ОПИТИТЕ НА НАПУСКАЩИТЕ ЕВРЕЙСКАТА УЛТРАОРТОДОКСАЛНА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНА СИСТЕМА ДА СИ ИНТЕГРИРАТ В ИЗРАЕЛСКОТО СВЕТСКО ОБЩЕСТВО

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Резюме. *Целта на статията е да се изследват опитите на напускащите еврейската ултраортодоксална образователна система да се интегрират в Израелското светско общество. Представени са най-важните елементи на еврейската ултраортодоксална образователна система. Посочено е как тази образователна система помага на юношите да се справят с ежедневните им проблеми, с проблеми при общуването с родителите, а също и с проблеми в учебния процес. Обяснена е връзката между проблемите в обучението, трудностите в социализацията и липсата на подкрепа в семейството. Анализирано е чувството за насигурност в живота, което се среща най-често сред младежите, които напускат еврейската ултраортодоксална образователна система.*

Ключови думи. Еврейско ултраортодоксално общество, отпадане от училище, образование, Израелско светско общество, социализация.

THE ATTEMPTS OF JEWISH ULTRA-ORTHODOX EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM LEAVERS TO INTEGRATE INTO ISRAELI SECULAR SOCIETY

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to investigate the attempts of Jewish Ultra-Orthodox educational system leavers to integrate into the Israeli Secular Society. There were several elements to their new lives that affected the them most. These were: handling various everyday problems, interaction with their parents, their attitude towards Ultra-Orthodox society, and their future. Their difficulties ranged from acquainting themselves to secular social and cultural codes to the absence of a supportive family. However, uncertainty about their lives was more evident among young men who had just left the Yeshiva and Ultra-Orthodox society.

Key words. Jewish Ultra-Orthodox society, school drop-out, education, Israeli Secular Society, socialization.

Introduction

Ultra-Orthodox society has several sociological and demographic characteristics, the combination of which sets it apart from the rest of Israeli Jewish population: the number of persons per family is larger than that of the average Israeli Jewish family, lower income, highly crowded housing, and a high number of social, educational, and cultural institutions (Shelhav & Kaplan, 2003).

In addition, it presents its unique culture as opposed to the secular culture in several ways: distinct clothing, social structure, separate educational system and its perception of an ideal Jewish way of life (Kaplan, 2003). Despite the transformations the Ultra-Orthodox society underwent over the past few years, it presents, still, a relatively low participation percentage of the Israeli labor market (Levine, 2009), which results the high incidence of poverty amongst this population (Gottlieb & Frohman, 2011). There is also a clear geographical segregation, which allows its separate educational system, and several aspects of its cultural, social and political activity (Bloch, Gabbay, Knowlton, & Fins, 2018).

This segregation is also common in other Jewish Ultra-Orthodox communities in the West (Fenster, 2003). In Israel, it is evident in two cities, namely Jerusalem and Bnei Brak (Fuchs, 2013). During the 1990s, several Chassidic communities established their separate neighborhoods in non-Ultra-Orthodox cities in Israel: Vizhnitz, Haifa, Tzanz and Netanya, in which these communities improved educational and charity systems. In addition, during the 2000s, several settlements were established for Ultra-Orthodox in the West Bank, with relatively affordable housing (Kaplan, 2003).

Literature Review

When examining school-leaving in Jewish Ultra-Orthodox society, especially its effects on the individual ex-student and his family, one must also consider the Ultra-Orthodox school system's unique characteristics. This society has its segregated educational system, with a singular course, aimed at forming a society of Torah learners. About 25% of all Jewish Israeli students attend Ultra-Orthodox school system (The Israeli Ministry of Education, 2014).

The main purpose of Ultra-Orthodox schools is to pass on Orthodox Jewish identity and way of life from one generation to the Professional training is nearly to completely absent from the curriculum. Ultra-Orthodox leaders fear of too close

a contact between their youths and the non-orthodox current, a contact which could eventually drive them to embrace an Israeli secular identity next (Ankri, Bachar & Shalev, 2010). Therefore, segregation and autonomy have become major Ultra-Orthodox ideals, especially regarding education. Therefore, the Ultra-Orthodox public fights so ardently for an independent and autonomous educational system. This principle dictates the way schools are managed, the methods of teaching, and the marginalization of non-religious subjects of learning. Nonetheless, some Ultra-Orthodox believe religious and non-religious subjects are compatible. Others, though not rejecting non-religious learning, are concerned about their prioritization over the religious ones (Horowitz, 2012).

Several researches have recently examined the Yeshiva leavers' view of their process of leaving the Yeshiva. Their findings improve our understanding of the relation between Yeshiva-leaving and faith crisis in Ultra-Orthodox society. Efrati-Munitz (2003) found that the processes of leaving Orthodoxy and leaving a Yeshiva never involve dichotomous states. In other words, leaving a Yeshiva is never identical to leaving religion, and those young men who left a Yeshiva do not defy religious values. For them, there is a golden mean between leaving a Yeshiva and leaving the religion altogether. She argues that teenagers who left their Yeshiva are just adolescents, who are still forming their individual identity.

