical credentials, the home is more “professional” than school education.

Ideally, then, there is no need to replace “the faces of a devoted and loyal father and a good and compassionate mother with a professional teacher.”[[59]](#footnote-118) However, circumstances have changed and led to a need for girls’ educational frameworks. The Jewish home is no longer the home of the past and the patriarchal splendor has faded; the experiences a girl could acquire at home are no longer and the home has become desiccated and pale. The very bustle of the surrounding environment, the various ideas circulating in society, have had a negative effect on the home. This is why it was necessary to establish a girls’ school that would assume the responsibilities previously filled by the home. Orlean emphasizes that one “cannot and should not copy from European schooling; simply emulate Jewish home education.” For that purpose, then, it is important to understand the influencing forces in the Jewish home, so that they may be reintroduced in the school.[[60]](#footnote-119)

In light of all this, Orlean determined that what was most necessary for the school was not a program or method, but rather personal example. The teacher assumes the most important role, standing in for the father and mother.[[61]](#footnote-120) Orlean’s priorities are explicitly clear: “The first point of the home school is the person; the second, the program; the third, the method.”[[62]](#footnote-121) The teacher must possess all the virtues originally transmitted by parents to their children through home education, so that she may influence and transmit them through the school. This is the core of her specialization, the foundation of a Jewish school.

A textbook written by Orlean for Beit Ya’akov, *Yidish lebn* (Jewish Life)[[63]](#footnote-122) stands in stark contrast to Deutschländer’s own textbook, *Schem VaJephet*.[[64]](#footnote-123) While Deutschländer’s book is written in German and is packed with references from European culture, Orlean’s is written in Yiddish and centered on the commandments of Judaism. The commandments having to do with respect for one’s parents,[[65]](#footnote-124) one’s brothers and sisters,[[66]](#footnote-125) Torah scholars,[[67]](#footnote-126) sages,[[68]](#footnote-127) and elders[[69]](#footnote-128) are central. A chapter titled “Der wot ponim mentsch” (The value of man), is packed with homilies, far removed in spirit and style from the theological arguments of neo-Orthodoxy on these same issues. There is also, of course, a chapter on “proper comportment,” including a section on modest dress.[[70]](#footnote-129)

Orlean did not just object to the implementation of the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine at Beit Ya’akov. He upheld the figure of the traditional Jewish woman who guards her modesty and comportment and takes care to stay out of the modern world’s revolution in women’s rights. In two of his essays he writes at length that the whole point of human existence is to achieve unity and harmony as a family and as a nation.[[71]](#footnote-130) The best path to realizing this goal is through a leader who is capable of uniting all the parts. The role of the leader, the governor, is not, as is usually assumed, to control his subjects: Ruling, according to Judaism, is a kind of slavery since leadership requires bearing the burden of responsibility.[[72]](#footnote-131) Therefore, just as Judaism aspires and yearns for the rule of the Messiah, a woman yearns for the rule of her husband.[[73]](#footnote-132) The ‘government’ of the home exists for the sake of family unity.

Orlean explains that husband and wife do not function as individuals, but rather as a single unit. In contrast to the family, the individual has no value in Judaism, he claims. Therefore, only those rights which support family cohesion and bring about true unity, rights which contribute to this goal, are the rights granted to women.[[74]](#footnote-133) The kind of rights women are struggling for in the modern era, such as voting rights, do not promote family unity. Just the reverse; they can potentially divide the family and create “home dualism,” ultimately leading to a “family feud, giving birth to a retarded invalid, bringing a divided soul into the world.”[[75]](#footnote-134) A Jewish woman relinquishes this ‘right;’ she has no desire for it, since it limits her creative abilities. Such rights position her as an individual, a single unproductive degenerate. In Judaism personhood is acquired through marriage; only the family exists. Full human justice belongs only to the family living together in harmony and peace, “creating through inner reciprocity, bringing only perfect creations to the world, […] aspiring to devotion to God.”[[76]](#footnote-135)

Orlean’s battle with modernity and his sensitivity to economic disparities came together at an interesting junction: his struggle against ‘luxury.’ Several essays on the subject were collected in a booklet titled Der Farshwender Gan-Eden (the Lost Garden of Eden).[[77]](#footnote-136) He protests that in current times the desire for luxury has become a “psychosis.” The desire to sate one’s appetites has reached extremes under the auspices of novel technology; the “eat and drink for tomorrow we die” attitude has taken over Jewish society. People live without considering the consequences and go into debt just to maintain an extravagant standard of living. People are no longer valued for anything but having a purse from Paris, a fancy coat or a Persian carpet.[[78]](#footnote-137) Profligacy is the main reason for the economic depression Polish Jews experienced in the 1930s, as well as for the rifts among them.[[79]](#footnote-138) In conclusion, Orlean attacks fashion. “A person of our time gets put in his head that every new fashion is one and the same as the standards of beauty,” he complains and proclaims that this is a grave mistake.[[80]](#footnote-139) The Jewish woman, he believes, has a well-developed aesthetic sense, but this sense has always been directed at sacred things: a handsome curtain for the Torah ark, a pretty matzah cover, attractive dishes for the Sabbath – these are what provided the aesthetic-artistic experience. His struggle against the dictates of fashion, Orlean explains, are by no means aimed at abolishing the appreciation for beauty: “On the contrary, the tendency to admire every new fashion is a sign of a lacking sense for beauty.”[[81]](#footnote-140) He goes on to develop the argument that the struggle to preserve such values is one and the same as the struggle to recapture the Jewish sprit of old.

In sum, what is a proper school for girls in Orlean’s opinion? For Orlean, the school should not serve to revolutionize or change education, nor should it become a conduit for the importation of the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctirne to Eastern Europe. A Jewish girls’ school is nothing but the product of a specific necessity and all efforts must be made to minimize its harmful effects while maintaining as much as possible the traditional Jewish girls’ education rooted in the home. Such education is aimed first and foremost at molding the pupil in the spirit of the traditional woman. The school must recreate the ambiance of the Jewish home and the forces acting within it. This is why it is most important that the educational persona of the teacher standing in for the mother and father be as faithful an approximation of them as possible.

Under Orlean, Schenirer’s and Deutschländer’s liberal Beit Ya’akov gave way to a different institution, less open to general culture. As we shall see below, Orlean’s approach, which prevailed in the final years before the outset of the Second World War, was transposed almost entirely intact to Beit Ya’akov education in post-War Israel. This is most evident in Beit Ya’akov’s most influential and central institution, the Wolf Seminary, which set the tone for the entire network of Beit Ya’akov schools. When a different approach surfaced, somewhat closer in spirit of the German *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, it was quickly sidelined.

