

Traditional Judaism in the Twenty-First Century

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Introduction

The other chapters in this volume are based on well-established and documented historical facts. These facts are subject to the historian's acts of reinterpretation, which refine our understanding of the past, and to the potential, but rare, discovery of new facts. But, for the most part, the past is a known thing, and historians may disagree on the margin, but in general, we have a pretty good idea of what has already happened.

However, describing traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century is an entirely different project, one which presents at least three challenges. First, the twenty-first century is only a decade old, so there are only approximately ten years of developments to report. Compared to the period of the Second Temple, or the Haskalah, there is comparatively little to describe. Second, the twenty-first century is unfolding right now. Its history is being written and rewritten in the acts and writings, and on the Internet forums and blogs, of its participants. It is a moving target. Historians agree about the general contours of the Second Temple period or the Haskalah. But with respect to traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century, it is not yet clear who or what history will deem important enough to remember, and what acts or books – or blogs – will be significant; which of these will future generations deem made history and which they will judge as insignificant, or which they will not judge at all. Third, if the task is to project into the future, and describe what the challenges for traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century will be, and

how traditional Judaism will meet those challenges, then one is in the realm of speculation and guesswork, perhaps educated, informed guesswork, but guesswork all the same. And history has a way of frustrating speculators. But at least the speculator may speculate freely.

Definition: What Is Traditional?

One problem with talking about traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century is defining “traditional Judaism.” The task of definition is important, even if it cannot be done perfectly, because at the start of the twenty-first century traditional Judaism is far from homogeneous. There needs to be some sense of what is in and what is out. After all, all self-describing branches of Judaism claim a “tradition” of some kind. Reform Judaism, for example, often thought of as the least traditional of the forms of Judaism, sees itself in some way as sharing goals and concerns with the biblical, prophetic tradition.

“Orthodox” is a good approximation for “traditional.” The problem with “Orthodox” is that it leaves out those who explicitly describe themselves as “traditional,” but not necessarily as “Orthodox.” “Halakhic” is another plausible approximation of “traditional.” The Conservative movement claims to be “halakhic,” but may have relinquished the right to use that term many years ago. At least one Conservative thinker, Rabbi Neil Gilman, has argued that the Conservative movement should stop calling itself halakhic.

Traditional Judaism might be one of those “we know it when we see it” phenomena. That approach is useful, and may be the best that can be done. But an attempt at greater rigor is worthwhile.

Traditional Judaism can be defined as that which bases its practices, or claims to base its practices, on juridical reasoning about Halakah from primary sources, including the Talmud; the Rishonim, medieval commentators who interpreted the Talmud; *Shulhan Arukh*, Joseph Karo’s sixteenth-century codification of Halakah, and its commentaries; and later authoritative halakhic texts. It is the kind of reasoning lawyers and courts do, but not legislatures. This definition is broad enough to include both the ultra-Orthodox Haredi movements as well as the not ultra-Orthodox Union for Traditional Judaism, both of which would acknowledge that Judaism currently lacks a legislative body, a Sanhedrin, and therefore, both could easily assent to the definition. The definition is also narrow enough to exclude Conservative Judaism, despite Conservative Judaism’s claims to be halakhic. Conservative Judaism proceeds, in no small part, legislatively, through a body enacting new rules and regulations, and often by plebiscite. Orthodox and traditional movements all claim to act only in a juridical manner, deriving legal conclusions from what already exists. None would claim to act legislatively, though some clearly legislate in the guise of legal reasoning. For this reason, it is important

to note the emphasis on the claim to act juridically, and not legislatively. This definition is useful, about as useful as the “we know when we see it” standard, and both will be violated in this chapter when expedient to do so.

A Thought Experiment

One can perform a kind of thought experiment to get a sense of the fragmented nature of traditional Judaism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Imagine a mainstream Orthodox synagogue in the second half of the twentieth century. Its services were more or less like those in any other mainstream Orthodox synagogue (putting aside differences of *nusach*, the order and manner of reciting the service, and *minhag*, local customs and practices). The rabbi would undoubtedly have been a man, usually university educated (even if he did not attend Yeshiva University), and very likely a member of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). A woman would not have been called up for an *aliyah*, to recite the blessing for the reading of the Torah. The sanctuary would have a *mechitza*, or a women’s gallery, separating the men from the women. The congregation probably would have described itself as Zionist, or Religious Zionist. Perhaps American and Israeli flags would have been posted on the *bima* or flanking the *aron kodesh*, the Ark containing the Torah scrolls.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is at least one Orthodox synagogue which claims to have the first Orthodox woman rabbi on its staff. Other Orthodox synagogues call women for *aliyot*, based on the *psaq* (halakhic ruling) of one Modern Orthodox rabbi in Israel. Many Orthodox congregants, owing to the advancements of one generation over the past generation are university-educated professionals. However, for many Orthodox, especially among the Haredim in Israel, and increasingly in the United States as well, any secular education is taboo, or, at best, tolerated, but only to earn a living. Many Orthodox congregations still see Israel as “the first flowering of the Redemption,” while in too many others, the modern State of Israel is viewed with suspicion and sometimes with outright animosity.

