Ideologically Justified Violence among Israel's Haredi Society

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the Israeli press occasionally reports on various sorts of violent acts taken by Haredi Jews and aimed at other Haredi individuals or groups. These acts range from slander, discrimination, threatening, and banning, to damaging private property, stoning, and even physical violence. Unlike regular crimes, the perpetrators of these acts of violence justify their actions for ideological and religious reasons, insisting they are only doing what is right in God's or their rabbi's eyes. This article reviews the history of ideologically justified violence in Jewish history in general and in Eretz Israel in particular. This review reveals that the rising number of such incidents, as well as their spreading to more Haredi groups, indicates that in Israel, particularly since the late twentieth century, Haredi society has adopted ideologically justified violence as a legitimate tool to enforce its social and religious norms.

Keywords: Haredi society; ideologically justified violence; religious zealotry; social control mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

A comparative study based on data gathered in Israel in the second decade of the twenty-first century revealed that the number of Haredim who reported being offended by crimes of a personal nature, including theft, robbery, fraud, physical violence, threats, and sexual abuse, was about 30 percent lower than that of the average Jewish citizen. This despite the fact that the number of victims from among the Haredim who approached the police was some 30 percent higher than average. Moreover, the Haredim are also the sociological group

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that is most appreciative of police efficiency.[1] These figures support the claim of some Haredi representatives that compared with the rest of Israeli society, the crime rate among Haredim is so low they do not need a police station in their cities, towns, or neighborhoods.[2]

This article, however, does not deal with crime in general, nor with "ordinary" violent crimes, but with a special type of violence, one that is justified by ideological reasoning and that is, therefore, more tolerated by the Haredi society.[3] The term "violence" in this article is used in its broader sense and includes various forms of aggression ranging from slandering, discrimination, threatening, and banning, to stoning, beating, and damaging private property. Violence, in this context, also refers to the forgiving manner in which Haredi society regards ideologically justified offenses.

The source and excuse for ideologically justified violence is the biblical story of Pinchas (Phinehas). Pinchas was the son of Elazar, the high priest, and the grandson of Aharon, Moses' brother. During their travels in the desert and just before arriving at the promised land, many Israelite men had sexual encounters with local Moabite women, which led them to worship the Moabite deity. As this sinful behavior spread, God instructed Moses to take the leaders of the people and impale them before Him to assuage His wrath. In response, the Israelites cried before Ohel Moed [Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting], either over the imminent bloodbath or over the plague which was raging through the camp.

At this stage, an Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to meet his brethren. He then took her into his tent, presumably to consummate the relationship. Pinchas, outraged by this public act, threw a spear at the couple, impaling them in an act of uncontrolled zealotry. Immediately thereafter, the plague, which had been raging in the camp, stopped, leaving 24,000 dead. Later, God praised Pinchas for turning back His wrath from the Israelites and granted him a covenant of peace and the pact of the priesthood as a reward:

> The Lord said to Moses. Pinchas, son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to the Israelites in my zeal. Therefore, tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.[4]

Despite the initial understanding that the couple was slain because of their blatant violation of relations with foreign women, later, the Bible

says that Moses, who himself was married to a Midianite woman, permitted intermarriage with virgin girls from that tribe.

The rabbinic interpretation of the story struggles with the lack of judicial process on the part of Pinchas. Jewish tradition is perceived as being very strict in matters of evidence and procedure when it comes to the laws of capital punishment. Pinchas's spontaneous, unilateral, extrajudicial execution goes against such principles of justice. The Babylonian Talmud defends Pinchas by suggesting that he remembered the oral law that one who has sexual relations with an Aramean woman is to be executed by a zealot.[5] The Jerusalem Talmud, in contrast, does not give Pinchas the benefit of the doubt and says that if not for the word of God, which came to his defense, Pinchas should have been excommunicated.[6]

Because of God's praise, because according to the Biblical text Pinchas continued to play several significant public roles, because according to some interpretations he was also a prophet, and because many could identify with his instinctive response, Pinchas became the ultimate symbol of Jewish zealotry. This type of violent, zealous reaction, which goes against the standard norms of justice and tolerance, is justifiable because it is conceived as representing God's will. This reasoning is what zealots in the following generations relied on when they turned to all sorts of violent actions.[7]

IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN JEWISH HISTORY

The Bible records numerous acts of ideologically motivated violence aimed at Jews. This type of violence played a significant part in the First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE), which led to the destruction of the Second Temple and the massive expulsion of Jews from Eretz Israel. Later on, Eretz Israel still maintained the zealous tradition in a few locations for several centuries, particularly in the Galilee.[8]

In the diaspora, things were different. Because Jews were dispersed in many locations and because their social status was far lower than that of the locals, they needed to stick with one another and refrain from internal controversies. The first significant case of a religiously justified attack on a Jew was the strict objection to Maimonides's philosophical tracts in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This controversy lasted for several decades, and according to one tradition, Maimonides' rivals even asked the local authorities to burn his books.[9] Some of the rivals suffered a backlash when they were threatened or even banned by other rabbis. The collection of letters from rabbis who came to Maimonides' defense was titled *Letters on Zealotry*.[10] A few other books that bore the title zealotry

[*kana'ut*] were printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and condemned individuals who acted against the standard religious norms.[11]

The next major case of public condemnation of other Jews occurred only in the seventeenth century, following the spread of the Sabbatian movement. The anti-Sabbatian campaign continued after Shabbtai Zvi himself converted to Islam and persisted for many decades after his death.[12] Here, again, one book dealing with this affair was titled *The Knowledge of Zealotry*, while another book, which attacks a Sabbatian rabbi, is titled *A Letter on Zealotry*.

At the end of the Middle Ages, as Jews gained higher social status as well as greater freedom in running their communities, acts of zealotry, particularly in the form of bans and excommunication, became more prevalent. This was manifested in the excommunication of Uriel Da Costa and Baruch Spinoza in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, and also in the continuous struggle against the new Messianic movement of Jacob Frank in the eighteenth century.[13]

A new and far more significant intra-Jewish controversy began in that century between the traditionalistic Jews, led by Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilnius (The Vilna Gaon), and the newly established movement of Hasidism.[14] The division between the Hasidim and their opponents (*Mithnagdim*) continued in the following generations to this day.[15] The harsh controversy between these two movements was manifested in many social sanctions such as the boycott of the Hasidic community; banning the meat slaughtered by a Hasidic *shohet* (ceremonial slaughterer); objecting to the opening of Hasidic prayer halls; and informing the authorities on the Hasidim's wrongdoing.

