

## Beyond the Religious-Secular Dichotomy: *Masortiim* in Israel\*

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### Introduction

Our concern in this paper is with Israeli Jews who, when asked to categorize their religious behavior define themselves as “traditional” (*masorti*, pl. *masortiim*). Their religious behavior is defined as “traditionalism” (*masortiut*). They constitute about one-third of the Israeli Jewish population. By comparison, less than 20 percent of Israeli Jews define themselves as either “religious” (*dati*, a synonym for Orthodox in the Israeli context)<sup>1</sup> or ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*). The remaining Jews define themselves as secular (*hiloni*). The Guttman Report upon which we rely for our general Jewish population statistics eschewed the term *hiloni* and asked respondents to define themselves as *haredi*, *dati*, *masorti*, not-*dati* or anti-*dati*.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of these categories and the differences between the categories are not entirely clear and the category “traditional” is the most enigmatic. Even among those who have stressed the demographic importance of this category, many dismiss it as no more than an inconsistent cocktail of beliefs and practices characterized by its lack of clarity. It is the category often referred to in academic analyses and popular discussion of religious identity among Israeli Jews. In both academic and popular discourse the distinction is drawn between “secular” and “religious” and the category “traditional” is often applied to a very different typology, one that was so popular among social scientists until recently – that between “traditional” meaning one who had not undergone modernization, and “modern” referring to one who has.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the very birth of the category “traditional” to mark a kind of intermediate category between the “completely

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secular” and the “really religious” marks it as a problematic form of identity. It renders traditionalism or traditional identity as a kind of artificial category located between two ideal types and lacking any meaning independently of these two other categories.

Nonetheless, with all our reservations about the terms, we will continue to employ it (or the Hebrew equivalents *masorti* and *masortiut*), as we attempt to establish the foundations for further research that will explore the content and socio-political implications of a *masorti* identity. We will use the term traditionalist or traditionalism to refer to the general phenomenon. We will most often use the Hebrew terms *masorti* and *masortiut* when we are referring to the specific Israeli manifestation. We will sometimes revert to the English terminology for the sake of linguistic niceties where the meaning is clear. As we shall see, *masortiut* is really a special form of traditionalism.

As in every form of individual identity, including *hiloni* and *dati* identities, the *masorti* identity is not absolute but dependent on the context, on time and on place. It continually evolves as it confronts competing mosaics of identities and changing social and political conditions. We also believe that it is possible to distinguish a variety of *masorti* identities that range from a positive and independent definition of *masorti* (i.e. one that is not substantially dependent on other types of identity in order to define itself), to a negative understanding of one’s own traditional identity (i.e., one that does indeed see itself as straddling the secular-religious dichotomy and locates itself in between them). Ethnicity and age also play a role in the choice of religious identity. Gender, as far as we can tell does not.

In the essay that follows we will attempt to outline the nature of what we have called a positive traditional identity. After a brief review of the literature we will offer an

expanded definition of traditionalism (*masortiut*). We will then turn to two of what we consider to be the three primary dimensions that any research on traditionalism must explore: the phenomenology of traditionalism and the interrelationships and tensions between a traditional identity on the one hand and a secular or religious identity on the other. We ignore the third dimension, that which deals with the complicated relationship between one's traditional identity and ethnic and national identity. We leave the exploration of that issue to another essay. We wish to stress that our research is in its early stages and we will raise some questions to which we do not as yet have clear answers.

## Research on Traditionalism: The Dominance of the Modernization and Secularism Discourse

In an article published in 1984 the distinguished anthropologist Moshe Shokeid summarized the relationship of academic research to traditionalism in Israel as developing in three stages. In the first stage, *masortiut* was met with dismissal by the academy as “part of the general category of characteristics comprising traditional culture that never garnered much esteem in veteran Israel society -- in its secular as in its Orthodox [variety]”.<sup>4</sup> This contempt has deep roots. Yaakov Shavit notes that the cultural elite of the early Zionist movement was both contemptuous of and bitterly hostile toward the Jewish folk culture of eastern Europe. Incredibly, they thought they could prevent the emergence of folk culture, except under their tutelage, in the *Yishuv*.<sup>5</sup> The second stage, according to Shokeid was characterized by the ignoring of *masorti* Jews whose behavior was now viewed as an expression of folklore and unworthy of serious academic interest.