**Beit Ya’akov in Israel (a): On the path of rejecting general and Torah education for girls**

The Holocaust devastated Beit Ya'akov in Europe, like so many other Jewish communities and their institutions. After World War II, what remained of the network was centered in the places Nazis did not reach, especially Israel and the United States. Few schools were left, yet the network succeeded in recovering, growing, and also splitting.[[82]](#footnote-141)

Two competing Beit Ya’akov schools were initially established in the Land of Israel: the first in Bnei Brak, was shaped by Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolf (1911-1979), and the other in Tel-Aviv, by Rabbi Meir Szczeransky (1905 - 1973). The difference between the two, at least in practice, was not great. Nonetheless, there were dissimilarities in style and atmosphere between the two schools: Wolf Seminary was perceived as more conservative and closed off while the Szczeransky Seminary was seen as more open and liberal. Both institutions were most significantly influenced by the figures who led them, but, nonetheless, it is useful to compare the differences between these two approaches to the debate among Polish Jewry in the interwar period. Such a comparison reveals that Szczeransky follows the original path of Beit Ya’akov in Poland, during the time of Deutschländer and Schenirer, while Rabbi Wolf follows in footsteps of Orlean.

Rabbi Meir Szczeransky established the Beit Ya’akov School in Tel Aviv in 1933. The very decision to establish a Haredi Agudah-type institution in the heart of the secular “first Hebrew city” was quite daring. Tel Aviv, then as now, was the epitome of the secular spirit. Moshe Porush (a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem) once noted that ‘Tel Aviv’ and ‘Beit Ya’akov’ were two contradictory terms.[[83]](#footnote-180) His son, Rabbi Menachem Porush (who served as a Member of Knesset for Agudath Israel), defined Tel Aviv of those times as “out of bounds” for Haredi Jews.[[84]](#footnote-181) The city was perceived as a place where it would impossible to raise children on “true Judaism and Torah”[[85]](#footnote-182) and contrasted with Bnei Brak, a safe territory.[[86]](#footnote-183) The audacity of establishing a Haredi seminary in such a place tells us much about Rabbi Szczeransky’s character and inclinations. These same characteristics are what led him to extend, as much as possible, the Chafetz Chaim’s (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan) dispensation regarding Torah studies for women.

Indeed, Szczeransky devoted much thought to the question of women’s Torah studies. His views were more liberal than the reigning position in the moderate central stream of Haredim. He sharply criticizes conservative Haredim (most probably referring to old settlement Jerusalemites), who rule out a girls’ education framework based on the assumption that Torah studies for women are forbidden. Szczeransky thought that this approach was not truly devout and, moreover, embodied a superficial understanding of Halacha.[[87]](#footnote-184) He sought to prove that it was permissible for women to study Torah, even a priori, and extended the dispensation to the study of Halacha that was relevant to women. It was not merely permissible to study such commandments, but a “duty and mitzvah to study.”[[88]](#footnote-185) He demonstrates, that throughout the generations, there have been women who studied the Torah. He does not even rule out women studying Talmudic literature, as long as one can ensure that these studies are beneficial to the woman and improve her comportment. In such cases, “there is no doubt that such a woman is permitted to also study Talmudic literature.”[[89]](#footnote-186) It is striking, in light of these efforts, that he does not deal with questions of woman’s nature or the reasons for the interdiction.

What about Rabbi Meir Szczeransky’s position regarding secular studies? There is no explicit statement of his opinions on this issue, since Szczeransky focused on textbooks and did not author philosophical treatises. Nonetheless, a pamphlet about Rabbi Hirsch reveals that he felt quite close to this leader of German neo-Orthodoxy. Although the pamphlet focuses more on details of Hirsch’s biography and his efforts to save German Jewry rather than on a discussion of his philosophy, the very positioning of Hirsch as a man whose “memory is bound to that of the nation’s greats as the savior of Eastern European Jews and the spiritual father of Agudath Israel,” indicates that Szczeransky viewed Hirsch’s legacy positively. He may have even seen him as an inspiration: “he left behind a righteous and blessed generation.”[[90]](#footnote-187) It might be said, then, that Szczeransky’s silence and refraining from critiquing Hirsch’s endeavors (in contrast to so many others) are a sign that he believed Hirsch’s philosophy was appropriate for more than just a handful of German Jews at a particular time and place.

The same pamphlet about Hirsch, published in 1941, contains an overview, probably also by Szczeransky, of the Beit Ya’akov Seminary. The review reveals a shortage in professionally trained teachers in Beit Ya’akov schools, a problem which leads parents to prefer secular schools for their daughters, since Beit Ya’akov cannot boast of accomplishments in general education. The author indicates that this situation is the result of choices made by those who preferred to “forego the pedagogical need for general science in a hopeless situation, for the sake of ensuring that our education is safe and sound from a moral-religious perspective, and attempted to implement this by producing educators who may have been flawed pedagogically but were capable morally-religiously.”[[91]](#footnote-188) The author explains that this preference spawned actions that did more harm than good. Even those who advocated for it, regretted their choice in retrospect. Moreover, it led many parents who might have sent their daughters to receive a Haredi education to choose otherwise. The reason Beit Ya’akov neglected general pedagogical education was “all because we could not demonstrate equal strengths in religious and in general education, which were the ideal for many.”[[92]](#footnote-189) The seminary for training teachers and kindergarten teachers, he explains, was established precisely to fulfil answer this demand:

Here the trainees receive complete scientific pedagogical education, without giving up an iota of the full Haredi religious education. The seminary aims to solve the painful problem of Haredi education with a final comprehensive solution and we are convinced that, with the help of God, the seminary’s students will be a blessing and benefit for Haredi education wherever they go, thanks to the exemplar education binding Torah and science they received at this esteemed institution.[[93]](#footnote-190)

The overview concludes with details of the seminary’s curriculum: Bible and its commentaries, Mishnah and Midrash, legends of the Sages, prayer, law and ethics, Jewish history, general history, Hebrew, linguistics, literature, English, French, geography, nature, physics, chemistry, math and calculus, psychology, history of education, educational theory, teaching, health, drawing, crafts, singing, gymnastics, and more.[[94]](#footnote-191) This may not be the exact same curriculum offered by Schenirer and Deutschländer, with its emphasis on European literature, but it clearly adheres more closely to it in spirit and principles than to the curriculum laid out by Orlean, who dought to set aside general education and methodology in favor of religious studies and education. The very same of overview, with minor changes, reappeared a few years later in another pamphlet published by the Beit Ya’akov seminary in Tel Aviv in 1946. The pamphlet, edited by Meir Szczeransky and titled *HaAtid* (The future), collected essays on a variety of topics by graduates of the seminary.[[95]](#footnote-192)