Nevertheless, the spreading of physical violence occurred mainly within the Hasidic community itself when one group, the Breslev Hasidic court, was castigated as moving astray from the "right" Hasidic path. The first wave of attacks on Breslev Hasidim began in the first decade of the nineteenth century, while a second and more violent wave occurred in the late 1830s. Unlike the Hasidim–Mithnagdim dispute, the hostility towards the Breslev Hasidim included many incidents of physical violence, which even included death threats.[16] The attack on Breslev Hasidism was resumed in the 1860s when, on top of the other means of violence, youngsters broke into their study halls and besides the "regular" beatings also ruined their holy books.[17]

ZEALOTRY IN ERETZ ISRAEL IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first Hasidic group arrived in Eretz Israel in the mid-eighteenth century, led by Rabbi Avraham Gershon of Kitov, the son-in-law of

the Besht (acronym of Ba'al Shem Tov), the founder of the Hasidic movement. Other Hasidic groups followed in the coming decades. The objection to Hasidism, which had previously existed only in Europe, spread to Eretz Israel, and the Hasidim were driven out of the main Ashkenazi concentrations in Jerusalem and Safed and were forced to settle in other locations.

Due to Hasidism's decentralized nature, each Hasidic group was led by a rebbe, who followed his own interpretation of the principles of Hasidism. This situation led to intra-Hasidic controversies, one of which erupted in Eretz Israel in the late eighteenth century. Rabbi Avraham Ha-Cohen of Kalisk, who at that time was considered the foremost Hasidic leader in Eretz Israel, accused Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the author of the *Tanya*, later the canonic text of the Chabad movement, of going astray from the Hasidic path. Here, also, the followers of Rabbi Shneur were forced out of Tiberias and had to move to Hebron. These eighteenth-century controversies were manifested by sociological and economic sanctions but did not deteriorate into physical violence.[18]

This was not the case in the nineteenth century, when, in addition to the Hasidim-Mithnagdim and intra-Hasidic controversies, a new fault line emerged. During this century, the number of Jews in Eretz Israel grew eightfold from 7,000 to 56,000, and many of the newcomers were Ashkenazim.[19] Most of Eretz Israel's Ashkenazi men in that period dedicated a large portion of their time to prayer and the study of Torah and Kabbalah. This communal lifestyle, characterized by a total commitment to observing Jewish laws, was known as the Old Yishuv. Although women and children helped sustain their families, most of the Old Yishuv's families were dependent on donations. These were collected in specific locations (a country, a region, or a city) and distributed in Eretz Israel to those who came from that territory. This type of charity was known as a Kollel.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, new types of communal life emerged in Eretz Israel. With the rise of the Enlightenment movement in Europe and its Jewish manifestation, the Haskalah movement, Ashkenazi maskilim began settling in Eretz Israel. Despite strictly observing the religious commandments, they pursued a more modern lifestyle, provided for their families rather than relying on charity, and sought to educate their children broadly rather than limiting them to traditional religious studies. Since one of Jewish Orthodoxy's main principles is that "Everything new is forbidden by the Torah," the modern lifestyle was castigated as "the New Yishuv," indicating that it was going against the spirit of true Orthodoxy.[20]

The early clashes with the New Yishuv occurred in the 1850s following the establishment of a girls' and later a boys' school in which,

on top of traditional Jewish education, the students were taught general studies as well. In Jewish tradition, women were barred from any advanced religious studies, and men were expected to dedicate all their spiritual energy to the study of the Torah. During that period, it was common for Jewish women in Central and Eastern Europe to go to work and help support their families. To better prepare them for this task, many Orthodox families, especially those living in cities, hired private teachers for their daughters or sent them to state schools.

Because of the Old Yishuv's conservative outlook, its Ashkenazi leaders objected to the new Jewish schools, and most of its students were Sephardi girls whose parents and rabbis held to a more tolerant worldview. When these leaders heard of the opening of a modern school for boys, they threatened the Ashkenazi parents who wished to send their sons there that their Kollel allowance would be stopped and attacked the school's managers. The result was that, as in the case of the girls' school, here, too, most of the schoolboys were Sephardi.[21]

ERETZ ISRAEL AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The period that began in the early 1880s and ended with World War I (1914–1917) significantly changed Jewish life in Eretz Israel. The spread of Jewish nationalism in Eastern Europe led to two waves of immigration, later known as the First and Second Aliyahs. The first wave, which began in 1882, was inspired by the Hibat Zion movement, whereas the second, which began in 1904, was related to the Zionist movement established in 1897.

The 60,000 immigrants who arrived during that period changed the social and cultural composition of the Jewish population in Ottoman Palestine. This was manifested in several ways. First, according to Ottoman law, only Sephardi Jews and rabbis could hold formal civil status and positions. At the same time, the local administration tolerated the Ashkenazi Jews, but they were accountable only to their respective consulate offices. This led to numerous controversies between the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi leaders and communities.[22] Second, the sharp rise in the number of Jews drove them outside of the old Jewish quarters, and they either established neighborhoods outside of Jaffa and Jerusalem or founded new agricultural colonies. Third, until that period, most Jews could be supported by the donations collected by the Kollels. Now, most Jews had to go to work to support themselves. This ultimately led to increased settlement options and more employment for the next generation of immigrants.

The fourth and most crucial change concerning our topic was the religious composition of the newcomers. Up until the first Aliyah, Jewish newcomers were primarily motivated by religious reasons. They were all observers of the halacha, and upon their arrival they adhered to the strict religious conduct of the communities they joined. Although religious Jews still came in large numbers in the first two Aliyahs, some of them held to a much more modern outlook than their predecessors. However, unlike in previous periods, many newcomers no longer felt a strong commitment to the traditional religious way of life. Instead of religion, they adopted new ideologies such as socialism or Zionism. Consequently, following their settlement in a town or village, communal life was no longer as homogeneous as it had been before. This resulted in controversies related to the religious nature of the public lifestyle, the communal education system, and the relationship between the observant and non-observant Jews.[23]

The tension between the more tolerant elements among observant Jews and the more fundamentalist elements escalated following the arrival in Jerusalem of Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Leib Diskin in the second half of the 1870s. He, together with his wife Sonia, established an opposition to the hitherto united Ashkenazi leadership. They founded rival social and religious institutions, including a separate rabbinical court, a yeshiva, a Kollel, and an orphanage. They also contested Rabbi Shmuel Salant's authority, who until then was considered the Old Yishuv's foremost leader. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both Rabbi Diskin and his wife, Sonia, were considered Eretz Israel's first true zealots.[24]

One example of their zealous conduct occurred in the late 1870s. Rabbi Yechiel Mikhal Pinnes was appointed a representative of the Moses Montefiore Foundation in Eretz Israel. Despite his traditional upbringing and conservative education, Pinnes adopted a modernistic worldview and supported the settlement of Jews in Eretz Israel, the establishment of agricultural colonies, and the opening of modern schools. He, consequently, decided that children in the orphanage he was hired to manage would be better prepared for independent life by teaching them non-Jewish vernaculars.