The third stage, in which Shokeid, together with his research partner Shlomo Deshen were outstanding exemplars, was characterized by a renewed interest in *masortiut*, an interest that was primarily anthropological and sociological.<sup>6</sup>

Much of the research and discussions of traditionalists and traditionalism took place within the framework of the modernization-secularization paradigm. Within this framework science is posed as an alternative to religion and religion is moved from the public arena to the arena of private practice and belief. At its extreme this theory suggests that the modernized and secularized human is freed from theological and metaphysical discourse. It is the only route whereby the individual can free himself from the constraints imposed by religious modes of thought. As a consequence of being secularized, people become self conscious actors who create their own history. There is no longer a space for religion as an overarching system of meaning. The central theme in the secularization discourse argues that in the modern world religion is so weakened that it must choose between rejection of modernity and acceptance of a reduced role in the dominant secular order. The implications of this are the abandonment of the public arena (cultural, social and political) to the private arena if not to eventual disappearance.<sup>7</sup>

In this general frame of mind, though not always in this extreme form, the terms tradition or traditionalism (*masoret* and *masortiut*) were discussed in studies of Israeli society. These studies provided evidence of the presence of traditionalism among Israel Jews, especially among *mizrahim* (Jews who originate or whose families originated in Moslem societies) whose religion was thought to be virtually synonymous with traditionalism. The distinction between a modern and a traditional society served the

authors as a kind of paradigm through which the studies of the religion of *mizrahim* as an expression of “pre-modern Judaism” were undertaken<sup>8</sup>.

As a consequence, they found little prospect for the survival of traditionalism in the context of a modern, secular, westernized Israel. *Masortiim* will have to choose between one of two mutually exclusive alternatives: secularism (i.e., completing the process of modernization and integration into the modern-western-secular culture), or the strengthening of religion, of what we will describe below as “scripturalism” which includes at least the partial rejection of modernity and a strong measure of isolation within the confines of the community and the culture of the religious. Thus, *mizrahi* traditionalism was portrayed as a temporary phenomenon, though it served the *mizrahim* in their competition for public resources.<sup>9</sup> Some of these studies also pointed to factors slowing the process of modernization-secularization. Two factors, the central role of the family and the special place accorded rabbis in traditional mizrachi society, are mentioned in this regard.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the description of *masortiut* was located in the context of a discussion of ethnicity and ethnic identification in Israel.<sup>11</sup> Special attention was devoted to some of the prominent expressions of religious traditionalism among *mizrahim*, first and foremost among them being the pilgrimages to the graves of saints.<sup>12</sup> Another direction, which this research took, was the role of gender in the process of modernization and secularization. Susan Sered, for example, observes that even though modernization opens up new possibilities for the religious participation of women, “the religion of women” is most vulnerable to the forces of modernization. This vulnerability stems from the personal, somewhat hidden, home nature of women’s religion.<sup>13</sup>

We are not prepared to dismiss the secular/modern vs. traditional/religious paradigm as wrong although, intuitively, we are not comfortable with it and contemporary scholarship rejects it.<sup>14</sup> But we are also anxious to pursue an alternative line of inquiry which Shokeid himself suggests. He recognizes that a third alternative besides secularization or integration into the established Orthodoxy of Israel also exists. This is the transformation of *mizrahi* traditionalism into a form of ethnic identification in which traditionalism would play a more important role than is otherwise accorded to it. Shokeid writes that:

The *masoret* religiosity adopted and proclaimed by Middle Eastern Jews...may under certain circumstances develop into a symbolic linkage with the more dominant cultural stream. With the growing disparity between the expanding Ashkenazi orthodoxy and the dominant secular sector, on the one hand, and the growing notion of cultural need concerning the symbolic realm of Jewish identity in the secular sector, on the other hand, *masoret* religiosity may be more than an ethnic peculiarity."<sup>15</sup>

In line with this observation of Shokeid we wish to propose the possibility that traditionalism is in fact a modern response – a method of coping with modernization rather than simply rejecting or accepting it. Following this line of reasoning, it may be more accurate to see *masortiut* as an expression of multiple modernities – an expression born of a discomfort with the older modernization discourse which emphasizes instead the simultaneous existence of a variety of modernity models, which influence one another. Modernization in the western sense is understood in this context as one expression of a variety of modernities.<sup>16</sup> Which of these paradigms is better suited to the condition of Israel and especially *mizrahi* traditionalism is a key question of our larger study, one that remains unanswered for the moment.

## Traditionalism Defined

We understand the term traditionalism as referring to a life lived, at least in part, in accordance with tradition, e.g. conduct learned from the immediate environment, the extended family in particular. It is religious because so much of it refers to matters of religious concern. The term, traditionalism, is best understood by its mirror concept – *scripturalism*. Clifford Geertz applied the label scripturalism to religious developments in two Moslem societies, Indonesia and Morocco.<sup>17</sup> Haym Soloveitchik expanded Geertz's theoretical insight to a description of scripturalism in Orthodox Judaism (though he didn't use the term).<sup>18</sup> Among traditionalists, religious conduct is the product of social custom. In the scripturalist form of religion, conduct is the product of conscious, reflective behavior. Among traditionalists, religious life is governed by habit and by what "seems" right, among scripturalists, by rules. Authority in the world of traditionalists is rooted in custom in the home, in the culture; it is transmitted mimetically. Authority in the world of religious scripturalism is rooted in texts as they are interpreted by the learned masters of the texts (in Judaism: *talmidei hakhamim*), and the heads of the advanced religious academies (in Judaism: *rashei yeshivot*). In the world of traditional religion and among traditionalists, the division between the masses and the elite is fixed. In the world of religious scripturalism, to use a Weberian concept, all should strive to become religious virtuosi. The last point is crucial because characteristics centered on the primacy of text is by new means modern.<sup>19</sup>

Both Geertz and Soloveitchik are sympathetic to what we call traditionalism, but in both authors it emerges as a thing of the past. Both authors explain, most convincingly, why scripturalism has become the religious norm, at least in Indonesia and Morocco,

which Geertz studied, and within American Orthodox Judaism to which Soloveitchik devoted his attention. We are less certain that this is true of our case. *Masortiut* faces challenges from both the religious right and the secular left; its future is problematical, but by no means certain. We will argue that it has not disappeared because it is tied to other sources of legitimacy.

Some of the explanations which Geertz and Soloveitchik offer for the rise of scripturalism and the decline of traditionalism are particular to the societies they studied, some of them applicable to a variety of societies, indeed to the modern world in general. Although the authors do not say so, their analysis hints at one general reason for the decline of traditionalism: the dissociation of religion and culture. We believe that traditionalism continues to feed upon another source – its tie to ethnic or national identity. But *masortiut* is, as we shall see, a peculiarly modern phenomenon in other respects.

Traditionalism flourished when religion and culture were united. The dissociation of religion and culture rendered religion “unnatural”, artificial, its practices no longer part of the normal rhythms of life. Haym Soloveitchik gives the telling example of an undergarment, which Jewish law commands that the Jew to wear. But, says Soloveitchik, today, when it is:

...worn not as a matter of course but as a matter of belief then it becomes a ritual object. A ritual can no more be approximated than an incantation can be summarized. Its essence lies in its accuracy. It is that accuracy the haredim are seeking. The flood of works on halakhic prerequisites and correct religious performance accurately reflects the ritualization of what have previously been simply components of the given world and parts of the repertoire of daily living.<sup>20</sup>