The Tel Aviv Beit Ya’akov ultimately had less influence than its rival institution, Beit Ya’akov in Bnei Brak, led by Rabbi Wolf. Wolf served as the Directory of the seminary for close to twenty years (1952-1970) and transformed it into a key apparatus in the production of generations of young Haredi women.[[96]](#footnote-193) Wolf came to Israel from Germany, where he was raised in the tradition of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. By the time he left Germany, Haredi society was already riven by the profound dispute over the appropriateness and correctness of the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine. Upon his arrival in Israel, Wolf met Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (known as the Chazon Ish), and was deeply captivated by his personality and influenced by his perspectives. Wolf abandoned the path of German neo-Orthodoxy and adopted a more conservative Haredi approach. When he later became the director the fledgling Beit Ya’akov seminary in Bnei Brak in 1952, he was determined that the institution he led would play a key role in the Haredi revolution, in Karelitz’ spirit. [[97]](#footnote-194)This spirit adheres to Orlean’s reclusiveness, but adds an additional layer: creating the Haredi “society of scholars,” where women went out to work in order to support their Torah-studying husbands.

Rabbi Wolf explicated his philosophy in dozens of essays that were later collected in the book *The Era and its Problems.[[98]](#footnote-195)* These essays outline the essence of Haredi education and its goals in Wolf’s view and provide valuable insight into the formulation of Haredi educational ideology and its responses to contemporary challenges, especially as it pertains to girls,.

The difference between the two Beit Ya’akov schools is no less stark in terms of the educational content. As we have shown, Deautschlander’s general studies curriculum emphasizes languages and humanities, especially literature and poetry, and particularly works of universal value (by cultural standards of that time, in any case). Beit Ya’akov’s secular studies in Israel were different: general history, Jewish history, math, English, grammar, composition and reading.[[99]](#footnote-196) These are largely practical subjects, aimed at acquiring practical professional skills. While a Haredi girl in Poland studied Goethe, Schiller and Habel, the average Israeli Haredi girl has most probably never even heard of a non-Jewish writer or poet, and probably of non-Haredi Jewish writers as well. A young Haredi woman graduates from Beit Ya’akov with a solid general education, often on par with that of a young Israeli studying in the state educational system, but her goal is supposed to be acquiring a profession, not acquiring general culture. Indeed, Wolf’s educational system is based on the principle that women’s education, whether it is religious or general, is but a means to an end. The moment the means strays from its purpose, it becomes invalid. This rule applies both to general studies and to religious studies:

With regards to studying the received Torah, forget about a woman studying [it], and not just Torah, but other studies as well, should be the means, not the ends. A woman should respect her husband, for being her husband, for being a scholar, and the man who respects his helpmate in [upholding] the Torah and the Commandments and in educating his sons and daughters… Our generation’s wise men have seen that additional education and training can overshadow the devoted figure of the woman in Israel.[[100]](#footnote-197)

Extensive education, then, is not only not beneficial, but can even be harmful. The harm Rabbi Wolf identifies is social; the woman might abandon her feminine role take on a masculine role. Her very devotion as a wife and mother might be compromised (more on this point below).

In contrast to Deutschländer, and similarly to Orlean, Wolf does not view studying, the content of educational programs, or professional teacher training as key goals. Studying has no inherent value unless it is aimed at educating: “the act is the education. […] everything done outside of that […] is educational aids.”[[101]](#footnote-198) The goal is to “strengthen and fortify the girls’ faith.”[[102]](#footnote-199) Formal girls’ education is the result of an unfortunate change in circumstances in the family and outside of it. In fact, it is a less valuable substitute for what girls once learned in the educational framework of home.

Ostensibly, women in today’s Jewish society acquire a formal education and therefore are superior to women in the past who had no such education.[[103]](#footnote-200) However, Wolf adopts Orlean’s line of argument in this case as well and emphasizes that it is not that women’s knowledge of the Torah has expanded, but that the system of learning has changed: what was once learned from serving Torah scholars (fathers, brothers and husbands) is today learned from the written and printed book. The book is a substitute for life, and as such, is inferior to the original and to the immediate experience of actually living in a scholarly environment. A person who from infancy learns from her environment, can internalize the knowledge acquired and thus, in this sense, is more knowledgeable than someone who simply read books. “It is a mistake to think that the girl who learns from a book is superior to the virtuous woman who never learned to read. In those times daily life itself was a book.”[[104]](#footnote-201) Elsewhere Wolf wrote:

The extensiveness of knowledge is not necessarily dependent upon the book, but rather on the environment, social circles, atmosphere being full of God’s Torah… A girl who grows up in the house of wise Torah scholars can recite the laws of Shevi’it, even if she does not know in which of the sacred books these laws are written. In previous generations that home was full of holy conversation, about the baking of Matzoth before Passover, about the devout selection of an Etrog, the customs of each holiday, and about the entire Torah.[[105]](#footnote-202)

This knowledge, anchored in the perception of the decline of the generations, is part of the content that must be instilled in the heart of a Beit Ya’akov student. Only if she truly internalizes it, can the educator declare the education a success: “and if the educator examines his work, whether his education was successful, that will be the sign! When the girl knows that learning is a tool for becoming like the mothers who didn’t study, then her education has succeeded.”[[106]](#footnote-203) He even goes so far as decreeing that “all the studies in Beit Ya’akov are nothing but a temporary provision […] and if no circle is known today that denies girls’ education in schools, this is nothing but a sign of decline.”[[107]](#footnote-204)

What about the teachers in Beit Ya’akov? Here too, Wolf adheres to Orlean and prioritizes the teacher-educator’s personality and ability to educate over the imparting of knowledge. The primary measure of success for teachers in the institution “is not their students’ knowledge but their comportment; these teachers are there no so much to teach, but to educate.”[[108]](#footnote-205) Accordingly, Wolf’s curriculum emphasizes educational knowledge; that is, the knowledge that brings the student closer to the essence of the commandments rather than the knowledge itself, which is secondary. Thus, for example, Wolf wrote about Ministry of Education programs for nature studies in kindergartens: “You can experiment in preschools, but the point is the education, not enriching knowledge or expanding false horizons.”[[109]](#footnote-206) It is wrong to merely impart knowledge, since this creates the false impression that science is everything. He reiterates that the sacred and the profane should not be intermingled: one should not proceed from the Commandments to science or the secular; the Commandments are sacred”[[110]](#footnote-207) and should be studied in the same manner as they were studied in the past. He admits that this is the system in most preschools in Israel and abroad today, and it cannot be abandoned, but it is important to ensure that the scientific content imparted throughout should remain a secondary rather than the main goal.[[111]](#footnote-208)

