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**Three labor strategies, three ultraorthodox stances: the resurgence of labor organization among the Israeli Haredim**

This article reviews the main patterns of Haredi labor organization activism in Israel, emerging as increasing numbers of Haredim entering the labor market wish to safeguard their rights. Using in-depth interviews, websites, and social networks, the article maps out the field and details three Haredi labor strategies: hedging a safe Haredi existence in non-religious workplaces, anchoring the voice of labor in Haredi culture, and leveraging orthodoxy to make a positive change in society at large. In conclusion, each strategy entails both conformist and innovative aspects, and more broadly also represents a specific stance regarding Haredi existence vis-à-vis secular society.

Keywords:

**Introduction**

***Haredi society is changing***

Until the late 1990s, the Israeli Jewish ultraorthodox population[[1]](#endnote-1) tended to be static. All Haredi communities shared the principles of conservation, obedience to spiritual-rabbinate authority, self-isolation, negating modernity and Zionism, and the supremacy of the sacred over worldly life.[[2]](#endnote-2) These features were the ultraorthodox reaction to a series of changes within Judaism: modernization, secularization, Zionism, and the Holocaust. Ultraorthodox Jews saw these as a threat, to which their answer was self-isolation and making Bible study the ultimate goal of the community. Consequently, Haredi society has constituted itself as a "Society of Learners," *Chevrat Lomdim*.[[3]](#endnote-3) This model was sustained by a pragmatic acceptance of the secular Zionist state, which, in turn, aided the Haredi community with financial support, dismissal from military service, and cultural autonomy.[[4]](#endnote-4)

The Haredi way of life had been growing in influence since the late 1970s. As the Likud party rose to power, forming right-wing coalitions in which Haredi parties played a key role, the Haredi community gained legitimacy and enjoyed bigger budgets.[[5]](#endnote-5) Consequently, Haredi society gained confidence. However, it preserved its survivalist rhetoric,[[6]](#endnote-6) particularly under Harav Elazar Shach and Harav Ovadia Yosef's charismatic leadership.[[7]](#endnote-7)

But a transformation is ushering in Haredi success. Men and women are joining the labor market,[[8]](#endnote-8) acquiring occupational, academic, and professional training.[[9]](#endnote-9) Digital media has broadly penetrated the community, giving rise to a blossoming scene of Haredi websites and digital networks, overcoming the long-standing disapproval of Haredi leadership against free access to the outside world and becoming a platform for internal criticism.[[10]](#endnote-10) Another change is taking place in the field of housing: the Haredi population no longer remains confined to its traditional urban centers – Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak – but is spreading to new Haredi towns or enclaves within mixed towns.[[11]](#endnote-11) Growing numbers of Haredim enroll in military or civil service.[[12]](#endnote-12) Others stop seeing the IDF and its soldiers negatively but rather develop a romantic view of it, though from a distance.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Torah learning has traditionally been seen as the *raison d'etre* of Haredi existence. Currently however, the worldly aspects of life are becoming more essential, and individualist trends are on the rise.[[14]](#endnote-14) One of their expressions is the development of leisure culture, for example the flourishing scene of Haredi popular music.[[15]](#endnote-15)

The rise of leisure culture from the bottom up also attests to the weakening of the top-spiritual leadership – *Gdolei HaTorah* – and the upsurge of grass-roots leadership of a more popular[[16]](#endnote-16) or civilian[[17]](#endnote-17) character. Furthermore, Haredi politics is no longer confined to narrow sectorial matters. Instead, it addresses broad issues of nationality and ethnicity[[18]](#endnote-18) and even displays first signs of political movements, such as Haredi feminism.[[19]](#endnote-19)

Many Haredim find these transformations threatening. As a reaction, they erect further walls to prevent the external world from influencing their traditional way of life.[[20]](#endnote-20) Haredi communities, then, are less stable than before: cracks form in the traditional structures,[[21]](#endnote-21) enabling additional change to take root. This article focuses on one specific area of change – the growing participation of Haredim in labor organizations. To provide the needed context, I shall first discuss the state of Haredi employment.

***Employment among the Haredim***

Owing to multiple causes – such as the Haredi ethos of the Society of Learners, the provision of state benefits, and the preference for self-isolation – employment rates among the Haredim have been substantially lower than those of non-Haredi Jews. The lowest score was noted in 2002, when the Haredi employment rate stood at 37% for men and 51% for women, compared to 78% and 68%, respectively, for non-Haredi Jews. However, since 2003, Haredi employment rates have been gradually increasing, narrowing the gap between them and the secular population. In 20XX, the Haredi employment rate was at 51% for men and 76% for women, compared to 87% and 83% for non-Haredi men and women, respectively.[[22]](#endnote-22)

 A central cause for the rise of employment among the Haredim was the massive cut of state benefits in 2003, among them reducing support for the Yeshivas. As making ends meet became difficult for many Haredi families, they had no choice but to join the workforce. This initial entry was only a starting point;[[23]](#endnote-23) since then, growing numbers of Haredim have acquired professional training, expanding the range of occupations practiced. Thus the Haredim have become part of the Israeli labor market.[[24]](#endnote-24)

The unique characteristics of employment among the Haredim may bring along certain difficulties. First, a lack of acquaintance with the job market leads the Haredim to concentrate in only a few branches, such as education, computing, accounting, social work, business management, etc.[[25]](#endnote-25) Second, the Haredim’s attitude to work tends to be instrumental: used to earn a living, it is not regarded as a career or a source of identity,[[26]](#endnote-26) because Bible study remains their calling.[[27]](#endnote-27) Third, Haredi employees tend not to develop a robust organizational identity.[[28]](#endnote-28) Finally, many wish to control the extent of their exposure to the secular environment. Since many Haredim assume that sticking together will make it easier to maintain their way of life,[[29]](#endnote-29) work enclaves for Haredi workers, often segregated by gender, are emerging as a new phenomenon.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Professional training among the Haredim is less common than among the general Israeli population. Haredi rates of Xare below those of their non-Haredi counterparts, 25% compared to 33% in 2016. Among Haredi employees, more women than men are receiving specialized training (30% compared to 17% in 2016).[[31]](#endnote-31) Moreover, the Haredim’s levels of secular education are relatively low, with only 20% having an academic degree, compared to 45% of non-Haredi employees.[[32]](#endnote-32) Haredi workers are also less inclined to use digital or other innovative technologies at work, adopting them only when required to.[[33]](#endnote-33)