In response, some of Jerusalem's zealots, backed by the Diskins, slandered and even issued a ban calling for his excommunication. Although the ban was not approved by many of the town's rabbis and was eventually revoked, the general atmosphere was that a "good" Ashkenazi Jew should not send his children to modern schools nor support such institutions. To demonstrate his disapproval, Rabbi Diskin opened his own orphanage in which the children were taught a profession but were not exposed to general studies.[25] In order to

disseminate their zealous outlook, Rebbitzin Sonia Diskin published a newspaper that promoted their zealous outlook and attacked those whom she considered their ideological opponents.[26]

Although Rabbi Diskin passed away in 1898, his wife, with the help of his disciples, continued the anti-modernistic line into the early twentieth century. During that time, as the number of Jews in Eretz Israel continued to rise, so did their religious variability, and the controversies between them escalated. Various social and economic events in the first decade of the twentieth century caused the deterioration of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, which was unable to unite under a single leadership as Rabbi Salant grew older.

The problems escalated even further after the arrival of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook in 1904 and his appointment as chief rabbi of Jaffa and the new Jewish colonies. His favorable attitude toward the New Yishuv stood in sharp contrast to that of the Old Yishuv's rabbis, which led to several controversies. The death of Rabbi Salant in 1908 also sparked a series of controversies among the rabbis in Eretz Israel. The sharpest of these occurred in 1910 over the issue of *shemita*, which involved many rabbis both in Eretz Israel and abroad. The controversy was manifested by the issuing of various bans, the publishing of polemic broadsides, and personal slandering.[27]

The controversies within the Old Yishuv and between the Old and the New Yishuv continued in the following years. Consequently, when World War I broke out in 1914, Jerusalem's Old Yishuv, which was weakened by the prolonged disputes, was undermined, and many of its members either fled or died of hunger, disease, or the atrocities of the war.[28]

THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE HAREDI MAINSTREAM AND THE HAREDI RADICAL CAMP

Although all the Jews suffered greatly during the war, those who immigrated from Hungary, which consisted of about one-sixth of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, suffered less than others. Before the war, Jews in Hungary enjoyed considerable economic and social prosperity. Consequently, the Hungarian Kollel became the richest charitable institution in Eretz Israel and was even able to build its own neighborhood, which offered almost free accommodation to hundreds of families.[29]

During the war, the Ottoman and Russian empires were enemies fighting with each other. Consequently, funds raised for the Kollels in Russia, which were crucial for the survival of the Old Yishuv, could not be transferred to Eretz Israel, which was under Ottoman influence.

Hungary, on the other hand, fought on the same side as the Ottomans, so its Kollel continued to receive funding from abroad, and a few years into the war it became the primary source of support for all members of the Old Yishuv.[30]

In November 1917, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour declared Britain's commitment to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine. A few weeks later, Britain conquered Palestine, and the League of Nations awarded it the mandate to govern it and to execute its pro-Jewish policy. These developments boosted Zionist activity worldwide, particularly as the British authorities recognized the Jewish Agency, which was controlled by secular Ashkenazi Zionists, as the formal representative of the Jewish people. Non-Zionist Agudat Israel, which feared that the Zionists would assume total control of the local Jewish leadership, decided to establish its own operation aimed at encouraging the settlement of Haredi Jews in Palestine.

Unlike their Ottoman predecessors, the British Mandate authorities recognized the right of all religious groups to have their own leadership and institutions. Since the Ashkenazi Zionists constituted a majority among the Jews, they founded and led the national Jewish institutions. While most Zionists were secular, the religious Zionists (both Sephardi and Ashkenazi) were represented by the Mizrahi movement. It established a separate religious educational system and Eretz Israel's Central Rabbinate, headed by a chief rabbi from both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities.

Since the Jewish community in Jerusalem was the largest, the British authorities allowed it to establish its own governing bodies. The council they established comprised representatives of various Jewish groups, and around one-third of the seats were reserved for Old Yishuv delegates, the same number as those allocated to the Zionists. Motivated by political considerations, the Old Yishuv formed an opposition bloc along with some other non-Zionists, and when Jerusalem's General City Council (Va'ad Ha-Ir Ha-Klali) was founded, they established the smaller Ashkenazi Community Council (Va'ad Ha-Edah Ha-Ashkenazi). Although initially, both Haredi and non-Haredi participants were involved in the Ashkenazi Council, following internal disputes the non-Haredi delegates withdrew, and the Council remained in the hands of the Old Yishuv.

The leaders of the Ashkenazi Council were two of the Old Yishuv's most prominent rabbis—the 80-year-old Lithuanian Rabbi Yitzhak Yeruham Diskin, who had arrived in Eretz Israel in 1908 to succeed his father, and the 71-year-old Rabbi Yosef Haim Sonnenfeld, the foremost leader of Jerusalem's Hungarian Jews. Since Rabbi Sonnenfeld was the more dominant of the two, he was able to lead this

small organization in the Hungarian separatist fashion and eschewed any cooperation with the Zionist organizations. Seeking to make the Ashkenazi Council an independent social and political entity unrelated to the Zionist organizations, its leaders operated on several fronts. They established a separate rabbinical court that backed the decisions of Rabbis Diskin and Sonnenfeld, thus granting them greater authority and highlighting the fact that the Ashkenazi Council had ignored Palestine's official Central Rabbinate.