Haredi educators in the Land of Israel believed that general education is permissible in retrospect only; even religious knowledge is nothing but a means for personal growth. Education for its own sake is not important, and when it comes to girls, even religious knowledge must be aimed at instilling faith and values. Wolf, like Orlean, concluded that Rabbi Hirsch himself did not view his own educational doctrine as ideal and, if he could, he would have stuck with the traditional method of Jewish education. Unfortunately, the situation in Germany left him with no choice and he was force to apply the doctrine provisionally. Ultimately, Wolf pronounces, “it was not the system of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* itself, but rather the Rabbi’s [Rabbi Hirsch] books which saved the generation; his understanding of the Torah rather than his view of the world.”[[112]](#footnote-209) Even this success was limited, since Germany produced no prodigies, and very few devoted themselves exclusively to studying Torah. Ultimately Yeshiva students are the mainstay “upon which every house in Israel depends, and it is they who nourish the entire world.”[[113]](#footnote-210)

According to Wolf, Rabbi Hirsch sought knowledge from general culture, but not its worldviews or ways of life. In practice, however, it is impossible to separate the two: once cannot acquire the knowledge without the worldviews and ways of life. Secular studies are imbued with views contradictory to the Torah and all secular books contain heresy, both overt and covert. In any case, Torah studies should take precedence over secular studies, since “without this he cannot understand nature and history in the spirit of Rabbi Hirsch.”[[114]](#footnote-211)

Wolf distinguishes between Hirsch’s *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, about which he has reservations and in which he identifies flaws, and a ‘hybrid’ system, which he unequivocally rules out. The hybrid system combines two orientations: Torah and general education, each independent of the other. This hybridization is un-educational, since it combines the Torah with other elements and in practice neglects both. In the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* system, in contrast, the study of nature and history are an aid to Bible studies: History in the sense that one may study the chronicles of the world according to the Book of Prophets, and nature studies in the sense that one learns about the work of the Creator and recognize His greatness through a study of the natural wold.[[115]](#footnote-212) General education then, cannot be independent: Education is not a grafting of two unrelated species, but rather two branches of the same tree. Today, Wolf explains, all institutions teach secular studies at some level or another, even as part of Torah Studies, but these studies are provisional. The nature of such studies should follow the spirit of Rabbi Hirsch in that they are aids in the study of the Bible rather than independent subjects. The hybrid education system poses an existential threat and one must take care not to be seduced by the “disease of grafting.” “The conclusion is clear: Study secular studies based exclusively on the sacred!”[[116]](#footnote-213)

Since secular studies are already taking place provisionally in girls’ education, it is important to aspire for the good and reject the bad. Furthermore, secular studies should not be imbued with any inherent value. Wolf does not provide many details about how to approach secular studies. For example, geography and history must be taught in the spirit of faith; it is not enough to leave out geological eras and the imaginary age of the world. Likewise, it is not enough to learn about Haifa as a port city with oil refineries since, if we omit mention of the Ramat Viznitz community in Haifa, or the unfortunate existence of public transportation on the Sabbath, a false impression is created that there is a ‘general’ Haifa and the Haredi public with its institutions are separate. In reality, the yeshivas of Haifa, and the kolelim in particular, are the reason for Haifa’s existence and the earthly institutions are insignificant. The same is true for other lands: one cannot learn about England without mentioning the community of Gateshead, “where there is a very important yeshiva, a teacher’s seminary, a community that is entirely Haredi.”[[117]](#footnote-214) Its population may be far smaller than that of other English cities, but “it is the weight that matters rather than size.” Wolf concludes: “This is not a perspective, but rather a reality – ‘everything is done for the sake of Israel’ (Yevamot: 62). The mayor of New York may not know that Williamsburg, Muncie, Borough Park, and Square, are the heart of New York; but thanks to God, we know it – it is impossible for someone who knows to become enslaved to someone who does not know.”[[118]](#footnote-215)

Of the two founders of Beit Ya’akov in Israel then, Rabbi Szczeransky’s approach was closer to the spirit of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, though more moderate, while Rabbi Wolf, a disciple of the very same school who rejected it, gave it a “new interpretation” that dispensed with its essence. By the next generation, Wolf’s approach had clearly prevailed. Even Rabbi Benjamin Szczeransky, Meir Szczeransky’s own son, who took over his position as director of the Beit Ya’akov seminary in Tel Aviv, reiterated repeatedly that Rabbi Hirsch’s system was merely used provisionally in responsed the needs of the time. In his book*, Igeret LeTalmidim* (A Missive to Students),he devotes a chapter to the question of general studies at Beit Ya’akov.[[119]](#footnote-216) In this chapter he surveys different responses to Rabbi Hirsch’s educational doctrine and demonstrates that Eastern European contemporaries, such as Rabbi Boruch Ber Leibowitz, head of the Kaminetz Yeshiva, and the Gur Rabbi, Imre Emet, held Hirsch in great esteem for his rescue of German Jewry. However, at the same time, they also indicated that this doctrine was appropriate for that specific time and place only, and its transposition to other places posed an existential threat to Jewish education. Benjamin Szczeransky emphasizes that this was Hirsch’s own position as well. General education should be ruled out: In our era everyone admits that education cannot serve as a tool to rectify the soul[[120]](#footnote-217) and that general studies are aimed at training students to integrate into humanity’s technological development. However, since this is not the goal of the Beit Ya’akov movement – which has no interest in educating women engineers, physicists, or doctors – such studies cannot contribute to instilling the only true wisdom in the world, that is piety. Therefore, such studies can be dismissed. The central goal in girls’ education is to “raise them to be faithful companions to the Torah scholars, those who meditate on the Torah. In any case, general studies are not very important to fulfilling this role.”[[121]](#footnote-218) It is only because of the requirements of secular law that Haredi education is compelled to integrate secular studies, so as to prevent the entry of unworthy teachers into the system.