Josephus identified at least four factions which comprised Judaism in the first century: Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, and a “fourth philosophy,” which he describes as being akin to the Pharisees, but more politically radical in its opposition to Roman rule. To these four factions one can add the Rabbis, who may or may not have been the heirs of the Pharisees, Zealots, a slightly later development in religious-political affairs, and smaller sects, like the emerging Christians. Each of these groups claimed to be authentic Judaism, representing a continuation of Judaism’s genuine past or the only hope for Judaism’s survival and future. The result of this diversity in first-century Judaism was not, as some might have hoped, a rich and diverse Jewish community, but, as we know from Josephus and other sources, civil war.

Josephus is worth noting at this point, because if one is to guess about the future based on the past, then traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century in many ways resembles nothing as much as Judaism as described by Josephus two thousand years ago. The shattering at the start of the twenty-first century seems again not to be richness and diversity, but perhaps fragmentation and even animosity.

The Center Cannot Hold

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein was, until recently, co-Rosh Yeshiva, with Rabbi Yehudah Amital (d. 2010), of Yeshivat Har Etzion, a *yeshivat hesder* in Israel. Students at a *yeshivat hesder* combine their yeshiva studies with military service, completing their military service in six years, instead of the typical two years. It is an artifact of Religious Zionism. Rabbi Lichtenstein describes his students as not loving Torah study less, but of loving Israel more.

Rabbi Lichtenstein is one of a number of leading Modern Orthodox rabbis, and, at the age of 77 years, is something of an elder statesman and spokesman for Modern Orthodoxy. He is, without doubt, an important Talmudist and a *talmid chacham*, responsible for training many Modern Orthodox leaders both in and out of Israel. His status is in part due to his undiluted commitment to Talmud Torah and halakhic observance. His status is also due in part to his commitment to Religious Zionism, as well as to his appreciation and affection for the Western Canon advocated by Matthew Arnold, as “the best that has been said and thought in the world.” He was a doctoral student of Douglas Bush and is a Milton scholar of some note himself. And, in some part, his status is also due to his association with his famous father-in-law, the leading Orthodox theologian Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, known as the Rav, who served for much of his life as Rosh Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) at Yeshiva University, and as a leading rabbi in Boston’s Orthodox community in the twentieth century. Rabbi Lichtenstein himself is a *musmach* (ordainee) of RIETS.

Rabbi Lichtenstein has all the qualities to be a leading Modern Orthodox rabbi: commitment to Religious Zionism, secular education, extensive Talmudic and rabbinic learning and even brilliance, and one degree of separation from the Rav. He espouses a particularly strong version of Modern Orthodoxy, *Torah u’ Mada*, which means, more or less, a deep commitment to Torah education and practice and an almost equally deep commitment to secular education. He defends absolutely *hokhma ba-goyim*, non-Jewish wisdom and values. In his book, *Leaves of Faith* (2003: 94), he writes “Who can fail to be inspired by the ethical idealism of Plato, the passionate fervor of Augustine, or the visionary grandeur of Milton? . . . There is nothing in our medieval poetry to rival Dante, and nothing in our modern literature to compare with Kant, and we would do well to admit it.” Milton and Dante get additional mentions, as do Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Aristotle, Frost,

Newman, and others. He cites them freely and fluently. Rabbi Lichtenstein's vision of Modern Orthodoxy is heartening to an Orthodox rabbi who is besotted by Dante and finds Kant inescapable. It is a hard core Modern Orthodoxy, which understands the intrinsic value of non-Jewish wisdom, and the inherent significance of the Western Canon. It is also a rarefied Modern Orthodoxy. Most university professors would attest to the difficulty in getting undergraduates to love Dante and Kant, or even to remember something of them after the final exam. Rabbi Lichtenstein wants to build a kind of Judaism on the assumption that all Orthodox Jews take them as seriously as he does. Rabbi Lichtenstein, Paris born and Harvard educated, is both urbane and cosmopolitan in a way that most of his students and admirers are not, even those who claim adherence to, or at least agreement with, his vision of Orthodoxy.