In 1919, Rabbi Kook was declared not only Palestine's but also Jerusalem's Ashkenazi chief rabbi. In response, the Old Yishuv challenged the appointment, and in April 1920 it declared that Rabbi Sonnenfeld, not Rabbi Kook, was the city's chief rabbi. The attacks on Rabbi Kook, which included a series of polemic sideboards and booklets, became more vehement, and all attempts to reconcile the parties, including those made by leading East European rabbis who visited Eretz Israel, failed.[31]

Seeking to present itself as a separate political entity, the Ashkenazi Council adopted a more moderate stance toward the Arab population, in contrast to the more militant approach taken by the Zionist authorities. Israel Yaacov De-Haan, an assimilated Dutch journalist, poet, and lawyer who, after arriving in Palestine became Haredi, promoted these stands and negotiated on behalf of the Ashkenazi Council with both British and Arab leaders. Since the British authorities sought to maintain a division among the Jews, particularly concerning the Arab Question, they backed the Old Yishuv's quest for semi-autonomous status, thereby ensuring that the Jews would not speak with one voice. In 1924, De Haan was assassinated, but his legacy, namely leading a separate and often provocative diplomatic policy regarding the Arabs, is still a cornerstone among contemporary Neturei Karta.[32]

In order to promote their separatist ideology, leaders of the Old Yishuv established their own newspaper, *Kol Israel*, which expressed the views of all non-Zionist Haredi factions.[33] In time, the Old Yishuv also founded separate schools for boys and girls, educating them to keep their distance from other sorts of Jews. Keeping the separation (hitbadlut) principle was so important that when the Gerer Rebbe, who headed the largest Hasidic court in Europe, visited Eretz Israel in 1927 in the hope of mediating between the country's two Orthodox camps, he was publicly condemned for his meeting with Rabbi Kook.[34]

Overall, of Palestine's roughly 80,000 Jews, around ten percent belonged to the separatist Haredi organization. While it seemed that the Old Yishuv managed to reinforce its independence, other events

reversed this process. In the late 1920s, tensions between Jews and Arabs intensified, and during the riots of 1929, many Jews, including many Old Yishuv members, were murdered. Since Haredi Jews did not have the means to defend themselves, they had to rely on the Zionist self-defense organizations for protection. At the same time, due to increased antisemitism in Europe, and since it was utterly dependent on the Zionist organizations for immigration certificates, Agudat Israel was forced to expand its cooperation with the Zionist movement.[35]

A new wave of attacks on Rabbi Kook occurred during Purim of 1932 when a group of youngsters exhibited a play in which Rabbi Kook was put on trial for his "moral sins" and was sentenced to death. Later that year, Rabbi Kook was prevented from delivering a sermon at an important rabbi's funeral. He was also condemned for sending a congratulatory letter to the Maccabi sports organization's convention in 1933.[36] In 1932, Rabbi Sonnenfeld passed away. Agudat Israel took this opportunity to put into place a more moderate leadership, one that would suit its own agenda, and in 1933 appointed Rabbi Yosef Zvi Dushinsky, a Hungarian rabbi who since 1923 had served on Agudat Israel's Council of Sages.[37]

Although Rabbi Dushinsky maintained the separatist orientation of the Old Yishuv, unlike Rabbi Sonnenfeld, and despite his radical views on many topics, he was pragmatic and cooperative on matters concerning the vital interests of the Jewish people and their right to settle in Palestine.[38] His noncompromising outlook was manifested in his ruling against more modern education for Haredi girls in the new Beit Ya'acov and Horev schools.[39] While both institutions operated under Agudat Israel's supervision, they adopted a more open approach to general studies and taught their students in Hebrew rather than in Yiddish.

Rabbi Dushinsky also ruled that fathers who sent their daughters to these "modern" schools would be ineligible for election to any office in the Edah Haredit, the name given in the late 1930s to the former Ashkenazi Council.[40] He furthermore opposed the Haredi Hebron and Etz Haim yeshivas, castigating them for being too modern.[41] These decisions exacerbated the tension between the moderate and the more radical members of the Haredi public, which eventually resulted in a split within Eretz Israel's Haredi Jews.

Starting in the early 1930s, with the rise of antisemitism in Europe, the restrictions on Jewish immigration to the U.S., and the improved economic conditions in Palestine, Haredi Jews, particularly from Germany and Poland's large cities, migrated to Eretz Israel in greater numbers. These newcomers were reluctant to live according

to the Old Yishuv's strict religious regulations or to depend on charity for their livelihood. Instead, they settled in the new Jewish towns and cities, opened their own businesses, or worked in their former occupations. They were perfectly content to live and work alongside other types of Jews, be they observant, traditional, or secular, as they had been accustomed to doing prior to their immigration. Although they sought to maintain a strictly observant lifestyle and to grant their children a Haredi education, they were loath to detach themselves from the general Jewish society.

Over time, Agudat Israel's leadership came to realize that an increasing number of Haredim were shunning the Edah Haredit's separatist demands. Consequently, in the mid-1930s, it dispatched a delegation to Palestine that separated the two organizations, each with its own leadership. Consequently, the Edah Haredit continued to represent the Old Yishuv's more radical camp based in Jerusalem, while the newly established leadership of Agudat Israel represented the more tolerant Haredi society in the other Jewish towns.

The tension between these two camps increased significantly following the establishment of Neturei Karta in the late 1930s, as it criticized Agudat Israel for its lenient and compromising policies. In 1945, Rabbi Dushinsky, who feared for the future of the Edah Haredit's separatist ethos, ruled that a large group of Agudat Israel supporters was ineligible to participate in the general election to the Edah's institutions. Consequently, Agudat Israel lost the election and broke away from the Edah Haredit, which, since then, has been controlled by Neturei Karta.[42] In the ensuing years, Neturei Karta and the Edah Haredit sought to underscore their strict anti-Zionist worldview and to confront Agudat Israel's more compromising stands. This resulted in a growing number of public attacks and protests, both against the secular Zionists and against the Haredi mainstream's passive stands. These confrontations were covered regularly by Neturei Karta's newspapers.[43]

The Edah launched a series of demonstrations in which they protested the fact that religious children who survived the Holocaust were placed in non-religious kibbutzim and educational institutions in which they were encouraged to adopt a secular lifestyle.[44] They also protested the opening of a public pool in Ramat Gan that catered to both men and women;[45] the use of radio instruments;[46] and against the Zionist institutions in general.[47]

Neturei Karta protested against some of the Old Yishuv rabbis and accused them of collaborating with the "Zionist establishment." For example, they protested against the leadership of Etz Haim, the Old Yishuv's foremost yeshiva, for inviting Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank, who headed the Central Rabbinate's court, and Rabbi Yaacov Moshe

Harlap, who headed Merkaz Ha-Rav, a yeshiva that was known for its pro-Zionist outlook.[48] They also protested when Rabbi Yitzhak Eizik Herzog, Palestine's chief rabbi, was invited to deliver a sermon in the Mea Shearim yeshiva, another important Old Yishuv establishment.[49]

Rabbi Dushinsky, who headed the Edah Haredit after the split, set out the fundamental guidelines by which the Edah should relate to Zionism and subsequently to the State of Israel. These included a total renunciation of Zionism, refusal to cooperate with its institutions or to accept financial benefits from them, and rejecting the incorporation of general studies in any of the Edah Haredit's educational institutions.[50] He furthermore forbade Haredi men and women to serve in the military, even during the siege on Jerusalem in the war of independence in 1948.[51] Rabbi Dushinsky died in October 1948, a few months after the establishment of the State of Israel.