**Beit Ya’akov in Israel (b): the creation of the Haredi Society of Scholars**

Rabbi Benjamin Szczeransky brings us to the next phase, the great endeavor which the Israeli Beit Ya’akov network embarked upon in the 1950s: The establishment of a Haredi ‘Society of Scholars.’ This society, studied by Meanchem Friedman and others, is a society where men study the Torah throughout their lives, while women take on the burden of being breadwinners in addition to managing their home and families.[[122]](#footnote-219) How did Beit Ya’akov ultimately contribute to realizing this goal? It seems clear that Beit Ya’akov was an important means of establishing the Society of Scholars in Israel.

The establishment of the Society of Scholars entailed a genuine transformation in the status of Haredi women, which, in turn, required a range of explanations and justifications.[[123]](#footnote-220) On the one hand, this new status meant that Haredi women were exposed to general society and culture much more than their husbands, and some foresaw that women would become ‘agents of modernization’ in Haredi society.[[124]](#footnote-221) On the other hand, Haredi women shouldered the burden of creating the economic foundations for the process that was ultimately aimed at increasing the self-segregation of Haredi society. Moreover, these women became enmeshed in a busy, taxing and challenging way of life, one which left them with little time to meaningfully take advantage of cultural and professional opportunities.

In terms of girls’ education, the Society of Scholars revolution brought down barriers in two key areas: Torah studies for women and the transformation of women into those who bear the burden of supporting the family financially. However, Rabbi Wolf, justifiably considered one of the leaders of this revolution, saw Haredi society as a continuation of traditional society and the preserver of its values. He emphasized that there was no difference in rank between a man and a woman, since both are capable of achieving closeness to God. Each, however, attains their rank through the fulfillment of a different purpose:[[125]](#footnote-230) The man through studying Torah and the woman by enabling him to do so, by making it possible for him to devote his time to that purpose.[[126]](#footnote-231)

We have seen that Orlean was afraid of the disruptions to the family order wrought by modern gender equality. He believed that the means of preventing these disruptions was preservation of the family’s patriarchal structure. Wolf was also fearful of disruption and aware that the traditional family was further threatened by the very changes Haredi society itself had introduced – women’s Torah study and their entry into the marketplace. As we have seen, he explicitly called for the preservation of the different purposes of each gender and of the patriarchal family order.

Not surprisingly, Wolf found time to comment on the feminist revolution. Like Orlean, he categorically rejected it and did not believe that it benefits women, since men and women are fundamentally different: “Women’s equal rights in the modern world are nothing but a distortion of her natural persona. The reality of the woman created in the six days of Genesis was perverted and distorted.”[[127]](#footnote-232) Man finds satisfaction in different things than a woman. A woman would not find satisfaction in the “equal rights” granted to her, nor would she find happiness and fulfillment. In the modern era, where new avenues have opened up to women and a woman is expected to realize herself in these avenues, she ends up losing on both ends: she does not find satisfaction in public roles since they do not suit her personality, while at home, in ‘her own territory,’ she does not invest as much effort as she used to – “her devotion to her children has diminished, her motherly quality has suffered, and she has lost her ability to imbue the home with warmth, that atmosphere of love for God and mankind”[[128]](#footnote-233) – thus, she can find no satisfaction there either. Moreover, beyond the individual loss suffered by the woman, the Jewish home suffers as well, through the loss of the warmth it used to be filled with in the past. These developments have led to a situation where women’s “desire for sons has suffered and families diminished,” leading to the phenomenon Wolf views as “suicide under the guise of ‘reduced birthrates.’”[[129]](#footnote-234) In sum, gender equality has led to the destruction of the family and its blessings.

Although Wolf was instrumental in leading the establishment of the Society of Scholars, he elided and avoided discussing explicitly the problems inherent in women’s going out to work. The issue is discussed directly in just one place in his book, where he explains that women’s work outside the home is not fundamentally different from any other work she does on behalf of the family, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, or raising and educating the children. All this is God’s work, including going out into the marketplace for work. The attempt to position work outside the home as extraordinary is fundamentally wrong and derived from a basic misunderstanding. For Wolf, the home is clearly what matters to the woman.[[130]](#footnote-235)

Beit Ya’akov presented as its main goal the ideal of ‘establishing a home for Torah,’ where the woman’s primary role is an ‘enabler;’[[131]](#footnote-236) that is, a woman’s professional occupation is the means, while the man’s occupation is the ultimate goal. Not only do women’s religious studies at Beit Ya'akov schools not enjoy the same prestige as their husbands’ Talmudic studies, but they are almost always seen as a method of instilling faith and devoutness rather than knowledge or intellectual skills.[[132]](#footnote-237) These studies are not even seen as the fulfilling of a commandment, since only men are commanded to study the Torah. Likewise, secular studies at Beit Ya'akov are unequivocally seen as practical means of acquiring a profession that will allow a woman to provide for her family, never as an end in and of itself. A women need not aspire to be learned herself, but rather should “hope to be the wife of Torah scholar, for whom studying is his life, and mother to sons of the Torah.”[[133]](#footnote-238)

Wolf’s educational endeavor was a success by any measure, probably beyond his hopes and imagination, and maybe even beyond what he would have liked to see it become: Fifty years later, the pattern of marriage, where the husband studies Torah and the wife supports him, has become the norm in Israel’s Haredi society. Those who deviate from this path are not considered to be living the appropriate life for a devout man.[[134]](#footnote-241)

**Conclusion: the twofold victory of the conservative model**

In general, the conflict over Beit Ya’akov’s direction in Israel appears to be a nearly identical replaying of the previous debate in pre-War Poland. In this sense, one might characterize the transformation undergone by the Beit Ya'akov network in Israel as completing the victory of Orlean’s method over Deutschländer’s. Deutschländer believed in *Torah im Derekh Eretz* and saw value in acquiring a general education for its own sake. He was cognizant of the advantages of education professionally and pedagogically, as well as its role in shaping a student’s life and her ability to truly understand and internalize Orthodox Jewish values. Orlean and Haredi educators in Israel, by contrast, viewed general education as a mere means to an end, and even religious knowledge was seen primarily as a means of self-improvement: education for its own sake was unimportant, while religious knowledge was aimed at instilling faith and values. If the Polish Beit Ya'akov, at one stage, may have symbolized the success and acceptance of the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine throughout Orthodox Jewish society beyond the boundaries of German cultural space, then the Israeli Beit Ya'akov epitomizes the decline of this approach in post-Holocaust Israeli Haredi society. In sum, Beit Ya'akov transformed from an institution with a powerful foundation in the *Torah im Derekh Eretz* doctrine to a system focused on fostering ‘the society of scholars’ in accordance with Israeli ultra-Orthodoxy.