There are other problems with this approach. It is culturally conservative, more in line with the idea of the Western Canon advocated by Matthew Arnold. Few people read Newman any more. And those who read literature and philosophy are more inclined to turn to Jacques Derrida, Paul DeMan, and Michel Foucault, and their postmodern progeny.

The limits of this kind of Modern Orthodoxy can be seen in the following. In 2009, the Israeli publisher Koren published a new siddur (prayer book) under the imprimatur of the American mainstream Orthodox Union, more commonly known as the OU, the people who declare Oreos kosher. The English translation and commentary are by the English Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, who was educated at Cambridge, Oxford, and Kings' College London. The commentary includes references to Orthodox authorities, like the Rav, as well as to non-Orthodox and even non-Jewish thinkers, like the English philosopher Sir Bernard Williams, an avowed atheist. The Koren-Sacks siddur also includes prayers for Israeli Independence Day, *Yom Yersushalayim*, as well as prayers for the Israeli Defense Forces and the Israeli government. Modern Orthodox Jews embraced the Koren-Sacks siddur enthusiastically, and saw it as an alternative to the ubiquitous Art Scroll siddur, which is seen by some as Haredi propaganda.

The siddur ticks off all of the items on the Modern Orthodox checklist: Religious Zionism, extensive, secular education, Talmudic and halakhic commitment, and invocation of the Rav. However, it raises another issue. Rabbi Sacks, to be sure, is a first-rate scholar, a *talmid chacham*, and an Orthodox rabbis' rabbi. But in producing a siddur for American Modern Orthodox congregations, the *American* Orthodox Union turned to an *English* rabbi for his translation and commentary. This fact suggests (i) that a rabbi of sufficient *secular* erudition and resources, along the lines which Rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks live, cannot be found in America; (ii) the appeal of hard core Modern Orthodoxy is limited; and (iii) it may be a phenomenon limited to the Anglophone world, which includes Anglophones living in Israel, and their children, often identified as *Dati'im* ("Religious").

The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, was a genius of the first order, *sui generis*, and a unique master of both Talmud and Halakah, as well as modern philosophy.

Without a doubt, he was Jewish giant in the twentieth century. The twenty-first century has yet to produce someone of his stature for Orthodox Judaism. He has become a marker or signifier of Modern Orthodoxy. By association with the Rav, one establishes one's Modern Orthodox bona fides. The Rav was Modern Orthodoxy at its best, and it is as if that through any association with him, one is Modern Orthodox as well. This syllogism applies to Yeshiva University and its RIETS seminary, with which the Rav was associated for much of his life. This is not to suggest that rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks, or any of a number of Modern Orthodox leaders have not earned their achievements honestly. But the Rav remains a reminder of a time when there was one person, a spiritual tent in which dwelled *Torah u' Mada* so completely. For Modern Orthodoxy to thrive in the twenty-first century, Modern Orthodox thinkers will need to let the Rav take his place among the greats of the past, and create a space for the next generation of great Modern Orthodox rabbis and thinkers, the next generation of Modern Orthodox *gedolim*. One problem that Modern Orthodoxy faces, at the cusp of the twenty-first century, is that though there are many Modern Orthodox Jews (even if they haven't read the *Divine Comedy*, or mastered the *First Critique*), Modern Orthodox institutions – Yeshiva University, the OU, and the RCA, have been politically naive and haven't tried hard enough to promote Modern Orthodoxy. These failings allow for the creation of a space in the Orthodox world for competitors to rise.

There is a deeper issue lurking within the Modern Orthodoxy of rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks. Dante and Kant, and the rest of the Western Canon, are part of a world view of Western Humanism and Enlightenment. One place this world view leads to is egalitarianism. In this worldview, Jews are not special or "chosen," and ultimately women are as good as men. Both of these principles can come into conflict with Orthodoxy generally, but more importantly into conflict with specific halakhic practices. It is a blind spot in Modern Orthodoxy not to see that this is a place where Milton, Dante, and Kant lead. Indeed, the question of feminism has become perhaps the major issue facing Orthodoxy in the twenty-first century.

I Ordained a Rabba, and (Almost) No One Cared

In June 2009, Modern Orthodox Rabbi Avi Weiss, of Riverdale, the Bronx, New York, confirmed (but not ordained) Sara Hurwitz as Maharat, a Hebrew acronym for the unwieldy designation which translates as "Halakhic, spiritual, and Torah leader," a neologism designed to confer the idea of "rabbi," but not the title. In February of 2010, Rabbi Weiss changed the title to rabba, the feminine form of rabbi, effectively ordaining Sara Hurwitz, who it is now claimed, became the first Orthodox woman rabbi. She serves as rabba of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

and as Dean of the Yeshivat Maharat, an institute founded by Rabbi Weiss to train future Orthodox women rabbis. The course of training undertaken by Rabba Hurwitz and the students at Yeshivat Maharat is, according to Rabbi Weiss, identical to the rabbinical training received by students at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT), an Open (not “Modern”) Orthodox Yeshiva, also started by Rabbi Weiss to promote his vision of “Open Orthodoxy.”