These difficulties may explain the Haredim’s weaker position in workplaces and in the job market as a whole. One way this gap manifests is through incomes: in 1997, Haredi workers’ average monthly wage was 5,019 NIS, while that of non-Haredi workers was 5,956 NIS. In 2017, average incomes stood at 7,920 and 11,459 NIS, respectively. The Haredim are also weakly represented in the upper echelons: in 2017, only 11% wereworking in a management role, compared to 24% of the general population. When they do occupy management positions, these are usually junior ranks; only 12% of Haredi managers – compared to 32% of their non-Haredi counterparts – hold a senior position.[[34]](#endnote-34)

Despite their objectively weaker position, Haredim’s subjective experience of work is quite positive and very similar to that of their secular colleagues. Expressing general contentment with the way their employers and workmates treat them, they do not feel harassed or discriminated against, nor do they report being forced to violate their religious beliefs. They also feel satisfied, even slightly more so than other workers, with their jobs, their colleagues’ assistance, and their work-life balance.[[35]](#endnote-35)

The data analyzed so far regards the Haredim as a monolithic category. However, splitting the group by age reveals an incipient turn among the younger generation. Younger Haredi workers start seeing work as a career. More of them have academic and professional training, are much more at ease with digital technology, and move farther up the organizational ladder. They are also willing to integrate with other groups in the workplace.[[36]](#endnote-36)

The growing importance of work among the Haredim, combined with the difficulties they are coping with, beg the question about the role of organized labor in their community. Trade unionism is the central institution for representing workers in industrial societies. What kind of impact does it have on Haredim in the labor market?

***The Haredim and organized labor***

Haredi labor organization is not new in Israeli history. Founded in the 1920s, the Po'alei Agudat Israel (PAI), a Haredi movement also inspired by socialist ideas, was an important agent both within the Histadrut and in the Haredi public.[[37]](#endnote-37) It stepped down in tandem with the Histadrut’s downfall and the shift of Haredi political support towards the right-wing Likud party; no significant religious labor agent has so far followed in its tracks.

In the past decade, after a prolonged recession, there have been a few organizing attemptsamong Haredi workers.[[38]](#endnote-38) These initiatives do not fit a single pattern. The Histadrut played a role here as it formed the *Division of Religious Local Councils and Religious Service Workers* (hereafter referred to as “The Religious Division” or as “The Haredi Division”) and also appointed a Haredi woman as a special Haredi coordinator at the Trade Union Unit’s headquarters.

At their outset, theserecent attempts did not look promising, as a comprehensive report published in 2012 suggests: only 18% of Haredi employees were registered members of labor organizations, compared to 27% of non-Haredi Jews. While the Histadrut was the most prominent labor organization joined by non-Haredi Jewish workers (64%), teachers’ associations unionized most Haredis (58%). Although Haredi teachers endured worse employment conditions than their non-Haredi equivalents,[[39]](#endnote-39) most of them did not have a workers’ committee at their workplace. Finally, the report showed that most Haredim endorse the right of collective action. Still, they were less supportive of having a labor organization at their workplace, much less being an active member of it (2.3% compared to 19.4% among non-Haredi Jews and 23% among Israeli Arabs).[[40]](#endnote-40)

So far there has been no academic research on the intersection of Haredi workers with trade unionism. Only applied data is available, particularly reports which provide descriptive quantitative data. Therefore, this article offers multiple contributions: it presents initial information about the subject and maps the field, and then tracks the phenomenon’s social origins, cultural meanings, potential, and limitations. This article is also a potential contribution to understanding the broader subject of employment among the Haredim. Here again, scholarly literature is scarce. A prominent scholar in this field is Avi Kay, who focuses on how Haredim see work and their workplaces, and how the sacred texts see labor relations.[[41]](#endnote-41) My article adds to Kay’s pioneering work by investigating the field of Haredi labor organizations in more detail.

***Organized labor and religion***

Social theorists hold various views about the role of religion in society. After Karl Marx, conflict theorists regard religion as an ideology legitimizing the control that oppressive forces wield over oppressed groups. This tradition also sees religion as a projection of material forces into the spiritual realm – a human creation that imposes itself upon society.[[42]](#endnote-42) The functionalist school views religion as a driving force in itself, with Emile Durkheim considering religion as synonymous with the collective consciousness, the pillar of society.[[43]](#endnote-43) Max Weber also contended that faith could operate as a cause that influences other institutions, such as work and the economy.[[44]](#endnote-44)

I embrace the position that culture is part and parcel of class and labor struggles, playing an active role in them.[[45]](#endnote-45) Faith, for example, shapes work and business. The most classic illustration is Weber’s thesis on the role of Protestant ethics in developing an ethos of work as a calling, which constitutes the cultural foundation of capitalism.[[46]](#endnote-46) A more recent example the Faith at Work (FAW) movement, whose goal is to restore the explicit link between work and religion.[[47]](#endnote-47)

Religious actors also get involved in labor disputes, where ethnographic studies reveal that they may endorse either party. Two documented examples are the strife at a factory manufacturing corn products in Clinton, Iowa,[[48]](#endnote-48) and a labor struggle in North Carolina.[[49]](#endnote-49) More decisive church support for workers was evident in two recent protests in the Chicago metropolitan area, led by the nurses at St. Joseph Hospital and the workers at O’Hare International Airport, respectively.[[50]](#endnote-50)

***Research Questions***

This article addresses the following questions: in which industries or branches do we find Haredi workers, and what are their primary motivations for organizing? How do they conceptualize the act of organizing and their role as workers’ representatives? What are their goals? What are their strategies and practices?