In interwar Europe, religious zealotry was sometimes accompanied by physical violence, both against lay Jews and prominent rabbis. In Eretz Israel, however, such incidents were rare. This, however, was about to change after the establishment of the State of Israel.

RELIGIOUS ZEALOTRY IN NEWLY BORN ISRAEL

The establishment of the State of Israel is one of the most significant events in the history of the Jewish people and its religious tradition. Nevertheless, the fact that a predominantly secular government was leading Israel had far-reaching religious and practical consequences for its observant citizens. At the same time, because of its democratic worldview, and unlike almost all other foreign governments in the past that regarded Jews in general and observant Jews in particular as second-degree natives, the Israeli government regarded all Jews in the same manner. Moreover, after the Holocaust, the Haredi community was considered a relic of the past, an endangered species that should be protected. Thus, for example, Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, decided to exempt a few hundred Haredi yeshiva students from military service.

Neturei Karta soon realized the weaknesses of the democratic system and exploited it to demonstrate the gap between their uncompromising anti-Zionist outlook and that of mainstream Haredi parties that joined Israel's first governments. During the state's first years, they launched a series of demonstrations in protest of cars driving through their neighborhoods on the Sabbath.[52] Later, other topics motivated their protests. In the early 1950s, they demonstrated against bus companies that commenced their activity before the Sabbath was over; against hospitals that performed autopsies

for medical or forensic reasons;[53] and particularly against the government's stricter policy when discharging religious girls from the otherwise compulsory military service.[54] They also protested against the separate state-funded Haredi independent education system;[55] and the decision of the head of the Mea Sharim yeshiva to stop anti-Zionist leaders from giving sermons there.[56]

In 1954, Neturei Karta demonstrated against a kindergarten located near Jerusalem's Haredi neighborhoods. It was established by the Working Mothers' Association to enable more women to work and support their families. Neturei Karta claimed that because the kindergarten hosted both boys and girls, it was a place of promiscuity and sought to close it, despite it serving many Haredi mothers. The demonstrations became aggressive, and on several occasions, the protestors blocked the road and stoned the passersby and the police.[57] Eventually, the kindergarten was moved to another location.

Prior to the general election of 1955, the Satmar Rebbe came to Israel to express his view that voting for the Israeli parliament was a cardinal sin, even when voting for the Haredi parties. Most other Haredi leaders in Israel were members of Agudat Israel, which was not only an ideological movement but also served as a political party. As a result, clashes broke out between students of the Satmar Yeshiva and students of other Hasidic yeshivas, and in several instances ended by mutual beatings and stoning.[58]

Demonstrations continued in the second half of the 1950s as Neturei Karta demonstrated against: the government's decision to send Jewish children who came from Morocco without their parents to continue their education in the secular kibbutzim;[59] against construction works in places suspected as old Jewish burial sites;[60] and against a Purim parade in Jerusalem.[61] In one instance a protestor suffered a heart attack and died during the demonstration. Consequently, Neturei Karta launched a series of aggressive demonstrations, blaming the police for killing him.[62]

Throughout this decade, Neturei Karta launched hundreds of demonstrations of various kinds. These protests sometimes deteriorated into violent acts, such as throwing stones and other objects at the police or the passersby. Rarely, however, did Neturei Karta use violence against another Haredi group or individuals. This, however, was to change in the coming decades.

THE EXPANSION OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

In 1958, Israel celebrated its first decade of independence. During that period, it had become a prosperous, modern, and democratic state.

It won the 1956 Sinai campaign and opened its doors to almost one million immigrants, many of whom were Holocaust survivors.[63] This meant that Israel overcame the many challenges it faced after its establishment and that it was not going to disappear as some Haredi leaders had anticipated. Although prior to its establishment Haredi leaders had feared that the Zionist regime would suppress religious life, time proved them wrong.

During that decade, the government supported the establishment of many Haredi neighborhoods and institutions and financed the independent, non-governmental Haredi education system. The majority of the Haredim shared the patriotic spirit of the new state, and most Haredi men served in the Israeli army.[64] The fact that mainstream Haredi society looked favorably on the state and cooperated with its institutions frustrated the leaders of the Edah Haredit and Neturei Karta who did everything in their power to condemn Haredi leaders for compromising on their religious principles. Eventually, this frustration also led to violent incidents in which zealous Haredim targeted mainstream Haredi leaders.

In late 1957, the Jerusalem municipality announced the opening of the city's first public pool. Because it was to serve both men and women, Neturei Karta claimed that this promiscuous atmosphere would diminish Jerusalem's holiness. They consequently launched a long series of demonstrations that often evolved into physical confrontations between the protestors, the passersby, and the police.[65]

Due to the gravity of this topic and after a prolonged period of non-involvement, Agudat Israel decided to organize its own demonstration. Unlike the demonstrations of Neturei Karta, which attracted only a handful of protestors, this one managed to assemble some 20,000 participants. Neturei Karta was unhappy with the fact that Agudat Israel threatened their exclusiveness in organizing protests, and a few of their members physically attacked Knesset Member Menachem Parush who had organized the demonstration, and he needed to be hospitalized.[66]

The Edah Haredit and Neturei Karta launched another series of violent attacks against the followers of Rabbi Yekuthiel Yehuda Halberstam, the leader of the Sanz-Klausenberg Hasidic court. Despite losing his wife and eleven children during the Holocaust, he managed to overcome his personal tragedy and establish the largest rescue operation for Orthodox survivors in the displaced persons camps established in Germany after the war. This gained him a reputation he had never enjoyed before, and following his settlement in New York, he established a prosperous Hasidic court. This success, however, led him to confront Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe. Before the Holocaust, Rabbi Yoel, who was the brother of

Rabbi Halberstam's late father-in-law, was also his spiritual patron. Now, in the early 1950s, despite both leaders having substantial Hasidic courts in New York, they also sought to establish branches in Israel. Both Rabbis Teitelbaum and Halberstam recognized that they could not establish a separate Hasidic neighborhood in Jerusalem, and both sought alternative potential locations. One such place was the city of Natanya, which had a small community of Haredi Jews of Hungarian descent. Natanya was also a center of the diamond industry, and Haredi workers could easily find work there.[67]