Whatever the halakhic justifications adduced by Rabbi Weiss for the ordination of women, it is clear that the practice is a break from all Orthodox practice of the past, and from mainstream Orthodox practice today. Both the mainstream Modern Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Haredi Agudath Israel condemned Rabbi Weiss for his actions, stopping short of stating that practice was contrary to Halakah. (Graduates of YCT are not admitted to membership in the RCA.) After that, they left him alone, watching carefully to see what his next step will be. The ordination of an Orthodox woman rabbi is not without some precedent in Modern Orthodoxy. Orthodox women are qualified as *yoatzot*, halakhic advisors on matters of family purity, and as *toanot*, attorneys-at-law who represent parties before rabbinic courts in Israel. But these are limited jurisdictions, and none have taken a title “rabbi.” These positions for women have remained largely uncontroversial within Modern Orthodoxy. Even Rabba Hurwitz’s clerical activities, according to Rabbi Weiss, will be circumscribed. She will not officiate at weddings or be a witness, cannot be counted toward a minyan, and she cannot be a *dayan*, rabbinic judge, all activities clearly prohibited to women by Halakah.

A few years prior to the ordination of Rabba Hurwitz, an Israeli Modern Orthodox Rabbi, Mendel Shapiro, published a *tshuva*, responsum, arguing through some halakhic jiggery pokery that it is halakhically permissible for women to be called for *aliyot* and to read from the Torah in an Orthodox synagogue, provided other necessities of Orthodoxy (for example, a minyan of ten men, a *mechitza*) are in place. Mainstream Modern Orthodoxy rejects Rabbi Shapiro’s opinion, finding it to be legislation in the guise of *psaq*. Indeed, the practice has not yet found a home at Rabbi Weiss’s own synagogue in the Bronx, New York. However, it has found acceptance on the far frontier of Modern Orthodoxy, in the establishment of so-called “partnership minyanim,” and in even in some Hillel Houses on university campuses.

What motivates this openness to a kind of “halakhic feminism,” and Rabbi Weiss’s “open Orthodoxy” generally, is, at its best, a moral sense. To the extent the moral question is one for the community, it becomes a political matter as well. It is, in this view, immoral to disenfranchise half of Orthodoxy from greater participation in Jewish communal life, especially when that half, the women within Orthodoxy, have notable achievements in Torah study and observance to its credit. It is important to note that Rabba Hurwitz, and likely those who will come after her, exhibit behavior that is neither flaming nor radical. Rabba Hurwitz is married and she covers her hair, as many married Orthodox women do. The moral sense behind this kind of Orthodox extends to a greater interest in liberal, social, political issues as

well, and it is not unusual for a YCT student to be politically engaged, typically in liberal causes.

This version of Orthodoxy has one advantage over classical Modern Orthodoxy. Most Modern Orthodox rabbis, those who received their *smicha* from RIETS, for example, tend to take positions in Modern Orthodox synagogues and schools. Graduates of YCT, perhaps because their career options are more limited, take positions in community organizations, non-denominational Hebrew schools, and Hillel Houses. In other words, they take the positions that many Modern Orthodox rabbis do not. This fact gives them broad exposure within the Jewish community, amplifying their influence beyond their numbers.

“Open Orthodoxy” (a term which has not yet achieved widespread usage) tries to solve the moral dilemmas within the framework of Halakah. It is for this reason that Rabbi Shapiro’s responsum on women’s *aliyot* has resonated strongly with some. It is an attempt to find a way for the Halakah to accommodate the sense that there is something wrong with not giving women *aliyot*.

This approach is different from looking to Halakah for moral guidance, something Jews have been doing for millenia. For example, Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik, brother of the Rav and an important rosh yeshiva in Chicago in his own right, vigorously opposed the Vietnam war, especially after the bombing of Cambodia, as contrary to Halakah. The Rav, on the other hand, was more generous in his acceptance of a war against Communism. Many Modern Orthodox Jews continue to support a variety of political causes, often citing halakhic reasons for their involvement.