**2. Materials and Methods**

***Data Sources***

Empirical data was collected from various sources. The first, and least central, is my initial fieldwork with non-Haredi workers’ committees in the Israeli private sector between 2006–2008. It provided me with some comments and insights, made by some of my religious informants, about the intersections between religion and labor activity. The second source is the seven meetings I held with the chairman of the Religious Division at the Histadrut. The hour-long sessions took the form of either monologues by the chairman or open-ended conversations between us. They spanned from 2017 until 2019 and constituted my induction to the field.

The third source of data is a series of six in-depth interviews carried out between January and September 2020 with Haredi activists involved in attempts at labor organizing. Most of the interviews took place face-to-face and were recorded and transcribed; each lasted between one and two hours. One interview, a little less than an hour long, was carried out by phone because of the interviewee’s fear of COVID-19 infection. Still, I had the impression that this remote format also suited the interlocutor because as a married Haredi woman, she was already being criticized for being part of a labor organization. The other five interviewees all preferred to avoid video calls by Zoom.

The fourth data source were shorter conversations with Histadrut officials engaging with Haredi workers. While these were not recorded, here I took notes. The final source of data was the internet, including Youtube videos, online columns, reports, and websites. The latter were diverse: general news websites (such as Yedioth Ahronot), the Histadrut’s news portal (Davar1), Haredi news sites (Be'Hadrei Haredim, Kikar Ha'Shabat), and social media sources such as Facebook pages and discussions.

These data sources were utilized in three ways. First, they provided valuable information about the field. Second, they formed the basis of deciphering its meaning categories and narratives. Third, the data sources used overlapped in many cases, thus allowing for a triangulation that helped me separate facts from interpretations, and therefore be more cautious and confident in my analysis.[[51]](#endnote-51)

I used three strategies for data processing. First was a narrative analysis[[52]](#endnote-52) of what led the activists to organize and face the associated challenges. Second was a phenomenological analysis[[53]](#endnote-53) whose goal was to extract the deep subjective meaning that these people ascribed to their actions. Third was a thick description, interpreting data by putting the actors’ words and actions into the context of both the immediate situation they maneuver and the cultural system they belong to.[[54]](#endnote-54)

The refer to the persons and organizations described in this article by pseudonyms to avoid any harm to them and to respect their privacy. I use real names when there is no necessity for or possibility of disguising them.

***Mapping the Field***

Before answering the research questions, I shall map out the types of Haredi labor organizations currently active:

1. Organization attempts at workplaces providing religious services. The employers are the Ministry of Religious Services or its proxies – the local religious councils or subcontractors. The case covered here concern the *balaniyot*,[[55]](#endnote-55) *kashrut* supervisors,[[56]](#endnote-56) and the workers of the local religious councils, including both lay workers and rabbis.
2. Organization attempts in exclusivelyHaredi workplaces – school networks, medical centers, an organization that maintains a place of worship for the state, a news website,[[57]](#endnote-57) and others.
3. Haredi representatives in mixedworkers’ committees – many Haredis join secular workplaces, and some workers’ committees choose to nominate a Haredi representative whose job is to ensure the company meets the Haredi workers’ particular needs. An example is a Haredi representative in the workers’ committee of one of Israel’s biggest insurance companies.
4. Haredi activists at non-Haredi labor organizations – where Haredim are active as part of the general collective. An example is “Jacob,” a Chabad Hassid who founded the workers’ committee of one of Israel’s prominent food corporations.

***Research Hypothesis***

Three strategies fuel the Haredi organization attempts: hedging a safe Haredi existence in non-religious workplaces, anchoring the voice of labor in the Haredi environment, and leveraging Jewish orthodox cosmology to make a positive change to society at large. These strategies are fueled by three respective motivations: pragmatic, idealist-conformist, and idealist-reformist ones (Tikun Olam).

**Case Studies**

***The pragmatic approach: hedging a safe Haredi existence within non-religious workplaces***

I am meeting with Yariv, the chairman of the workers’ committee of “Calculus,” a big insurance company, and Saul, representing the Haredi workers within the committee. Yariv tells me that shortly before our talk an election had taken place in which he had been running for his second term as chairman. His list included candidates from minorities within the company – Saul and an Israeli Arab woman.[[58]](#endnote-58) The goal was to represent the cultural diversity of the company. Yariv tells me that they celebrate the three religions’ main holidays, giving the relevant workers a gift. They also mark International Women's Day and events relevant to the LGBT community.

 Saul tells me about his activities. One of his goals is to ensure that every Haredi employee can find food of a suitable kashrut standard or brand. Another is to ensure that men have a place to pray. This could involve adapting a conference room to public prayers (*minyan*) or making an arrangement with a small, intimate synagogue close to the workplace. Saul has managed to secure a modest annual donation from the company and the workers’ committee to the synagogue so religious workers could go there for prayers. A third goal is to organize appropriate leisure activities for Haredi workers. On International Women’s Day, for example, Saul sets up lectures or movies by religious women artists. On holidays, when the committee hands out small food gifts, Saul takes care that the bottle of wine or chocolate box meets the right kashrut standards.

More challenging are company vacations and leisure activities. It is a tradition for big organizations to send their employees on an annual retreat to spend a few days in a hotel at a popular site in Israel (such as Eilat on the Dead Sea) or even in a nearby country. One of the workers’ committee’s related tasks is arranging entertainment. Since many common secular entertainment activities do not fit the ultraorthodox lifestyle, the workers’ committees of several companies employing significant numbers of Haredi workers joined together to book several hotels in Eilat at the beginning of the off-season so that the Haredim could enjoy the vacation without being exposed to immodest behavior and maintain their kashrut standard. They also managed to collect enough money to book concerts with Haredi superstars such as Avraham Fried, Ishai Ribo, and Ishai Lapidot.

The last goal Saul is striving to accomplish is to bring orthodox Jewish input into the general organizational culture. Two of his successes are adding religious books to the little library the committee created to benefit all workers, as well as adding the weekly times of Shabbat entry and exit and the current parashah[[59]](#endnote-59) to the workers’ committees’ Facebook page.

