**18.3.20**

**Society Seminar, Dr. Neri Horowitz - The Haredi Sector**

**Discussion with Rabbi Bazalel Cohen**

The unique characteristics of Haredi society

* Demographics, high birth rates.
* The structure of the ultra-orthodox community is a "pyramid":

Up to the age of 15, 50% of the community, 19%, 16%, over the age of 65, only 3%. [XX too many numbers]

The is the pyramid that explains the transfer of information, the asking of questions by the "younger generation", etc.

Concerning **Haredi employment**, they are in an advanced stage. A lot of work remains to increase the scope and rate of employment among Haredi men.

**Concerning education**, they are in the beginning stages. The required change is extensive.

**Historic background:**

* The Haredi education for males is "old school", primarily based on tradition. The main education model is the Latvian model (over 200 years old) from the Volozhin Yeshiva. The Genius from Vilna was a studious figure.
* The 200-year-old model was Torah study based on "the vicinity" for the rabbis, who depended on the local population. If the rabbi moved to another city, the yeshiva would move with him. If the rabbi died, the yeshiva closed its doors.
* Chaim of Volozhin founded the Volozhin Yeshiva, the "mother of all yeshivas". For the first time, there was an institution that "stood on its own", "the first university for Torah studies". An independent model, the opposite from everything that was known at the time. This led to the city's situation to change drastically, the city is dependent on the yeshiva and not the opposite. This resulted in the yeshiva's leaders becoming important figures.
* This change strongly influenced the history of Torah studies. This is the model currently used today for Torah studies.
* The period of 220 years must be divided into two parts (140 and 80 years).
* The Lithuanian yeshivas operated for 140 years until the Holocaust. They were "elite" yeshivas that required the candidates to show high learning abilities, but many did not, and they were not accepted.
* In the last 80 years, since the Holocaust, yeshivas have been established that accept all applicants. Over the years, levels have been created.

**The dropout rate in Haredi yeshivas**

* Amongst the highest in Israel.
* Among 14-18-year olds, the dropout rate is even higher, and the next highest level is at an older age.
* Up to 30% of the Haredi population are "dropouts".
* The understanding is that the model of Torah study is "unnatural", the studies are very intensive for many hours.
* The population's distribution: 1/3 "are content", 1/3 "are coping" and 1/3 "do not survive".
* These data, together with other understandings, were what led to the establishment of the "Hochmei Lev" Yeshiva.

**The founding of the Hochmei Lev Yeshiva**

* The idea was to establish a high-school yeshiva - both a yeshiva and high school that included subjects for a full matriculation diploma. This is a prominent model in religious-Zionist circles (the most famous and first was the Nativ Meir Yeshiva. The religious population in the newly populated Tel Aviv has also existed for 80 years, but they turned to agriculture and only a small number of them turned to a very narrow sector of the Haredi population. There are also high school-yeshiva models in the United States, and it is widely accepted.
* What is different? Three challenges for which a solution must be found:

1. Bridging academic gaps (English, mathematics, etc.).
2. Economic gaps, tuition in yeshivas is high and makes life difficult for Haredi families.
3. Concerning culture - the high school-yeshivas until now have attract a very specific public and is incompatible for the "classic Haredi" - from attire for example and other various aspects.

* From a historical perspective, it turned out there were even larger challenges, especially literacy.
* In practice, in English and mathematics, the students were able to close the gaps.

**A macro view and policy in general**

* The task, to develop a model that can be duplicated, where the goal is to change the thought process of the parents of children completing the 8th grade - instead of naturally sending them to a small yeshiva, other options should be considered.
* This caused severe arguments and opposition on the Haredi "street", including among rabbis, however this resulted in the Yeshiva being advertised, which is positive in itself.
* For many years, the State of Israel was unaware of what was happening in Haredi education. Today, there is broader understanding, but there is still no official functionary that looks at Haredi education on the macro level and to define policy.
* In the Haredi sector, there is a difference between types of educational institutions:

1. "Recognized but not official" - institutions that are not owned by the state, are financed at a level of 75% and are required to uphold a set of rules (all educators must have proper certification and other regulations).
2. "Exempt institution" - are budgeted at a level of 50% and they "do what they like" (i.e. educators are not required to have any formal training).

* The change in Haredi primary education took place six years ago. State-Haredi study institutions were established under the Ministry of Education (during the term of Shai Peron, the former Minister of Education), where all employees were civil servants who were required to comply to the state's set of regulations, e.g. certification, study programs, etc. The study program included all the core subjects.
* The very establishment of State-Haredi study institutions was also significant for the discrimination between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, there are binding regulations for the official institutions[[1]](#footnote-1). Since it is obligatory, the solution is "integrative".

How changes are made in the Haredi world

* There are two approaches that in recent years have been the center of a severe disagreement in the Haredi community on how to generate change.

1. From the inside turning out - "the Haredi mainstream" - Ashkenazi vs **Sephardic** Jews, senior figures vs **those adopting religion**, Israelis vs **new immigrants**, the country's center vs **the** **periphery**, conservative vs modernists, men vs **women**.
2. From the outside turning in

The facts speak for themselves when addressing changes that start from the outside and turn in - education, employment, welfare. However, policy makers "fell in love" from changes that began from inside and turned outward.

This also affects the question, how to make a change?

Many resources, large investment and smaller changes [XX is this correct?   
נדרשים משאבים רבים, השקעה גדולה והשינויים קטנים יותר.]

The bigger challenge for "the new Haredi" is the lack of leadership. The religious leadership ( and also gifted students who also understand the "current challenges") [incomplete sentence].

The state needs to identify who the partners of Haredi society in order to be able to promote education in the Haredi sector. During the term of Yair Lapid as minister of finance, a mistake was made in the "favoring" of the state-Haredi institutions, because if this succeeded the budgets of the other Haredi institutions could be reduced. This automatically turned the state-Haredi institutions into "the enemy" of Haredi education.

1. There has been discrimination of Sephardic children in schools operated by Ashkenazi Haredis [↑](#footnote-ref-1)