Another conclusion of this research, related to the former, is that the marginality of Yeshiva leavers is different than marginality of secular leavers. Yeshiva leavers' marginality drives them to a daily struggle to form their own religious identity and look for alternative belongingness. Yet, this marginality does not necessarily mean delinquency. Still, they share several similarities with secular marginal youth, such as problematic homes, lack of support and learning difficulties. Their challenge in their attempts to form their new religious and social

identity is that they do not wish to break away from Ultra-Orthodoxy completely (Efrati-Munitz, 2003).

Leaving the Yeshiva is a critical, life-changing decision, which involves responses from their surrounding they must deal with. Therefore, they try to explain their attempts using their own concepts (Rothkopf, 2018). This explanation uses several means, such as distinction. A recurrent theme of these men's biographies was their distinction regarding many aspects of their lives. For example, they distinguish between their previous life, which they consider hypocritical, and their current life, which is honest and open. They also distinguish between "religion" and "Orthodoxy". The former is open and pluralistic, reflecting God's will, while the latter is secluded, demanding and fails to reflect God's true will (Sivan, 1995). Therefore, they believe that a future openness of Ultra-Orthodox society will not necessarily contradict religion. Consequently, they reject the false association between leaving a Yeshiva and leaving the religion (Efrati-Munitz, 2003).

Methodology

The method of the present research is narrative and life stories analysis. According to Bruner (1986), there are two main ways of reality-constructing thinking. One is the scientific, logical way, which presents logical arguments concerning factors of human behavior. The other one is the narrative thinking, which include stories about specific events. Each way of thinking has its own principles and verification processes. The "Narrative Turn", during the 1970s, made a distinction between a "life history" and a "life story". The main argument for narrative-based methods is that human societies and cultures can be read as social texts, which are symbolic representations structures. Narratives are means of documentation (Bruner, 1986).

The research population – Adult men who left Yeshivas as youths. The sampling method was a purposeful sample, which selected interviewees who

optimally represent the research population and could enlighten the researcher about the studied phenomenon. Therefore, statistically selected multiple interrogatee sample is insignificant (Patton, 1990). The sample group included 40 men who left Yeshivas as youths and currently lead a secular life. They had the following characteristics: most of them left Yeshivot Gdolot; their ages ranged from 19 to 45, and they had a great number of siblings.

Research Findings

Regarding their current lives, the interviewees recurrently mentioned three main subjects: how they handle various everyday challenges, relations with their parents and family of origin and their views regarding Ultra-Orthodox society

Problem-Solving

The interviewees' stories reveal they face various problems. Most of the them reported that even now they struggle with the cultural secular codes. They also complained about lack of support from their families, uncertainty about their future, and the feeling of meaninglessness of secular life. These reports reflect different life circumstances, for example, various types of family relationship, but also the effects of the time passed since they left the Yeshiva. All interviewees assumed they could handle these problems. Yossi (19), told me about his alienation, and his use of the Internet to deal it. The internet has the benefit of freeing one from the need to ask for others' help.

Relations with the Parents and Family of Origin

In most cases the parents responded very disapprovingly to their son's decision to leave the Yeshiva, especially when it involved leaving the religious way of life. On some occasions, they went as far as ordering their son out of home. This raises the question about the current relations of the leavers with their families, from the leavers' point of view. In this respect, too, the interviews revealed a variety of situations. Some reported to have normal relations, others, abnormal or even warm.

Attitude towards Ultra-Orthodox Society

The interviewees leveled various accusations at the Ultra-Orthodox society, in which they had lived for many years. These accusations, sometimes harshly expressed, dealt with the following: Ultra-Orthodox leaders present a groundless stereotype of Israeli secular society; Ultra-Orthodox social norms are hypocritical; its educational system fails to prepare its students to life in modern Israeli society, particularly due to its failing to provide basic general education; This system practically trains its graduates to avoid working, and cannot admit that not all Yeshiva students can endure many years of religious studies; It tries to establish an ideal "society of learners", for men only, which makes women the sole providers of households.

Discussion

The mass "desertion" of Ultra-Orthodox youths to secular society demonstrates that Ultra-Orthodox society to be out of touch with reality. By focusing on religious studies only, it fails to realize that this is not enough to allow Ultra-Orthodox integrate into modern Israeli society. Instead of excluding students who "go astray", Ultra-Orthodox leaders, should, for example propose a law recognizing Yeshiva studies as equivalent to academic education, thus allowing Yeshiva graduates to be better paid as government and local authorities employees.

Ultra-Orthodox society must bear in mind that it's just an enclave within Israeli secular society. The secular society members enjoy the ability of purchasing academic degrees, occupations and promotions. This is not to imply that Yeshiva education is meaningless. on the contrary! Such a law will officially recognize the value of Yeshiva studies, so Yeshiva graduates will not deem themselves unproductive. Ultra-Orthodox society must take actions in order to reduce the rates of leaving, at least among those who still adhere to its values.

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