The workers’ committee of "Calculus" also took care of practical matters concerning the Haredi workers. Most of the ultraorthodox workers were young mothers. The company enabled them to start their workday earlier in the morning and to finish at 15:10. With the committee’s support, the company also provided them with shuttles circulating between work and the three Haredi urban centers where most of them live.

 According to Saul and Yariv, the provision of suitable activities, gifts, and services to Haredi employees impacts them positively: they feel part of the organization, and therefore their motivation increases.

The Haredi workers of "Calculus" are a minority in a secular company, which Saul kept emphasizing. Thus, his main concern has been to ensure that Haredi employees feel comfortable maintaining the observant way of life in a non-religious environment. Raising no ambitions to transform the secular identity of the company, he remains cautious and modest in his demands. For example, when the workers’ committee marks LGBT events, he refrains from any reaction, neither blessing the community nor condemning them.

There is further indication of Saul’s pragmatic approach. Asked whom he defines as a Haredi, he answers that he includes whoever self-defines as such. Another criterion Saul uses is technical: he serves whoever joins his mailing list or attends activities he organizes. This practical approach stands in stark contrast to the typically strict and exclusive Haredi discourse regarding group boundaries.

Thus Saul’s primary task is to enable Haredim to observe the precepts of Judaism and maintain their lifestyle. He tries to be prudent and avoid projecting any impression of the Haredim as a privileged group to the other employees.

***The idealist-conformist approach: anchoring the voice of labor in Haredi culture***

There are three primary tensions shaping the effort to legitimize organized labor in Haredi communities. The first is the gap between the latters’ aspiration to represent a spiritually advanced ideal society, and acknowledging that it is just as [**complex/ed]** as any other community. The second tension stretches between the ambition to open up more to secular society, and the fear accompanying such a move. The third is an ambivalent stance towards the labor movement: while manyHaredim scorn it because of its blatant secularism, they at the same time respect its actions on behalf of those in need.

Haredi opinions of organized labor have also been informed by the changes these communities have recently been undergoing. From the 1970s until the last decade, the Haredi ethos of Torah learning had pushed aside worldly matters and rejected any action that might defy authority, leading to a decisive negation of organized labor. Labor struggles carry connotation of leftism and especially socialism, which tends to be seen as incompatible with religion.

Haredi labor organizers need to overcome this perceived opposition. One strategy is to push labor relations to the center of Haredi public discourse by getting involved in the growing Haredi media scene, especially on websites. Consequently, news coverage of labor issues has become quite regular, especially via articles on labor rights (including at Haredi workplaces) and profile stories featuring Haredi labor activists. No less than three of my interviewees enjoyed highly positive coverage in the Haredi media. At least one of those activists, Jacob, has been the protagonist of a long story in the weekly issue of Israel’s largest newspaper – Yedioth Ahronoth.[[60]](#endnote-60)

But gaining legitimacy also requires obtaining rabbinical consent. Shmuel, chairman of the Religious Division at the Histadrut, told me that he had been urgently summoned to the rabbinical court during a labor dispute at a Hassidic education institution. The judge had expressed his disappointment at a Haredi man representing the Histadrut, and reminded him of the harms the organization had inflicted upon religious communities. Shmuel replied that this had happened in the remote past – but that now he, as a Haredi man wearing a kippah, was the Histadrut representative of Haredi workers, which was to be seen as an outstanding achievement.[[61]](#endnote-61) This suggests that the first strategy aiming to re-legitimize the Histadrut among the Haredim is to portray the Haredi movement as victoriously taking its place within the organization, and the Histadrut in turn as changing and opening up to Judaism.

But legitimizing labor through rabbinical consent goes further. Another practice is appealing to the spiritual leadership to ask for support, such as issuing a Halakha[[62]](#endnote-62) rule. An example is the appeal of a group of women education workers to the Bnei Brak[[63]](#endnote-63) Haredi Rabbinical Court of Justice under Rabbi Nissim Kerlitz. They asked for a ruling supporting their right to organize and their struggle to improve their labor conditions. The verdict was that “[o]rganizing is acceptable as long as it does not lead to actions incongruent with the Halakha.”[[64]](#endnote-64)

In addition to Halakha rulings, Haredi labor activists also pursue the public and moral support of major Haredi leaders. Two of my interviewees told me enthusiastically about an endorsement by the most prominent figure in the Sephardi biblical world, the late Ha'rav Ovadia Yosef. Ha'rav Yosef declared that the Histadrut is Israel’s greatest *gemach*. A *gemach* is a common Haredi social mechanism that creates provisioning systems based on charity, solidarity, and cooperation. To normalize workers’ organizations, Haredi Histadtut officials are also cultivating connections with rabbis from all main Haredi sub-communities, including the Sepharadim, Lita'im (Lithuanian Haredim), and Hassidim. While some rabbis are publicly endorsing workers’ rights activism, others are not condemning it, which is an indirect way of expressing support.

In any case, the new activist movement has at least one undeniable achievement: it provokes internal discussion about what Jewish sources have to say about labor rights, especially the right to organize and the freedom to strike – the two fundamental principles of organized labor.[[65]](#endnote-65)

Another sophisticated strategy for gaining support is to suggest the idea that strengthening the labor rights of Haredi workers may lead to broadening the influence of Judaism on Israeli public life. The case of the *balaniyot* illustrates this approach. The ritual bathing of women is a pillar of the orthodox perception of the pure Jewish home.[[66]](#endnote-66) However, the *balaniyot*, who assist and supervise the bathing, work outside normal hours and often fulfill additional duties related to maintaining the public baths, all for a disproportionately low salary. Since the state is paying them, it seems to be responsible for these poor conditions. However, my informants told me that the religious establishment is equally responsible, particularly the local religious councils.

The campaign for improving the *balaniyot*’s working conditions followed two parallel paths – negotiating with the Ministry of Treasury and lobbying inside the religious establishment*.* The activists argued that the religious establishment could not afford to overlook women who play such a crucial role in the everyday sustenance of the orthodox Jewish way of life.