However, Rabbi Weiss and his ilk are convinced that when a political or moral intuition conflicts with Halakah, a space can be made within Halakah to accommodate it. The problem is that sooner or later, the two will conflict without accommodation. Returning to the question of feminism, Rabba Hurwitz, even if she gains greater acceptance within the Modern Orthodox community, will never be counted for a minyan or be a *dayan*. Halakhic accommodation to moral and political sensitivities is asymptotic. They will never meet, or be congruent. And if Halakah is infinitely malleable to accommodate any possibility then either it stops being Halakah, or it becomes legislation. “Open Orthodoxy” needs to decide what it will do at the limits of Halakah and morality, whether it will continue to be a halakhic movement or not.

The Union for Traditional Judaism

The Union for Traditional Judaism was created by the more Orthodox wing of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary when JTS began ordaining women. Rabbi Shaul Lieberman, a great Talmudist and Orthodox rabbi and professor at JTS wrote a *tshuva* forbidding the ordination of women. After his death in 1983, JTS

started ordaining women. Rabbis David Halivni (an Orthodox Chaim Berlin graduate), Haim Dimitrovsky, and Jose Faur, among others, left JTS. The result was the Union for Traditional Judaism (UTJ) a “transdenominational” movement committed to Torah and halakhic observance. Indeed, there is, in principle, little in the stated “Declaration of Principles” of the UTJ that many ultra-Orthodox would find objectionable. Traditional Judaism is, in some ways, congruent with Modern Orthodoxy. Some of its rabbis, Rabbi Alan Yuter for, example, rabbi of an Orthodox synagogue in Baltimore, studied for and received Orthodox ordination, after leaving JTS. The UTJ maintains its own seminary, headed by Rabbi Halivni, and its own rabbinical organization. Rabbis affiliated with the UTJ are also among the most important academic rabbis in North America. For example, Rabbi Halivni is Littauer Professor of Talmud and Classical Rabbinics at Columbia University. Rabbi David Novak teaches philosophy at the University of Toronto.

The UTJ deserves mention because of the curious way history sometimes works. The very reason for the existence of the UTJ is Rabbi Lieberman’s objection to the ordination of women. Yet, Rabbi Weiss, a Modern (or “Open”) Orthodox rabbi has ordained a woman. What was at one time the most conservative of the Conservative movement has leapfrogged the most liberal wing of Orthodoxy. At least in this one area, Traditional Judaism is more “Orthodox,” than at least one form of Orthodoxy, though it remains to be seen whether its position on ordaining women will shift.

Traditional Judaism comes across as a small, quiet movement, but it has some promise. Rabbi Halivni is a recognized *talmid chacham*, at least by those who measure such things by true scholarship. In some ways, Traditional Judaism is very much like mainstream Orthodoxy of the twentieth century, and may appeal to many traditional Jews who don’t feel quite at home in Orthodox or Conservative Judaism – if they only were to know more about it.

Haredim: Men in Hats

Haim Amsalem, is a rabbi and former Israeli Member of Knesset for the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi Shas party. He is the author of several important works on the Talmud and Halakah. Indeed, during his time with Shas he was the only Shas MK who was also a rabbi. In November of 2010, Rabbi Amsalem stated in interview in the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, that perpetual, lifelong learning in *kollel* is not for everyone, and that Haredi schools should teach core subjects, like math and language skills, that would enable Haredim to enter the workforce. He also said that Haredim should serve in the IDF and should work for a living to support themselves and their families. To many outside the Haredi world, Rabbi Amsalem’s proposals were immoderate only to the extent that they didn’t go far enough. To Haredim they were heresy.

The religious leadership of Shas immediately responded to Rabbi Amsalem's remarks by demanding that he surrender his seat in the Knesset. The Haredi press called him a thief and a heretic, and compared him to Amalek, the ancient enemy of the Israelites. He was blamed for the drought which has plagued Israel in recent years. In response, Rabbi Amsalem has repudiated Shas, and now sits in the Knesset as an independent.

The "Amsalem Incident" encapsulates some key features of Haredi life in Israel, and by comparison, outside of Israel and in the United States. These features are a rejection of modernity, a commitment to an ideology of *daat torah* (see below), and an unsustainable in its present state, indeed, failing, economic model for its communities.