All the same, the self-segregation endorsed today by Beit Ya’akov did not start with Rabbi Wolf and his fellow leaders of the Israeli network of schools. This is a process embarked upon by Rabbi Yehuda Orlean, who successfully eclipsed his predecessor, Dr. Deutschländer, and condemned his path. Thus, Haredi Judaism of the 20th century stood twice at a door offering a path to neo-Orthodoxy, and twice it turned its back in favor of a more segragated and conservative road.

1. On Sara Schenirer, see: Judith Grunfeld-Rosenbaum, "Sara Schenirer,” in: Leo Jung (ed.), *Jewish Leaders 1750-1940* (Jerusalem: Boys Town, 1964), pp. 405-432; Pearl Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart: Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer* (Jerusalem: Feldheim 1991); Michal Shaul, "Dor Yatom Mehapes Imma: 'Moreshet Sara Schenirer' Kikhli Leshikum Hahevrah Haharedit Aharei Hashoah' [“An orphaned generation in search of a mother: ‘the legacy of Sara Schenirer’ as a tool in rebuilding Haredi society after the Holocaust”], in: Kimmy Caplan and Nurit Stadler (eds.), *Mehisardut Lehitbasesut: Temurot Bahevrah Haharedit Uvehikrah* [***From Survival to Consolidation : changes in Israeli Haredi society and its scholarly study*] (**Jerusalem: Ṿan Leer Institute and HaḲibutz HmMeʼuḥad, 2012), pp. 31-54; Rachel Manekin, “Mashehu Hadash Legamrei: Hitpathuto shel ra'ayon hahinukh hadati lebanot ba’et hahadashah“ ['Something totally new': the emergence of the idea of religious education for girls in the modern era], *Masekhet* 2 (2004), pp. 63-85; *Em Haderekh: Maasef* [Mother of the Path: a Collection: Sara Schenirer Memorial Book] (Jerusalem: Otzar Hahokhma, 2005); Sefer HaYovel ha-25 shel Beit hasefer hatikhon vehaseminar legananot ulemorot Beit Ya'akov beTel Aviv, 1936-1961 (Tel Aviv, 1961); Yeḥezḳel Roṭenberg (ed*.*), *Em BeYisrael:Sefer Zikkaron leSarah Schenirer* [A Mother of Israel: Sarah Schenirer Memorial Book], 4 vols. (Bnei Brak: Netzaḥ, 1955-1960), and in particular the article by. S. Yarhi, “Her history and life’s work,” at pp. 5-32 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Iris Brown, "At the Heart of Two Revolutions: Beit Ya’akov in Poland and in Israel, between Neo-Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy" (forthcoimg). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. For the ideological justifications of this dramatic turn see: Iris Brown, “’I Shall Work’: Justifications for and Consequences of Ultra-Orthodox Women Shouldering the Burden of Breadwinning,” *Democratic Culture* 14 (2013), pp. 7-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
4. For more on this phenomenon, see: Shaul, "Dor Yatom.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
5. Rotenberg (ed.), *Em beYisrael: kitve Sarah Shnirer* (A mother in Israel: the Writings of Sarah Shnirer), 4 vols. (Tel Aviv: Netazh, 1955)*,* p. 24. For a survey of various testimonies on this question, see for example: Isaac Breuer, "Hashpa’at sifrei Harav Hirsch al Sarah Schenirer,” in Roṭenberg (ed*.*), *Em beYisrael*, vol. 3, p. 31; Leo Deutschländer, 'Sara Schenirer ', Nach'lat Z'wi 7/8 (Marz-Mai 1935), pp. 168-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
6. Brown, "At the Heart of Two Revolutions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
7. Sarah Schenirer encountered in Vienna Rabbi Hirsch’s model, which determined, alongside the doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* having to do with the combination of secular and religious studies, that women are permitted a priori to study the Torah, and that the only thing distinguishing them from men is the study of Halachah. According to Hirsch, the transmission of the Halachah through the generations is the responsibility of men and, therefore, only they are permitted to study the Halachah and its sources. Women are exempt from these studies. He believed that the study of the Bible, ethics and other Jewish subjects, in contrast, are also necessary for girls. For more on the development of formal Torah studies for women, see: Author name, “Beyn ‘teva ha’isha le’marut haba;al” [Between a woman’s nature and a husband’s authority: Haredi educational ideology and the limits of religious education for girls], *Zehuyot* 3 (2013), pp. 97-123. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
8. See for example: Wolf S. Jacobson, ***Zikhronot* [Memoirs] (Jerusalem:** haMerkaz lesifrut ḥaredit beErets Yisrael, 1952), p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
9. Wolf S. Jacobson, *Esa De’i Lemerahok: Pirke Zikhronot* [I will carry my knowledge afar: Memoires](Bnei Brak: Netzah), p. 95. Also see: Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), pp. 167-168. Bacon describes a gradual process leading up to this, from a local Agudath Israel decision in Krakow to the national level. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
10. Atkin, *The Beth Jacob movement*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
11. Dr. Judith Grunfeld (Rosenbaum) was an active partner in the efforts to extend Beit Ya'akov beyond Poland, and was Deutschländer’s assistant both in his educational endeavors and in his fundraising for the seminary in Krakow. See: Miriam Dansky, *Rebbetzin Grunfeld :the Life of Judith Grunfeld, Courageous Pioneer of the Bais Ya'akov Movement and Jewish Rebirth* (Brooklyn, NY:‎ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
12. Grunfeld-Rosenbaum, "Sara Schenirer,” p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
13. Grunfeld-Rosenbaum, "Sara Schenirer,” pp. 426-427. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
14. However, **in contrast to Sarah Schenirer who received appreciation and everlasting fame for her efforts on behalf of Jewish girls’ education, Deutschländer’s name is largely unknown and conspicuously absent from Haredi literature. I have treated this phenomenon in depth in my paper:, Brown, “At the Heart of Two Revolutions,” and demonstrated that this overlooking of Deutschländer is largely ascribable to the neo-Orthodox approach he sought to bring to Beit Ya’kov.** [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
15. Jacobson, ***Zikhronot,* p. 209.** [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
16. Schenirer, Em BeYisrael, vol. 1, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
17. Sarah Schenirer, ***Ṿos darf zayn miṭ der Yudisher ṭokhṭer?.* [What to do with the Jewish daughter], (Lodz:** Ferlag Bays-Yaḳov-Zshurnal**, 1930). This pamphlet was written some 13 years after establishing Beit Ya’kov and presents a more conservative position aimed at an audience of relatively conservative Orthodox parents. This pamphlet was eventually translated into German and Hebrew, and one might find significant differences between the different language versions. The translators appear to have adjusted the pamphlet to its target audience. The German and Hebrew version published in Israel introduce a curriculum that includes secular studies, while the Yiddish original published in Poland omits to mention them.** [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
18. Leo Deutschländer, *Bajs Jakob: Sein Werden und Wesen* (Wien: Verlag der Keren Hathora Zentrale, 1928), pp. 39-40, 42. We will return to the curriculum later in this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
19. Deutschländer, *Bajs Jakob,* pp. 40, 41, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
20. *Leo Deutschländer, Schem VaJephet: Westöstliche Dichterklänge :jüdisches Lesebuch*, (Breslau:‎ [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
21. Deutschländer, *Bajs Jakob,* p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
22. Mordechai Friedmann, “Mifgash yahadut tora im derech eretz im haharediut hamizrach erope’it [Tora im Derech Eretz Judaism’s encounter with Eastern European Orthodoxy]” in, Mordechai Breuer and Asher Wasserteil (eds.), *Torah im derech eretz: hatenu’ah, isheha, raayonoteha* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1987), pp. 173-178;Emmanuel Bloch. “Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch and the Doctrine of 'Torah Im Derech Erets' in the Eyes of the Hareidim,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 24* (2015), pp. 273–300. www.jstor.org/stable/24432029. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
23. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
24. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
25. Orlean believed that the primary focus was the person, or the teacher; the program (or curriculum) comes second, while method is of minor importance, in third place. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
26. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 41. For more on the Beit Ya'akov curriculum, especially during Orlean’s last years, and the distinctions between the various kinds of schools that were part of the network, see: Kazdan, *Di geshikhte fun Yidishn shulṿezn,* pp. 489-499. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
27. Known as ‘the Imre Emet.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
28. Hillel Seidman, *Ishim Shehikarti* [Figures I Knew] (Jerusalem: Mosad harav Ḳuḳ, 1970), p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
29. Yehuda Leib Orlean, "Introduction” to Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Yesodot HaChinuch*, vol. 1 (Bnei Brak: Otsar Hahochma, 1968). Hirsch is known as the founder of and is most closely identified with the doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. The Haredi sector is ambivalent about Hirsch: It would like to appropriate him, on the one hand, while having reservations about his openness to modernity, on the other. It would appear to be no accident that Orlean chose to write a critique of the doctrine precisely in an introduction to Hirsch’s book. On the one hand his introduction reveals an appreciation of Hirsch’s work and his acceptance by Eastern European Orthodoxy. On the other, the sharp critique of the doctrine reveals deep reservation about Hirsch’s writings and a warning that this doctrine is not appropriate a priori; even retrospectively, it was only suited to that handful of German Jews. See: Eliezer Hayun, “Ha’im Haya HaRashar ‘Gadol’” [Was Rabbi Hirsch ‘great’], *Tzarich Iyun* (May 17, 2017). http://iyun.org.il/sedersheni/%D7%94%D7%90%D7%9D-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%94-%D7%94%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%A8-%D7%92%D7%93%D7%95%D7%9C/ [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
30. Yehuda Leib Orlean, "Introduction” to Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Yesodot HaChinuch*, vol. 1 (Bnei Brak: Otsar Hahochma, 1968), pp. 24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
31. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
32. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
33. *Talmud Bavli*, Baba Bathra, folio 21, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
34. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. pp. 24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
35. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
36. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
37. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
38. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
39. Orlean, "Introduction,” p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
40. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
41. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
42. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
43. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
44. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
45. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, pp. 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
46. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
47. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, pp. 114-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
48. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*. pp. 114-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
49. Apparently this debate preceded the internal Orthodox debate that erupted many years later about the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine as a whole. This debate focused on the question whether it emerged in retrospect, out of necessity, or was a priori intended as such. See: Friedmann, “Mifgash yahadut tora”; Bloch, “Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch.” [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
50. Leo Deutschländer, “Sara Schenirer,” *Nach'lath Z'wi*, pp. 168-171. Deutschländer also submitted a briefer, rather banal, obituary to the Third Grand Convention of Agudath Yisrael: Leo Deutschländer, "Sara Schenirer S.a.,” in: *Programm und Leistung: Keren HaThora und Beth Jakob*, (London und Wien 1937), pp. 90-91. The same volume also contains an obituary of Deutschländer, written by Louis Weiler (pp. 92-94). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
51. Deutschländer, "Sara Schenirer,” pp. 168-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
52. Yehudah Leib Orlean, “Eshet Hayil [Woman of valor],” in in: Roṭenberg (ed*.*), *Em beYisrael*, part 3, pp. 36-57. Orlean’s essay builds on the famous chapter from Proverbs by the same name: He works through each verse from Proverbs to explain how Schenirer was ‘woman of valor’ in line with the biblical description. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
53. Orlean, “Eshet Hayil,” p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
54. Orlean, “Eshet Hayil,” p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
55. Orlean, “Eshet Hayil,” p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
56. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, pp. 29-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
57. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
58. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
59. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
60. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
61. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
62. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
63. Judah Loeb Orlean, *Yidish lebn: Lern kapitln far Yehadus* (Warsaw: Grafia, 1933; second expanded edition, 1938). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
64. Deutschländer, *Schem VaJephet.* [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
65. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, pp. 18-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
66. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, pp. 22-23 [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
67. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, pp. 32-35 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
68. Orlean, *Yidish lebn,* pp. 35-37 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
69. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, pp. 37-40 [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
70. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, pp. 101-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
71. Judah Loeb Orlean, “Ahduth.” In Roṭenberg (ed*.*), *Em BeYisrael*, pp. 231-247; A similar essay appears in his book, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, pp. 55-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
72. Orlean, “Ahduth,” pp. 239-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
73. Orlean, “Ahduth,” p. 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
74. Orlean, “Ahduth,” p. 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
75. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
76. Orlean, *Beʻayot Haḥinukh*, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
77. Judah Loeb Orlean, Der Farshundene Gan-Eden (Warsaw: Bajs Jakow, 1931). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
78. Orlean, Der Farshundene Gan-Eden, pp. 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
79. Orlean, Der Farshundene Gan-Eden, pp. 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
80. Orlean, Der Farshundene Gan-Eden, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
81. Orlean, Der Farshundene Gan-Eden, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
82. On splits and factions within the Beit Ya'akov network see: Menachem Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit:Mekorot, Megamot Vetahalikhim* [*Haredi society: sources, trends, and processes*] (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim Leheker Yisrael, 1991), pp. 158-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
83. Moshe Porush, “Beit Ya’akov Be-Tel Aviv,” in: *Sefer Hayovel ha- 25 shel beit hasefer hatichon vehaseminar legananot vemorot ‘Beit Yaakov’ be Tel Aviv* (Tel Aviv, 1961), p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
84. Menachem Porush, “Beit Ya’akov and the Yeshivas,” in: *Sefer Hayovel*, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
85. Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, quoted in: Moshe Mordechai Schlesinger, “Pninim MiShulchan Gavoha,” Yated Ne’eman Sukkoth Holiday Supplement, 1990, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
86. Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit*, pp. 116-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