The same logic applies to kashrut attendants. The kashrut apparatus is undergoing reorganization as in 2017, the Supreme Court ruled against its predominant employment arrangement. In the former system, the attendants were supervising kashrut in places that employed them, which the new ruling disqualified. The Ministry of Treasury saw this change as an opportunity to restructure the branch, offering to form new corporations that would function as contractors and in turn hire the kashrut attendants. Fearing that this move would worsen their working conditions, the attendants formed a national workers’ committee affiliated with the Histadrut. Their primary strategy of legitimization was to portray themselves as proxies of the Haredi community acting to shift Israeli society towards Jewish orthodoxy. To achieve this, they argued, their act of organizing was indispensable.

The persistent efforts to gain legitimacy testify to the fierce opposition facing labor activism. One of my interviewees told me that although the Bible approves of workers’s rights, labor activism has evoked antagonism in Haredi circles. Four explanations were offered to explain this resentment: one is the clash between workers’ rights and Haredi employers’ interests, many of whom have close ties to Haredi politicians and the great rabbis.[[67]](#endnote-67) The second is the labor activists’ willingness to expose inside tensions, an unusual move in the Haredi culture of unity.[[68]](#endnote-68) The third pertains to Haredi labor activists’ readiness to appeal to secular authority. Such a move is regarded as contradicting the Halakha, except if it concerns specific subject areas.[[69]](#endnote-69) To sum up, for many, engaging in labor activism means defying the authority and undermining the unity of the Haredi community.

Central to Haredi society is the idea of the individuals’ obedience to the highest spiritual leaders and their proxies – politicians and other local leaders.[[70]](#endnote-70) In contrast, Haredi labor activists seem to act ambivalently towards this authority: on the one hand, they respect it by seeking their spiritual leaders’ approval in labor disputes. On the other hand, they may also appeal to secular authorities.

A good example concerns Haredi schools and kindergartens.[[71]](#endnote-71) The Haredi education system is a major economic enterprise. Funded by the state, private donations, and parents’ fees, it has become an attractive field for Haredi entrepreneurs, many of them with close connections to the political system. It is also a critical source of jobs, especially for women. In a Society of Learners, where men are supposed to spend their lives at the Yeshiva (or "Kollel" for married men), women’s employment is crucial for the families’ financial sustenance. However, in recent years the supply of teachers has outgrown the demand. Moreover, government support is not as stable as in the past, and there are fewer private donations due to economic crises. Given the growing financial pressure, employers increasingly violate their obligations, finding ways to pay their workers less than they deserve. One such way is to prevent teachers from registering at the Ministry of Education, therefore cutting the seniority component of their paycheck. When the teachers attempted to complain, they faced the threat of losing their jobs, pressure not to defy their leaders, and the message that the fate of Torah learning among the young generation was solely on their shoulders.

However, the Haredi labor activists reacted assertively. They shifted the pressure back on the employers and appealed to the rabbinical court. They argued that according to the great Jewish religious authorities, such as the Rambam **(Maimonides)**, abusing workers breaks one of the Torah’s prohibitions and is thus not subject to negotiation or compromise.

Another example of a clash between Haredi labor activists and the Haredi leadership is provided by nurses organizing at a prominent medical center. The nurses had the following goals: better employment conditions, equal salaries for nurses doing the same jobs, and accountable management. The reaction to their demands initially seemed hostile, as the activists found an open letter pasted to the medical center’s walls, claiming that a top rabbi had denounced the nurses’ campaign. Surprised, the activists used their social connections to access the rabbi who had signed the letter. They elaborated on their arguments and convinced the rabbi, who instructed his close assistant to see how he could help the workers. To sum up, both Haredi employers and Haredi labor activists further their goals by recruiting support from spiritual leadership.

Thus it seems that confronting Haredi employers requires creativity with respect to both arguments and practical measures. We can observe both of these in the following incident. “Praise” is an NGO that operates at a holy site of national importance. It is affiliated with the Prime Minister’s office and financed by it, employing hundreds of workers. The management, having strong ties with the local Haredi leadership, opposed the workers’ attempt at organizing. Since the activists’ calling a conventional strike would risk shutting down the holy site, they threatened to embark on a unique strike that would leave the site open and free to visit. They would not charge any fees or provide paid guidance, so the damage would affect the employers more than the site or its visitors.

To conclude, Haredi labor activists expressed their adherence to ultraorthodox principles and rabbinate leadership. So far, their success has been partial – significant resentment against organized labor persists, and there are powerful interest groups determined to block it, or as one of the interviewees put it:

The Torah is very clear about the necessity of treating the worker fairly and paying his accurate salary with no delay. But sadly, when money and political power mix, the outcome is an unfortunate overlooking of the Torah commandments.

***The idealist-reformist approach (Tikun Olam): leveraging Jewish orthodoxy to make a positive change in wider society***

Haredi labor activists’ third approach is based on Tikkun Olam (“mending of the world”), a traditional Jewish concept that defines seeking social justice as part of the Jewish people’s mission in the world at large.[[72]](#endnote-72) The Tikkun Olam approach is more open than the other two strategies by providing a legitimate basis for orthodox Jews to reach out to the secular population.

 A telling example of this approach is an attempt – made by Jacob, a Chabad Hassid – to organize the workers of “Ultimate,” a giant corporation that manufactures, imports, and distributes a variety of food products through its multiple divisions. Soon after joining the company, Jacob had become overwhelmed by what he described as an uncivilized management attitude, reporting for example that managers swore at employees. Other complaints referred to the quality of life at work, such as that the company refrained from replacing old forklifts causing the employees inconvenience. Jacob could see no reason for this other than placing low importance on workers’ welfare, and decided to organize the workers under the Histadrut’s organizational umbrella. The workers’ committee was founded in secret to bypass the managements’ anticipated attempts to thwart it.

Over the years, my field experience has taught me that the success of an organizing attempt depends on secrecy and credibility. The core organizing team must be loyal, as the workers support such a risky move only if they feel that the new committee is truly representing them. Hence, to reduce the risk of a leak, Jacob turned first to fellow Haredi colleagues. On the other hand, for it to be representative, Jacob sought to establish a diversified committee, with members from all departments and multiple social groups: secular Jews, Ethiopian Israelis, Russian Israelis, and two Arabs, one of them (his closest assistant) from East Jerusalem. In this way, Jacob transcended not only Haredi separatism, but also the established lines of Israeli social segregation.