The original Haredim, sometimes called ultra-Orthodox, were those Orthodox Jews who rejected the advances of modernity and the Enlightenment, by refusing all engagement with modernity, and even rejecting participation in the *Torah u'Mada* worldview of Modern Orthodoxy. In some cases, in Eastern Europe, modernity was not an option for Haredim because Jews were persecuted and forced to live in ghettos. In other cases, again especially in Eastern Europe, modernity took a particularly anti-Jewish, antireligious form, such as Marxism, making any engagement with it particularly unappealing for many Orthodox Jews. As a result, Haredim generally reject any non-Jewish education, which they see as a threat to the integrity of Orthodox belief and lifestyle. Many Haredim also have a distrust of non-Jewish government. This distrust can be traced back to the hatred of the Tsarist, and later Communist, governments, but now includes even the government of the State of Israel, which is viewed as fundamentally anti-religious. They are not technological Luddites, but many reject computers and the Internet because the Internet is a gateway to the non-Jewish world. However, some Haredim have compromised with the Israeli government, and the Agudat Israel and Shas parties represent Haredi interests in the Knesset, and in fact carry considerable political weight.

Haredim generally subscribe to an ideology called *daat Torah*, roughly, "Torah belief." This belief system entails a complete commitment to the Torah. What distinguishes it from other versions of Orthodoxy is that Torah is expressed through the words of recognized *gedolim*, not merely great rabbis or greatly learned persons, but elder Haredi leaders. It is as if the Hasidic rebbe and the Lithuanian rabbi have merged into this new character, the Haredi *gadol*. Pronouncements of *gedolim* are taken as absolute; they are true and their commands must be followed as authoritative declarations of Torah intent and belief. Often, the pronouncements are bare, and differ from classic Responsa, which were reasoned, and subject to reasoned critique. The pronouncements of *gedolim*, though said to be expressions of genuine Torah-based ideology, come close to the legislative. That is, rather than deriving the opinions from established sources, the pronouncements amount to new rules and regulations for the Haredi community. But *daat Torah* involves a degree of false consciousness, or at least self-deception. The Haredi community,

which thinks of itself as the most religiously conservative, may in fact be breaking with tradition and embracing what is in reality a new legislative method, with a self-appointed legislature of *gedolim*.

Rabbi Amsalem's disagreement with the religious leadership of the Shas party was seen by many Haredim as heretical precisely because he went against *daat Torah*, in publicly disobeying the pronouncements of *gedolim*, in both his criticism of Haredi lifestyle and education, and in his refusal to surrender his Knesset seat when ordered to do so by *gedolim*. Pronouncements made in the name of *daat Torah* are often fundamentalist in nature and antimodern.

Haredim are like snow. To the untrained eye, all snow is alike. But to the experienced Eskimo tracker, there are differences in snow, its texture or color, that make a world of difference. One difference, as noted above, is that some Haredim participate in Israeli politics, while others reject the modern State of Israel, going so far as to make common cause with some of Israel's enemies. Haredim also include Hasidim and Mitnagdim, a distinction which may be lost on some, but which is important in Orthodox life.

The differences among Haredim can be seen in the following incident. Both the Neturei Karta and Satmar Chassidim are Haredim. They reject modernity and Western values. They condone only the most minimal non-Jewish education. Both groups are actively anti-Israel and anti-Zionist. But the Neturei Karta are Mitnagdim ("opponents"), those whose customs and practices derive from the early opponents of Hasidism, mostly descending from Lithuanian emigres to Israel in the early nineteenth century, but with no part in the building of the modern State of Israel in the twentieth century. Satmar are Hungarian Hasidim. In December 2006, a delegation of Neturei Karta attended a Holocaust revisionist conference in Tehran. They posed for photo ops with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. To be sure, none believed that the Holocaust was a fraud, and indeed many lost family members in the concentration camps. But the Neturei Karta's hatred of Israel compelled them to make common cause with one of Israel's enemies. (The Neturei Karta has in the past also sought relations with Arafat, the PLO, and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.) Soon thereafter, Rabbi Zalman Leib Teitlebaum, one of the current pretenders to the leadership of the Satmar community, issued a scathing indictment of the Neturei Karta, instructing his Hasidim to distance themselves from them. The Satmar condemnation of the Neturei Karta was published in *Der Yid*, a Satmar newspaper in New York, and posters condemning the Neturei Karta were, for a while, plastered on walls in Bnei Brak and Mea Shearim, Israel's largest Haredi communities. As a result, Satmar have withdrawn from anti-Zionist protests because of the presence of Neturei Karta.

In Israel, according to a 2010 study by the independent Taub Center for Social Policy Studies, 65 percent of Haredi men are unemployed, relying largely on extensive state welfare. According to recent US Census data, only 4.5% of the residents of 25 or older of Kiryas Yoel, a largely Satmar enclave in upstate New York, hold a bachelors degree. Over 60 percent do not own a car. The median income

is \$18,000. To be sure, in the United States and Europe, Haredim fare somewhat better than in Israel. Many receive some form of secular education or vocational training, and some American Haredim, more those aligned with Agudat Israel than with Satmar or Neturei Karta, even go on to professions like accounting and law. Yet, with prolific families, overall low employment, and limited education, the Haredi world is facing an economic crisis. This crisis has been offered as one explanation for the incidence of financial crimes committed by Haredim in recent years.