Eventually, Rabbi Halberstam took the initiative and had a series of meetings with top Israeli officials who assisted him in promoting his plan. The cornerstone for the new neighborhood was laid in 1956, and a few years later Rabbi Halberstam and the first families moved in. Both the establishment of the Hasidic neighborhood in Natanya and Rabbi Halberstam's success in the U.S. drove the Satmar Rebbe to attack the rabbi and his Hasidim, which responded in a counterattack.[68] Following Rabbi Halberstam's meetings with Israeli leaders, and especially after his photographed encounter with Ben-Gurion, members of Neturei Karta and the Edah Haredit physically attacked the settlers of the new neighborhood, and painted graffiti in the Jerusalem synagogue in which Rabbi Halberstam was invited to prey and deliver a sermon.[69]

Another intra-Haredi controversy evolved in the early 1960s, this time on a far larger scale. Since the first elections, the two Haredi political parties, Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel, have either run under the same list or separately, yet have fully cooperated with each other. In 1952, in protest of what they considered anti-religious legislation, both parties decided to leave the coalition. In 1960, however, Poalei Agudat Israel decided to rejoin the coalition despite a clear decision by Agudat Israel's Council of Sages that forbade this move. This resulted in an open dispute that was manifested in both the public sphere through the two parties' newspapers, the publication of broadsides, and oral slander, as well as in rivalries between members of the same synagogue, yeshiva, and even within the same family. At times, as the debates heated, the conflicts even turned to violence.[70]

In 1961, a group of Neturei Karta members broke into the Etz Haim Yeshiva building, the foremost educational institution of the Edah Haredit, and defaced its walls with black paint. This act was undertaken to protest the yeshiva leaders' decision to accept municipal funds for renovating the thirty-year-old building.[71]

In 1963, a local intra-Hasidic controversy developed within the Viznitz Hasidic court in Bnei Brak when a group of young and zealous yeshiva students criticized their superiors for their lenient outlook. The youngsters, referred to pejoratively as "the deferred,"

(nidahim) were ousted from the community and eventually settled in Jerusalem, where they established their own community. The Viznitz community leaders ordered their Hasidim to sever all contact with them, and when they showed up in Bnei Brak they were attacked, sometimes violently, until they were chased away.[72]

Another intra-Haredi controversy erupted in the second half of the 1960s between the two most radical organizations, Neturei Karta and the Edah Haredit. Because the Edah, a far larger organization, had to provide for its members' necessities, such as water, electricity, sewage, gas, postal services, telephone, and public transportation, it was compelled to collaborate with either national or municipal authorities. Such cooperation was required even to maintain the Edah's separate functioning; for example, it required formal permits to run its separate slaughtering house, rabbinical court, or burial services. They also needed permits for building their institutions or registering their real estate properties.

Neturei Karta, which objected to even a minimal level of cooperation with the state or the city's authorities, criticized the Edah's leaders, accusing them of compromising on their principles. In the mid-1960s, the Edah leaders had an opportunity to launch a counterattack. This occurred after Amram Blau, Neturei Karta's undisputed leader, decided to marry Ruth Ben-David, a good-looking French convert twenty years younger than him.[73] Edah Haredit's campaign against the two getting married was long and bitter, although it did not involve physical violence. Blau and Ben-David were eventually married but were ousted from Jerusalem for a few months. When they returned, Blau's tarnished public image continued to deteriorate until he died in 1974.[74]

THE ROUTINIZATION OF INTRA-HAREDI VIOLENCE IN THE 1970s–1980s

During the 1970s, Israel's Haredi society lost some of its most prominent leaders who had accompanied it for many decades. The new leadership that emerged rejected the former concept of Haredi Judaism and sought to advance a more reclusive form of Haredi ideology. Moreover, these new leaders faced new challenges, particularly the spread of a more progressive and unrestrained lifestyle that evolved in America in the 1960s and arrived in Israel a decade later.[75] These changes were accompanied by a growing number of ideologically justified acts of violence.

In 1970, Neturei Karta broke into Kol Torah yeshiva, which was known both for its relatively modern outlook and for admitting

American yeshiva students who studied there for a year or two before returning home to begin their academic studies at the university. They protested the yeshiva's invitation of a delegate from Israel's immigration office who convinced the students to make Aliyah and to remain in Israel.[76] In those years Neturei Karta resumed the activity of the "chastity brigades" that sought to enforce strict modesty standards in the Haredi neighborhoods.[77] In 1971, yeshiva students violently broke into a Neturei Karta meeting and viciously hit a participant who had condemned Agudat Israel's rabbis as being too lenient.[78]

A significant development in the use of verbal violence occurred in 1972 following a halachic decision made by nine rabbis on behalf of Israel's official grand rabbinical court. Most Haredi rabbis regarded that ruling as wrong and accused the other rabbis of compromising on religious principles to appease the Israeli authorities. The main target of the onslaught was Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Shlomo Goren. Until then, despite previously serving as the IDF's chief rabbi, Rabbi Goren was greatly respected and was acknowledged as a great rabbinic scholar by most Haredi rabbis. This attack, however, was so vicious that the entire Haredi society stopped recognizing him as a trustworthy halachic authority. The attack reached its peak when Rabbi Goren received a false bomb envelope that contained a threatening letter.[79] The man who orchestrated the attacks was Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach, the head of the prestigious Ponevezh yeshiva. In the following decades, he, more than anybody else, propagated the use of violence in Israel's Haredi society.[80]

A much broader controversy erupted in the early 1980s. Until then, the Belz Hasidic court adopted a strict anti-Zionist policy and, apart from voting for the Knesset, promoted a separatist ideology similar to that of the Edah Haredit. This meant that it refused to accept any state or municipal funding or real estate assets, a fact that slowed its development. At that time, the court's leaders decided to part ways with the Edah and agreed to receive state support for their institutions. This decision eventually turned Belz into one of Israel's largest and most influential Hasidic courts. The Belzer Rebbe's decision, however, was unacceptable, both to the leaders of the Edah Haredit who accused him of betrayal, and to the Satmar Hasidim in the U.S., who held a similar worldview as the Edah. The result was a series of attacks, both verbal and physical, on the Rebbe and his Hasidim, both in Israel and during his visit to America, during which he even needed police protection. The attackers also published polemic books and broadsides, and the controversy, although it subsided after a few years, was only concluded many decades later.[81]

Another noteworthy case of violence occurred in 1984 after Menachem Parush, a Knesset Member representing Agudat Israel,

disregarded the Gerer Rebbe's demand to vacate his seat to another delegate. Parush implied that because of his mental condition, the 86-year-old Hasidic leader was not qualified to make such a decision. A few Gur Hasidim who regarded his remark disrespectful broke into the hotel that Parush owned in Jerusalem. They caused damage to the hotel's synagogue and attacked Parush, who required a few days in the hospital to recover.[82]

A new type of violent controversy emerged in the mid-1980s—succession disputes. Such disputes were quite common in pre-Holocaust Europe and often involved all sorts of violent behavior. In Eretz Israel, however, they were not very common, and once they erupted, they were usually resolved in a peaceful compromise. Unlike the situation in Israel's early years, in the 1980s the number of members in each Haredi group or institution grew, and so did the prestige and influence of that group's leader. Consequently, the motivation for succeeding such leaders grew.