At first, the organization was a success. Jacob and his partners got signatures from at least a third of the employees, which is the minimum required to make the committee eligible. However, the victory was short-lived. The management did not recognize the new committee and aggressively tried to suppress it. The case got into court, where the judge convicted the company of violating the right to organize and ruled a 500,000 NIS fine.

Nevertheless, the intimidation continued in underhand ways. Gradually, all members of the workers’ committee except Jacob found themselves out of the committee or out of the company.[[73]](#endnote-73) Jacob still persists alone and endures all kinds of harassments: the company guards assaulted him, and the company violated his privacy by publishing personal details about his past business difficulties. Jacob also reported indirect attempts to buy him off, which he refused.

What made Jacob cross the lines of Haredi separatism and establish a universal workers’ committee? He said it was his Hassidic-Chabadic faith. Before joining the company as a distributor, Jacob had been working as a teacher and a schoolmaster. He also had an unsuccessful adventure as a high-tech entrepreneur. Becoming a worker at a food corporation was, in a way, downgrading him. However, his faith made him see it differently:

I did not come here to sell hotdogs. God has a mission for me – to establish the workers’ committee and take care of them. Though the company has broken the workers’ committee, I have done my share. Currently, the management improves its treatment of the employees. […] They want to divert the workers from joining us. At the bottom line, all the grievances that had led me to organize the workers are addressed now. One thousand two hundred workers are smiling now. […] But it is not my success but God’s. He put me on a mission.

When I confronted Jacob with the argument that his approach contradicts the separatist strategy endorsed by most Haredim, his reply pointed to his membership in Chabad and its unique theological approach to the world:

In Chabad, we look for your internal essence as a Jew and as a human being. That’s what counts — the love of Israel, but not only Israel. Our rabbi[[74]](#endnote-74) told us that a man has to go out to the world, do good wherever he is, and spread light. His predecessor[[75]](#endnote-75) said that darkness, particularly spiritual darkness, can only be removed by light, not by the stick. This is a Haredi view that you should also take into account.

To sum up, Jacob’s motivation was universalist and articulated with the broader Jewish concept of mending the world.

**Discussion**

***Shifting boundaries***

Recently, Asaban and Bahar Cohen pointed out the emergence of a new type of Haredi leader with a more civil orientation and innovative ways of practicing Haredi life. One of the leaders they cite declared:

I don't want to change. I wish to preserve what is already operating in the same way for at least two hundred years. I do wish to improve, to fix, and to update wherever necessary. There is no point in staying stuck at the *shtiebel.*[[76]](#endnote-76)

Haredi labor activists are part of this new leadership and follow its logic. They take pride in their group identity and declare their steadfast commitment to the Haredi principles and lifestyle. At the same time, they cultivate connections to the secular world and make innovative moves that depart from the separatist version of theHaredi ethos. How are they accomplishing this? In this article, I outlined three strategies: a pragmatic approach of hedging a safe Haredi existence in non-religious workplaces, an idealist-conformist approach of anchoring the voice of labor within the Haredi environment, and finally, an idealist-reformist approach that leverages Jewish orthodoxy to make a positive change to the broader society. Although clearly distinct, these approaches share the duality of adhering to ultraorthodox tenets while broadening their interpretation. I argue that these three strategies reflect three existential stances that members of Haredi communities may assume vis-à-vis the secular parts of Israeli society. I shall support my claim by briefly reviewing the three case studies presented in this paper.

The first case introduces Saul, who is securing a Haredi space within a secular company. However, he also expands Haredi boundaries in the following ways: 1) he chooses not to monitor who follows the Haredi lifestyle; 2) he decides to coexist with the LGBT community, although not publicly accepting them.[[77]](#endnote-78) However, Saul's innovation is limited in scope since he takes into account that the Haredi employees are financially dependent on their company. Therefore, I claim that his stance represents a broader existential position vis-à-vis the Israeli society – namely that of a minority that seeks to preserve its resources without irritating the secular majority.

The second case describes labor activists ensuring that their moves obey the Halakha rules and are consistent with Jewish sacred texts. At the same time, they expand the Haredi public discourse by including labor relations, particularly the workers’ side. Such a move is significant since the Haredi community has neglected to develop a public discourse on many realms of life traditionally covered by religion,[[78]](#endnote-79) economic life included. But in Judaism, daily life is supposed to follow the holy logic[[79]](#endnote-80) and the labor activists wish to put this approach back on track. They innovate within the community, and would rarely call on a secular court. I propose that this strategy reflects the second and the most prominent stance of the Haredi community vis-à-vis the Israeli society – that of an autarkic entity, with its own culture, norms, and institutions. Although eroded, this stance remains dominant.

The third example discusses Jacob’s adherence to the Chabad worldview, which uniquely encourages contact with the non-Haredi environment in order to influence it.[[80]](#endnote-81) However, Jacob adds another layer to Chabad’s relative openness: while most of the external connections that Chabad Hassids cultivate are with secular Jews, aiming to make Judaism more available and attractive to them, Chabad cosmology contains another mission that pertains to the rest of the world’s nations. The goal is to make Gentiles accept the seven commandments that the Torah is obliging them to follow.[[81]](#endnote-82) Jacob innovates by defining his mission as enhancing universal social justice, and he does so by cooperating with all his fellow workers, including non-Jews. I argue that his stance reflects a third Haredi position vis-à-vis the Israeli society: an ambition to reach out and mold it according to the divine will.