Rabbi Amsalem's remarks involve another level of complication in the Haredi world. Rabbi Amsalem is a Sephardi, and the Shas party is a Sephardic political party. Yet, the Haredi world and its institutions and ideas are foreign to Sephardim. There is no native Sephardi Haredi culture. Yet Sephardim and Shas are increasingly aligning themselves with Haredim of Eastern European origin.

In 2010, the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of a Hasidic Haredi girls' school in the town of Emanuel. Sephardi students were separated from their Ashkenazi classmates. A fence separated the Sephardi girls from Ashkenazi girls during recess. The Hasidic parents and administration of the school reported to jail rather than abide by the Court's order to desegregate. They claimed that the Court was taking a first step into regulating Haredi religious education, and would fight such intrusion to the end. Remarkably, the leading Sephardi Rabbi in the world, Ovadia Yosef, sometimes called the spiritual head of Shas, sided with the Haredim, and supported school segregation. The desire to be seen as "Sephardi Haredim" was so strong that Rabbi Yosef condemned his own son, who called for desegregation, as well as Rabbi Amsalem, who also supported desegregation of the Emanuel school. The existence of "Sephardi Haredim" can be traced back to the influence of Ashkenazic yeshivot on the Sephardic population in Israel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In part, it is an artifact of Rabbi Yosef's political agenda, to align Shas with Haredi political clout. Whether this phenomenon has staying power, or whether there will be a Sephardi backlash to it, remains to be seen.

It is in this context that Rabbi Haim Amsalem stated that Haredi education needs to prepare Haredim to work and support themselves. However, the Haredi world saw Rabbi Amsalem's remarks as a capitulation to modernity, and as a threat by the "heretical" and Zionist government to interfere with Jewish life and Jewish education, as an opening to introduce an alien culture into the Haredi world.

In the twenty-first century, Haredim need to face economic reality. The current culture of economic dependence and unemployment cannot be sustained. Haredim need basic education and they need to work. They also need to face political reality. Within Israel, there is growing sentiment, among both Orthodox *dati'im* and non-Orthodox, that the state cannot and should not continue to support the Haredi community with extensive welfare. Haredim and their leaders need to change, because the status quo cannot be maintained.

And Then There's Chabad

Chabad-Lubavitcher Hasidim find themselves between a rock and hard place. To many non-Orthodox, Chabad is Haredi, because their observance is strict and they wear hats. But within the Haredi world, Chabad is heretical. Chabad supports Israel. Lubavitch Hasidim reach out to unaffiliated Jews. They have comparatively high levels of education and employment. They use the Internet. Yet, they are really not Modern Orthodox. Chabad can legitimately be called another branch of Orthodoxy. Much has been made in recent years about Chabad messianism. To a large extent the controversy has died down, with Chabad leadership taking steps to purge the most die-hard messianists from the larger group.

The paradox of Chabad can be traced back to the movement's early days in America. The then rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson, came to America in 1941. He escaped from Russia, where he was persecuted and arrested, going to Warsaw and fleeing again one step ahead of the Nazis. But it did not take him long to realize that America was not like Russia or Poland, and that it offered unique opportunities.

In September 1944, Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson published an open letter to Jewish American servicemen. After offering them words of encouragement, he tells them that they, in the armed services, have an opportunity to perform a mitzva "rarely afforded to a civilian." That mitzva is "to love they neighbor like thyself." He goes on to explain that serving in the armed forces forges bonds of camaraderie through shared ideals, experiences, and dangers. This bond with one's comrade-in-arms is an opportunity to help him "spiritually and materially." It is a stunning statement. After the time of the Maccabees, military service was an anathema to most Jews. Certainly, conscription into the Russian army, Tsarist or Communist, was a fate to be dreaded. But Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson rejected the anti-American sentiment of many Eastern European rabbis. To see military service as an opportunity for religious growth would have been unthinkable to Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson's forebears, but he saw a difference.

When Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson signed his US citizenship papers he wore a traditional Hasidic fur hat for the occasion. When his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, took over as leader of Chabad-Lubavitch in 1951, he dispensed with the fur hat, and put on a fedora. The Hasidim followed. Since that time, photographs show generations of Lubavitch Hasidim looking dapper in natty suits and snappy fedoras – more Humphrey Bogart than Tevye the Milkman.