In the mid-1980s, for instance, a dispute arose between two individuals who sought to lead Neturei Karta. The group's first and undisputed leader was Amram Blau, who passed away in 1974 and was succeeded by his friend and colleague Rabbi Aharon Katzenelbogen, who died in 1978. Following his death, a controversy emerged between Blau's son, Uri, and Moshe Hirsh, Katzenelbogen's son-in-law.[83] The rift between the two parties escalated, and by the mid-1980s both sides began slandering each other, with each party publishing its own journal. The result was a split within Neturei Karta, and while one group continued to belong to the Edah Haredit, the other left it. This conflict also resulted in several physical confrontations and even in one party damaging the other party's yeshiva.[84]

Another vicious confrontation occurred during that period, following Rabbi Shach's decision to part ways with Agudat Israel and lead his own non-Hasidic organization and political party, Degel Ha-Torah. Rabbi Shach established his own daily newspaper and used it to slander his opponents, including Agudat Israel's newspaper, *Ha-Modia*. Since both Haredi newspapers competed for the same readership, and since each needed to attract advertisers, this soon deteriorated into a full-blown economic war that, at times, also led to physical confrontations. This was manifested, for example, when Rabbi Shach's car was smeared with slandering graffiti and a police car was called to guard his home after he received a few threatening calls.[85] The publisher of a new independent Haredi newspaper, *Tsofar*, which reported and criticized the growing violence within the Haredi community, was himself a victim of harassments and violent attacks.[86]

As the rising level of violence within the Haredi society expanded during the 1980s, it also affected the non-Haredi society. A radical underground organization titled Keshet launched a series of attacks against those considered enemies of the Haredi public. These included several archeologists who were accused of performing excavations in former Jewish burial sites, pathologists who performed autopsies, and activists who opposed religious coercion. The attackers also tarnished the headstones of Zionist and Israeli leaders, torched bus stops that carried indecent advertisement pictures, and planned to bomb newsstands that sold non-Haredi newspapers.[87]

At the same time, the chastity brigades, which used to publish posters calling for greater modesty standards among Haredi women, began acting more violently. For example, they torched a Bnei Brak shop that sold secular books and newspapers, threw a hand grenade into a sex shop in Jerusalem, and violently attacked Haredi couples whose behavior they deemed "an offense to moral norms."[88]

A controversy that erupted in the mid-1980s turned intra-Haredi violence from a rare phenomenon that occurred in small and remote communities into a daily routine. The Ponevezh yeshiva is regarded as the premier educational institution, and its students are considered the elite of Haredi society. Since its establishment in the late 1940s, the yeshiva has acquired not only a worldwide reputation but also many real estate properties. Despite being led by three heads of the yeshiva, they have reached a mutual understanding among themselves. However, in the 1980s, as Rabbi Shach sought to become the foremost Haredi leader, he also wished to become the leading figure in the yeshiva and to supervise the appointment of its new teachers. Consequently, students who adhered to one head of the yeshiva began slandering and physically attacking those who admired another leader. In 1984, one head of yeshiva found a threatening letter attached to his apartment's front door that was smeared with crude tar.[89] In the following years, conflicts erupted every few months ending with violent brawls among dozens of students.[90] In 1988 large graffiti demanding the resignation of one of the yeshiva leaders attracted the attention of the non-religious media to the prolonged intra-Haredi violent dispute.[91] Rabbi Shach's attacks against his colleagues in the Ponevezh yeshiva continued well into the mid-1990s.[92]

HAREDI VIOLENCE AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1977, following the victory of the right-wing parties in the elections, Agudat Israel returned to the coalition 25 years after it had left it. In return, it received substantial financial support for its institutions and

education system, which allowed it to expand both demographically and to dictate a far stricter Haredi lifestyle. Consequently, if in 1977 Haredi society was represented by four Knesset members, by 1988 it already had thirteen delegates. Because the Haredi representatives controlled substantial budgets that could significantly impact the fate of various Haredi groups, the boundary between politics and ideology became even more blurred than it had been before.

Rabbi Shach, who led the Lithuanian, namely the non-Hasidic community within Agudah, was not happy with the fact that, on the one hand his camp was considered the Haredi society's elite, and the religious standards it set compelled all other Haredi groups to follow them, but at the same time, the Lithuanian camp was also the smallest in size and thus enjoyed less political representation. In 1985, Rabbi Shach left Agudat Israel and established a separate political party titled Degel Ha-Torah. However, in the 1988 election it only won two seats in the Knesset, while the other Haredi parties won eleven. This failure, which compelled Rabbi Shach to cooperate with the other Haredi parties, prompted him to strengthen his political power by targeting those he considered his opponents. These included his opponents from the Lithuanian camp, prominent Hasidic leaders, and leaders of Shas, the newly established Sephardi-Haredi party. Although Rabbi Shach never instructed his followers to use any form of physical violence, he was reluctant to condemn those who took such actions.