***Dual strategies in context***

In previous ethnographic research, I located a few labor activists who combined a relatively coherent social-democratic discourse with Jewish devotion. Their religious faith was their main driving force and passion,[[82]](#endnote-83) while social-democratic ideas were a supplement voiced in specific discussions. The Haredi labor activists who are the subject of this article are much more observant: their adherence to ultra-orthodoxy is unquestionable, which is why I assume that their exposure to the liberal, egalitarian, and secular ideologies will not assimilate them into secular society.[[83]](#endnote-84)

Understanding the labor activists’ inseparable bond with the Haredi community enables us to explain their dual strategies. Khalid Arar and Tamar Shapira discuss Arab Muslim women managers’ obstacles in the traditionalist patriarchal environment surrounding them. One strategy of overcoming these obstacles is adopting the veil as a way of expressing commitment to tradition and sensitivity to the local community. Consequently, the managers gain legitimacy and respect, and the change they represent seems less threatening.[[84]](#endnote-85)

Arar and Shapira’s thesis is also relevant to Haredi labor activists. Like Arab women managers, the Haredi labor activists occupied a less dominant position inside their communities. Therefore they kept expressing their allegiance to the Haredi system and used the Haredi cultural tool-kit[[85]](#endnote-86) to articulate their claims and choose acceptable practices, which facilitated communicating their messages and gained them legitimacy.

The duality of conservation and innovation is not new to Haredi communities. It also appears in Tamar El-Or’s account of the primary education of girls in the Hassidic Gur community.[[86]](#endnote-87) It attests to the ability of the Haredi lifestyle to incorporate outside challenges without compromising its core principles.

Is this change merely minor? While this is a possibility, there are others as well. One is that we are witnessing a trend in which the current social model – that of a Society of Learners – is losing its exclusiveness. Like Haredim in the United States and Western Europe, modern Israeli Haredim find worldly issues essential again.[[87]](#endnote-88) By pushing high rabbinic authorities to address labor issues, labor activists contribute to moving the Torah out of the ivory tower of the Yeshivas back to the ground, to laypeople and their daily lives. Such a change seems profound since it affects the symbolic order of the Haredi cosmology.

Haredi labor activism has not brought any eruptive, revolutionary change. However, one cannot easily assess the scope and depth of gradual, incremental change;[[88]](#endnote-89) we need a longer time perspective to evaluate it. However, in a conservative society like the Haredi one, any effort to overcome the gatekeepers and influence the symbolic order is substcantial and an expression of charismatic social action.[[89]](#endnote-90) The contention between conservative and modern Haredim is going to continue. While the former will see the change brought about by labor activists as destructive, the latter will perceive it as an innovation.[[90]](#endnote-91)

***Future prospects***

The entry of Haredi people into the labor market is not an episode, but rather will probably expand in scope. Many Haredi workers are vulnerable as well-established secular companies, the government, and new Haredi entrepreneurs are eager to cut labor costs while taking advantage of disciplined employees. Haredi workers seem to fit this bill. Many of them are anxious to work, used to a modest lifestyle, and accept authority. However, they are also becoming more aware of their condition and seek to assert their rights, some doing so by organizing. In the process, they reiterate their commitment to their faith, identity, and community. Although they are only seeking modifications in the workplace, their activity can drive a more remarkable change. Often unknowingly, they challenge a core Haredi ethos by returning the Torah to worldly matters, such as class politics. Thus it is no wonder that many members of the traditional leadership are intimidated by the move and block the new trend.

The future is hard to predict. Will Haredi labor organization be swallowed up by the hegemonic Haredi ideology, lose its edge, and persist only in isolated enclaves? Will it enrich the Haredi discourse to include more egalitarian ideas and respect for workers? Will it create a new form of Haredi socialist movement? I do not rule out a future featuring a combination of these possibilities. Further research is needed to follow up the development of this trend and analyze its other facets – such as, for example, its leadership and its manifestation in other labor organizations (like the Ko'ach La'ovdim).