87. Meir Szczeransky, “Berurim bidvar limud Torah lenashim” [investigations of Torah studies for women,] in: *Sefer Hayovel*, p. 103; Meir Szczeransky, *Or HaMeir* [Illuminating light], (Tel Aviv, 1941), pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
88. Emphasis in the original. Szczeransky, “Berurim bidvar limud Torah,” p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
89. Szczeransky, “Berurim bidvar limud Torah,” p. 107. Rabbi Szczeransky was an educator and administrator, but was not considered an authority in Talmudic studies. Therefore, he presented his position to one of the great rabbinical leaders of his time, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin. Sorotzkin, who had served as the Chairman of the Agudath Israel’s Council of Torah Greats, replied at length. The reply reveals that Szczeransky had raised the possibility, at least theoretically, that a “select excellent few” girls would study Talmudic literature in depth. See: Meir Szczeransky, “Tshuva bidvar limud Torah lenashim” (A reply regarding Torah studies for women), in: *Sefer Hayovel*, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
90. Meir Szczeransky, *Gedolei Yisrael: Rabbi Shimshom Rafael Hirsch* (Tel Aviv: Beit Yaakov, 1941), p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
91. Szczeransky, *Or HaMeir*, p. 53; Szczeransky (anonymously), “Skira” [Overview], in: *Ha’atid: Kovetz Ma’amarim* [The Future], edited by Meir Szczeransky (Tel Aviv: Beit Yaakov, 1946), p. 20. It should be noted that the Beit Ya’akov high school was established in 1933 and the teachers’ seminary in 1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
92. Szczeransky, *Or HaMeir*, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
93. Szczeransky, *Or HaMeir*, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
94. Szczeransky, *Or HaMeir*, pp. 56-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
95. Szczeransky (ed.), *Ha’atid: Kovetz Ma’amarim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
96. Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit*, pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
97. Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit*, pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
98. Yosef Avraham Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, 4 vols. (Bnei Berak: L. Friedmann, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
99. The examinations, which are administered by Ministry of Education certified institute, are theoretically meant to be at the same level as matriculation exams. It appears, however, that the level is lower in English and Math. A passing grade in these examinations is 60, which is also the threshold for acceptance to 13th and 14th grade tracks which award Teaching certification, technical training certification or a diploma from the Ministry of Commerce and Employment. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
100. Yosef Avraham Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot*, (Bnei Berak: L. Friedmann, 1984) p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
101. Yosef Avraham Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch*, (Bnei Berak: L. Friedmann, 1981) p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
102. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
103. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
104. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
105. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
106. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
107. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
108. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
109. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
110. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
111. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
112. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
113. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
114. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* pp. 88-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
115. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* pp. 100-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
116. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
117. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
118. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
119. Benjamin Szczaranski, *Igeret LeTalmidim* (Tel Aviv: 1988), pp. 348-357. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
120. He argues that the Holocaust is decisive proof that education and science contribute nothing to rectifying human nature: “There is no need for further evidence beyond the Holocaust and this wretched destruction to refute the “progressive” view about the contribution of culture and science towards rectifying human nature and refining his spirit and qualities.” Szczaranski, *Igeret LeTalmidim*, p. 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
121. Szczaranski, *Igeret LeTalmidim*, pp. 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
122. Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit*, pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
123. I have treated this topic in depth in my paper: Brown, “’I Shall Work.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
124. Menachem Friedman, *Ha’Ishah Haharedit* [*the Haredi woman*] (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim Leheker Yisrael, 1988), pp. 11-15. In a later paper, Friedman withdrew this prediction and attempted to explain why it did not come to be. See: Menachem Friedman, “Kol kevoda bat melekh hutza: Haisha haharedit,” in, David Ariel-Joel**et al. (eds.) *Barukh she’asani ishah? Haishah baYahadut mehaTanakh ṿeʻad yameinu* (**Tel-Aviv: Yediot Aḥaronot; Sifre Hemed, 1999), pp. 189-205. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
125. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
126. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 177. For more on this subject see: Brown, “’I Shall Work.” [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
127. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
128. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
129. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
130. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot u’midot,* p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
131. Saul Berman, "The Status of Women in Halakhic Judaism,” *Tradition* 14, 2 (1973), p. 8. Reprinted in: Elizabeth Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, New York 1976, pp. 22-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
132. If we were to review various answers by Israeli Haredi rabbis and educators, we would find that their primary justification for permitting women to study Talmud is their fear of the negative effects of exposure to general education, popular culture and the streets. They appear to be less concerned with women’s lack of appropriate religious knowledge. This perspective seems to have gained acceptance and even become more extreme. Rabbi Wolf Jacobsohn writes that the purpose of girls’ education today is “not to increase the girls’ knowledge but to save souls.” Jacobsohn, *Esa de’i Lemerahok*, pp. 235-237. Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolf, director of the Beit Ya'akov seminary in Bnei Brak through the 1980s, close confidant of Rabbi Karelitz (known as the Hazon Ish), and one of those who continued to develop his vision of the “society of scholars” after his death, reiterated: “The purpose of Beit Ya'akov is not livelihood, but education.” Yosef Avraham Wolf, *Hatekufa Uve'ayoteah*, vol. 4, *De’ot Umiddot*, (Bnei Brak: L. Friedmann, 1984), pp. 212-217. Beit Ya'akov regulations determine that the role of education is not merely to impart knowledge, but also to impart spirit and become an influential force in shaping students’ personalities. The undervaluing or denigration of knowledge appears to be a regular theme amongst Haredi educators in Israel. Knowledge is merely a means in shaping the student’s path. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
133. Wolf, *Hatekufa vebeayoteah*, vol. 1, *Hinuch,* pp. 55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
134. Friedman, *Hahevrah Haharedit*, pp. 74-77; Menachem Friedman, “Ha’Ishah Haharedit” [the Haredi woman], in: *Eshnav le-ḥayehen shel nashim be-ḥevrot Yehudiyot*, edited by Yael Atzmon (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar center for Jewish history, 1995), pp. 273-290. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)