Rabbi Shach considered any Haredi leader who was not willing to comply with his full authority to be an opponent worthy of condemnation in the strongest terms. For example, he did not hesitate to confront the Gerer Rebbe, who headed Israel's largest Hasidic court. In 1990, his students sent threatening letters to the leader of the Viznitz Hasidic court, Israel's second-largest Hasidic group.[93] Rabbi Shach also had an ongoing confrontation with Chabad and its leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, also known as the Lubavitch Rebbe. Although this controversy began in the early 1980s,[94] it was intensified in the 1990s when, at a certain point, Rabbi Shach even suggested that Chabad was no longer a legitimate Orthodox group.[95]

In the 1990s, he also intensified his opposition to Poaley Agudat Israel, the smaller and more liberal Haredi party, which he considered a threat to Haredi society. As in previous years, the party celebrated the liberation of eastern Jerusalem in the Six-Day War. Influenced by Rabbi Shach's condemnation of such events, Haredi activists warned the organizers that they had planted a bomb, and the hall was evacuated until the police inspected it.[96] Another target for Rabbi Shach's attacks was Shas, the Sephardi Haredi party, and its leader, Israel's former chief rabbi Ovadia Yosef. Because Rabbi Shach had played a

substantial role in establishing this movement, he expected to become its prominent spiritual leader. When the party decided to separate itself from the Ashkenazi hegemony and to appoint Rabbi Ovadia its foremost leader, Rabbi Shach was furious and attacked the party's leaders in general and Rabbi Ovadia in particular.[97]

Rabbi Shach continued his attacks against many Haredi leaders, including top Lithuanian rabbis such as Haim Kanievsky, Dov Landau, the head of the Slobodka Yeshiva, and Shmuel Wozner, head of the Hakhmei Lublin Yeshiva.[98] His attacks on Rabbi Binyamin Yehoshua Zilber were so fierce that Rabbi Zilber had to leave his hometown of Bnei Brak.[99] Since the use of verbal and physical violence became so prevalent among the followers of Rabbi Shach, who was the foremost Haredi leader, it is no wonder that various acts of violence spread to other parts of that society. In 1991, Knesset Member Menachem Parush was once again a victim of Haredi violence when a hand grenade was thrown into his hotel following his allegedly insulting another Haredi head of yeshiva.[100]

Although Rabbi Shach himself was a non-Hasidic rabbi, his use of violence inspired Hasidic groups as well. Such was the case with the Hasidic community of Makhnovka, which in the early 1990s began referring to itself as the Belz-Makhnovka court. This new title was not well received by the "original" Belz Hasidim, who began a series of attacks against those whom they considered imposters. In 1995, they even attacked the Belz-Makhnovka Rebbe himself, damaged his car, and demolished his study hall.

In the late 1990s, as Rabbi Shach was getting older, a fierce controversy erupted between the remaining two heads of the Ponivez yeshiva. The students split into two rival camps titled "the haters" and "the terrorists," and the numerous clashes between them often ended with physical violence. Despite numerous attempts to settle the controversy, it remained unresolved, and violent eruptions have occurred every few months since then.

Physical violence also occurred against non-Haredi citizens. The focal point of these confrontations was Jerusalem's Bar-Ilan Street, a major transportation route that crossed several Haredi neighborhoods. Haredi men protested against those who drove there during the Sabbath. They shouted and cursed, and on several occasions stoned cars and even tried to beat the drivers. These weekly scenes lasted for several years until other transportation routes became available. Unlike the "Shabbat demonstrations" of the 1950s and 1960s, which were carried out by a small number of participants who belonged to Neturei Karta and the Edah Haredit, the violent protests of the 1990s were joined by thousands of mainstream Haredim from nearby neighborhoods. [101]

IDEOLOGICALLY JUSTIFIED VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL'S CONTEMPORARY HAREDI SOCIETY

In the twenty-first century, Israel's Haredi society, as a collective, adopted ideologically justified violence as a legitimate tool to enforce its social and religious norms. Unlike in the past, when such acts were sporadic incidents, nowadays they can only be described as social trends. Various sorts of violent acts are used daily against individuals who are accused of breaching the "right" Haredi standards. Children are expelled from Haredi schools because of their parents' occupational choices or because the fathers, but particularly the mothers, do not fully obey the Haredi dress code, or because they use non-kosher (internet accessible) cellphones;[102] When they grow, such children are considered of lesser value in the matchmaking market.[103] Divorced women are condemned for destroying their families even after being abused or beaten by their husbands, and receive little or no support from their families or the surrounding society;[104] and young men who cannot cope with the long hours of study in the Yeshiva and instead join the IDF in order to be able to go to work and to have more occupational possibilities, are shunned and treated as second degree Haredim.[105] Moreover, various sorts of violence are aimed not only at lay people but also at rabbis, including those who are considered top Haredi leaders.

One example is the vicious attacks against Rabbi Shaul Alter, the son of one of the former Gerer rebbes. In 2019, he established his own Hasidic community, thus causing a split within the hitherto united Gur Hasidim. Ever since then, he has been attacked both verbally and physically, received life threats, and had his followers banned, and the other Gur Hasidim were ordered to shun them. In addition, the children of Rabbi Shaul's followers were expelled from their former schools and yeshivas.

Violent actions are taken not only against individuals but also against whole groups that are castigated as second or third degree. Such groups, which may include hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands include the Sephardi Haredim,[106] *Hozrim Be-Teshuva* [repentant],[107] certain Hasidic groups, or the growing number of "Modern Haredim," who seek academic or advanced technological training or choose to have fewer than the average number of children in order to pursue a more comfortable life and to provide their children with better education.[108] Such "second-degree" groups are slandered publicly, either by the Haredi press, by the publishing of public posters, or by sermons given by prominent rabbis. The sanctions inflicted upon such groups and individuals vary from small talk slandering among neighbors, the denial of honorary positions within

the synagogue community, preventing their children from being admitted to the more reputable educational institutions, and avoiding marrying such "lower caste" families. Occasionally, when family and friends are invited to their homes, they refrain from dining there, indicating that they do not trust their kosher observance. Sometimes, close family and friends will not attend family celebrations, seeking to avoid being associated with a "less respectable" Haredi family.

This toxic atmosphere often translates into all sorts of more aggressive acts aimed at humiliating and intimidating. These include shouting and cursing in public; spitting or throwing water; denying financial or other social support; the publication of slanderous posters; banning books written by "not trustworthy" authors; writing graffiti on one's home; destruction of private property such as cars; and demonstrations aimed to disturb the lives of Haredi families who live nearby. Although the use of physical violence is relatively rare, it does appear, especially when similar groups are confronting one another. This occurs in cases of conflicts within certain yeshivot, Hasidic courts, or over the appointment of a successor to a prominent Haredi leader. In such cases, the police are called to intervene, and at times, private security companies are hired to stop the offenders.

CONCLUSION

During Israel's first two or three decades, ideologically driven violence among its relatively small Haredi society was scarce and prevailed mainly within its more fundamentalist wing, namely Jerusalem's Edah Haredit and Neturei Karta. As the number of Haredim grew, and with it their political influence, the use of violence became ever more frequent. Moreover, violence was no longer limited to the more radical groups but became common in many mainstream Haredi circles. Consequently, as of now, namely the third decade of the twenty-first century, it seems that the level of ideologically justified violence in Haredi society is still rising, and most Haredi leaders, as well as the Haredi press, prefer to ignore this unhealthy social trend rather than to confront it.

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

NOTES

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