**Acknowledgments**

**Declaration of interest statement**

**Notes**

1. .Hereafter mostly referred to as “Haredi” or “Haredim” (plural), as this is the term used in Israeli public life. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. .Brown, *The Haredim.* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. .Friedman, *Haredi Ultra-Orthodox Society*. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. .Leon, “Is there a Future for the Society of Learners?,” 129–144. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. .Avraham and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers,* 13–14. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. . Caplan and Stadler, “Changing Faces of Israeli Haredi Society,” 11–29. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. . Leon, “Rabbi Ovadia Yosef,” 301–322. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. .Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-orthodox Men,” 165–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. .Kalagy and Braun-Lewensohn, *Integrating from Distance,* 27–34. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. .Asaban and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers,* 35–37. Leon, “Is there a future for the Society of Learners?,” 136. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. . Cahaner and Shilhav, “From Ghetto to Suburb,” 252–272. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. . Zicherman and Stern, *A Framework for Ultra-Orthodox Conscription,* 20–24. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. .Stadler, “Taboos, Dreams and Desires, ” 69–90. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. .Leon, “Is there a Future for the Society of Learners?,” 136–137. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. .Leon, “Social Resources of Popular Religious Music”, 155–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. .Caplan, Kimmy. (2007). *Internal popular discourse in Israeli Haredi society*. Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History. (Hebrew). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. .Asaban and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers*. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. .Leon, “Ethno-religious fundamentalism,” 20–35. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. .Rieder-Indursky, *Invisible Women.* [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. . Asaban and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers,* 15, 39; Caplan, Kimmy, *Internal Popular Discourse*. 245–261. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. .Leon, “Is there a Future for the Society of Learners?,” 135–137. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. .Cahaner and Malach, *Yearbook of Ultra-Orthodox Society,* 50–54. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. . Asaban and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers,* 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. .Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. .Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-Orthodox Men,” 165–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment*; Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-orthodox Men,” 165–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. .King and Gazit, *“An Honorable Living.”* [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. .Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-orthodox Men,” 165–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. . Kalagy and Braun-Lewensohn, *Integrating from Distance.* [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. . Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-orthodox Men,” 165–175. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment.* [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment,* 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment*. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment,* 9–12. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment,* 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. .Cohen and Malach, *Ultra-Orthodox Employment,* 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. .Gebel, *The Agudat Yisrael Workers Movement*. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. . Labor organization is any independent organization that waged workers form for collective action. Its goals are to improve the material, social and political conditions of employees vis-à-vis the employers. At a macro-sociological level, labor organizations form an institution that I refer to as “organized labor.” Labor organizations come in many forms: they may organize on the basis of branch, region, craft, profession, specific workplaces, gender, political or religious belonging, and many others. In this article, I use the term “labor organization” to refer to a general labor organization, such as the Israeli *Histadrut*. I use the term “trade unions” (or simply “unions”) to refer to more specific labor organizations that operate at the national level. In the Israeli context, trade unions are usually a part of the wider labor organization. For example, The *Israeli Social Workers Union* or the *Israeli Transportation Workers’ Union* are both affiliated with the *Histadrut*. A “division” is a subunit of a union. For instance, the *Naval Division* is a subunit of the *Israeli Transportation Workers’ Union*. Labor organization at the workplace level is referred to as “workers’ committees.” An example of an Israeli workers’ committee is the *General Workers’ Committee of El Al Workers*. Workers’ committees must be affiliated with a national labor organization. All these terms appear below in the article. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. .In terms of their hourly wage, the number of teachers employed **unwillingly** on part-time contracts, and other unrecorded violations. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. . Kasir and Tsachor-Shai, *Unionized Workers*. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. .Kay, “Occupational Preferences of Ultra-orthodox Men,” 165–175; Kay, “Pursuing Justice,” 901–911. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. . Marx and Engels, *German Ideology,* Part One. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. .Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. . Weber, *Protestant Ethic*. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. .Katznelson, “Working-Class Formation,” 3–41; Bram and Fischer, “Religion as a Resource for Recognition,” 167–192. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. . Weber, *Protestant Ethic*. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. .Miller, *God at Work.* [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. .Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity.* [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. .Smith-Nonini, “With God on Everyone's Side,” 55–78. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. .Peters and Merill, “Clergy and Religious Persons’ Roles,” 164–177. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. . Flick, “Triangulation,” 444–461. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. .Chase, “Narrative inquiry,” 351–380). [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. .Shutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World*. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. .Geertz, “Thick description,” 3–36. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. .*Balaniyot* are the female attendants of Jewish ritual bathhouses. Womens’ ritual bathing plays a crucial role in the ultraorthodox concept of purity and procreation associated with the Jewish home. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. .Kashrut supervisors oversee that food manufacturers, food stands and restaurants abide by their declared kashrut standards. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. .See [https://www.bhol.co.il/forums/topic.asp?cat\_id=4&topic\_id=3034567&forum\_id=771](https://www.bhol.co.il/forums/topic.asp?cat_id=4&topic_id=3034567&forum_id=771%20%20%20%20%20%20) (Hebrew, accessed September 30, 2020) [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. .The workers’ committee comprised 14 representatives. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. . The Torah is composed of sections called the *Parashot* (singular: *Parasha*). Each week is assigned a Parasha which is read during the Shabat service at the synagauge, in such a way that the reading of all five books of the Torah is completed within exactly a year. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. .The activity of Haredi labor activists is also covered by the daily news website of the Histadrut called Davar1. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. .Shmuel told me this story during two interviews I held with him at the Histadrut headquarters in Tel Aviv, on November 29 and December 14, 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. .The Jewish religious law. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. .After Jerusalem, Bnei Brak is the most important Haredi city in Israel. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. .See <https://www.davar1.co.il/66126/> (Hebrew, accessed October 7, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. .For more details see <https://www.davar1.co.il/66126/> (Hebrew, accessed October 7, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. .This is the explanation given by my interviewee Rivka, a prominent figure in the campaign to improve the *balaniyots*’ employment conditions along with the image of ritual bathing among the Israeli public. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. .The interviewees who told me about close connections between Haredi employers, politicians and rabbis asked for it to stay off-record, therefore I do not cite them. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. .While there are many internal tensions in Haredi society, they are considered acceptable only if they concern matters of faith (*Le'shem Shamayim)*. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. .See <https://www.davar1.co.il/66126/> (Hebrew, accessed October 7, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. .Zicherman, *Black Blue-White,* 287–288. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. .For further details see Zicherman, *Black Blue-White*, 289–295. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. .Robbinson, *Essential Judaism,* 243. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. .While the law forbids laying workers off for their organizing activity, there are ways to bypass this. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. .He refers to the last rabbi of Lubavitch, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. . I assume he refers to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (1880–1950). [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. **.**A *shtiebel* is a small space for communal prayer and gatherings common in Eastern Jewish communities before the Holocaust. By saying that he/she did not want to stay stuck at the *shtiebel*, the interviewee presumably referred to not persevering in old practices without justification; Asaban and Bahar Cohen, *Trailblazers*, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. .A similar case of interest is that of Yigal Guetta, who as a member of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) represented the Haredi-Sephardi Shas party. Guetta was forced to resign from the Knesset after it was publicized that he had attended his gay nephew’s wedding. Although he said that as an orthodox man he does not legitimize homosexuality, he defended his attendance at the wedding, arguing that he would not be estranged to a member of his close family. For details see <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3096719> (Hebrew, accessed on December 3, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
78. .Geertz, *Islam Observed*. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
79. .Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
80. .Brown, *The Haredim,* 67–76. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
81. .Brown, *The Haredim,* 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
82. .Nissim, *Workers’ Committees in the Private Sector*, 259–265. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
83. .Among the Israeli liberal left, there is an anticipation that modern Haredi people will eventually turn into a partner for the construction of a political coalition, alignment, or block. However, the encounters I had in the field taught me that no matter how similar these activists’ views on the economy were to those of the secular left, most of them expressed their unwavering support for Haredi parties and Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister and leader. For further details see Itamar Ben Ami, 2020. Overlooking the New Haredis. *Hazman Hazeh*. (In Hebrew). Accessed December 15th 2020. <https://hazmanhazeh.org.il/benami/> [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
84. .Arar and Shapira, “Veiling and management,” 367–384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595816674745> [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
85. .Swidler, “Culture in Action,” 273–286. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
86. .El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant.* [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
87. .Zicherman, *Black Blue-White,* 249. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
88. . Eisenstadt, “Charisma and institution building,” 1–36. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
89. .Eisenstadt, “Charisma and institution building,” 1–36. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
90. . Shokeid and Deshen, *Predicament of Homecoming.*

**Bibliography** [↑](#endnote-ref-91)