It was under Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Rebbe, that Chabad became an international institution. The Rebbe was worldly in ways that most Hasidic leaders were not. He was educated in Berlin and Paris. At least according to one story, possibly apocryphal, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson visited and stayed with Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in Berlin, while the former was auditing

courses and the latter was studying philosophy. One reason the story has such currency is that it invokes the thought that the man who would become the Rebbe and the man who would become the Rav, roomed together, even if only briefly. In any event, in 1937 the Rebbe would earn a degree in electrical engineering from ESTP, one of the Grande Ecoles, an engineering school in the Montparnasse district of Paris, and would later study at the Sorbonne until he had to flee France from the Nazis. During the war he worked as an electrical engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yards.

It is by now commonplace to point to the success of Chabad Lubavitch in the thousands of institutions it has established around the world. But this success has roots not only in the Rebbe's unique background – for a Hasidic leader – but in his appreciation of the American experience and modernity. Indeed, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that had the Rebbe not been a rebbe, he might have been described as Modern Orthodox.

English Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks went to Cambridge to study economics and philosophy. But he credits the Lubavitcher Rebbe with telling him to become a rabbi. According to Rabbi Sacks, the Lubavitcher Rebbe wanted leaders, Orthodox leaders of all kinds, and not just Hasidim. In a more startling example, Rabbi Haim Dimitrovsky, an Orthodox rabbi and professor of Talmud at the Conservative JTS, asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe whether he should remain at JTS. The Rebbe told him he should, as long as Rabbi Shaul Lieberman was also there. Despite the caveat concerning Rabbi Lieberman, it would be hard to imagine any Orthodox leader today taking the same position, in part because both the Conservative and Orthodox movements have changed, but in part because of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's unique appreciation for what a modern, and American, Orthodox Judaism needed.

Many Chabad *shluchim*, emissaries, take positions in small towns and on college campuses where they are often the only Orthodox Jews, and sometimes the only Jewish institution in the area. They reach out to unaffiliated Jews. But as much as they have an effect on other Jews, other Jews also have an effect on them. They encounter non-Orthodox people and ideas. Their children are often not raised in Orthodox neighborhoods, and spend their formative years exposed to world which is not Orthodox, and sometimes not very Jewish at all. As a result, many Chabad Lubavitch Hasidim are more aware and tolerant of, if not quite open to, the larger world, than other, more secluded Hasidic sects.

Chabad has shown a remarkable ability to succeed in the years since the death of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It has learned to function as an institution, governed by a board and directors, and not by a single charismatic leader. If Chabad is to continue in the twenty-first century, then it must first deal with any latent messianism firmly and finally. Furthermore, it has to continue to recognize the diversity of traditional Judaism. But, moreover, it cannot forget the adaptability to and insight into modernity that its leaders showed in the past.

Who Wins?

It is apparent to us that of the four factions Josephus described two thousand years ago, the Pharisees won. Rabbinic thought after the destruction of the Second Temple derives from the Pharisees, and Judaism today, in one way or another, is Rabbinic Judaism. For the reasons for the success of the Pharisees, see the chapters in this volume by Werlin, Pearce, Secunda, and Galambush.

Each aspect of traditional/Orthodox Judaism today has points of appeal, but also genuine problems. And, each thinks it is right. The greatest problems are perhaps faced by the Haredim, because their problems are economic. Their way of life cannot sustain itself materially. The differences between the versions of Orthodoxy existing today will undoubtedly compete, and there will be a winner. But history is, by definition, unknowable, and it remains for time and the next generation of historians to determine who wins in the twenty-first century.

References

Aharon Lichtenstein has set out his ideas in many books and scholarly articles, including *Leaves of Faith: The World of Jewish Learning* (Jerusalem: Ktav, 2003), as well as in a number of interviews and articles in *Jewish Action*, the popular magazine of the Orthodox Union.

Further reading

Tova Hartman is a leading feminist Orthodox writer. See her *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism: Resistance and Accommodation* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2007).

Heilman, Samuel C. and Friedman, Menachem M. *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Jonathan Sacks has written over twenty books setting out his view of Orthodox Judaism. In addition to his translation and commentary to the *Koren-Sacks Siddur* (Jerusalem: Koren Press, 2009), see *Arguments for the Sake of Heaven* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1991), and *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002).

Mendel Shapiro (2001) *Qeri'at ha-Torah* by women: a halakhic analysis, *The Edah Journal*, 1(2).

Alan J. Yuter's thoughts can be found at UTJ Viewpoints, www.viewpoints.utj.org (accessed November 24, 2011).

There are many books on Haredim, but the best insights into the Haredi world come from their own publications, such as the newspapers *Hamodia* and *Yated Ne'eman*, both of which publish English editions, and neither of which have websites.