Scripturalist religion faces the challenge of living in a culture that is no longer conducive, indeed, which may even threaten its religious mandates. It meets this challenge through a number of strategies.<sup>21</sup> One is by withdrawal from the culture and insofar as that is possible, the creation of a new culture. Another is one in which religion conquers the culture and imposes its mandates. A third strategy is to seek some accommodation with the culture through the reinterpretation of the religious tradition. Among Orthodox Jews, in Israel as elsewhere, one finds accommodationist rabbis. They will accept the norms and values of modern culture where their interpretation of scripture permits them to do so. But even these “modern” rabbis and their followers accept the basic spirit of scripturalism – the supreme authority of the text. They only differ from other rabbis in their more lenient and permissive interpretations of the text. There is a fourth strategy that is most common among the religious laity -- compartmentalization (the notion that certain forms of behavior or behavior in certain areas of life are subject to religious demands whereas others areas of behavior are religiously irrelevant). Traditionalism falls outside this paradigm (although as we shall see it does adopt a form of compartmentalization) perhaps because it is a *sense* or a *feeling* rather than an ideology. It includes a sense that the choices described above are unnecessary because the religious observance which one incorporates into one’s life is perfectly natural. However, *masortiut* as we describe it is not at all pre-modern. The *masorti* is thoroughly modern in the sense that he is self conscious of his *masortiut*. As a consequence, two important differences distinguish the *masorti* from the classical traditionalist. First, the recognition that that which he/she finds natural may not be natural for others. Secondly, an acknowledgement that scripturalism is synonymous with the proper observance of

religious commands. Hence, the *masorti* does not reject scripturalism, so much as chooses what to observe and not observe. This choice, however, is strongly influenced by the tradition to which the *masorti* has been socialized. Does this make *masortiut* a variety of popular religion or, more likely, to use David Hall's felicitous term "lived religion"<sup>22</sup>? That is a question to which we hope to turn in a future essay.

The traditionalist's recognition of the religious authority of the scripturalist necessarily renders him/her conscious of the complexity of his/her values and behavior and to what appears as the absence of consistency. In everything touching upon ideology, it would appear that the traditionalist is unable to project a coherent and consistent ideology. As Moshe Shokeid summarizes the ethnographic description of Moroccan immigrants to Israel, these traditional Jews "never developed a consistent set of behavioral rules or philosophical justifications to their mixed secularist-religious style. In retrospect they view themselves as continuing the tradition of their father, adapted to their present condition".<sup>23</sup> This absence of ideology is expressed in their stubborn refusal to impose the traditional way of life (or for that matter the religious "scripturalist" way of life) on others or on the environment.<sup>24</sup> (It is important to note that in Judaism, the demand that the public arena be conducted in a certain manner is an integral part of one's religious obligation.) The difficulty or the conscious refusal to articulate a traditionalist ideology stems from the acceptance of the scripturalists' religious authority. In other words, traditionalists accept the scripturalist point that the latter represent the ideal and have exclusive claim to a religious ideology. The traditionalist chooses, therefore, not to intervene in this arena.

Traditionalism, therefore, is intimately related to scripturalism. Traditionalists are aware of their own ignorance of the scriptural tradition and are sometimes prepared to amend some of their practices when informed by those more knowledgeable than themselves that they are not practicing this or that rule properly. They accept the organizational structure and are relatively indifferent to the belief structure of the elite religion. Of course the rituals and symbols which are important to them imply a belief system, but one tending to be mythical rather than rational and ideational, and hence not in opposition to the more complex theological or legalistic elaboration of the elite religion. (Of course, the mythical dimensions of ritual also play a central role among the religious scripturalists.) Therefore, in the eyes of the elite religion, folk religion or in our case traditionalism is not a movement but at best is an error, or set of errors, shared by many people. At worst, it is understood as avoiding basic decisions, as a kind of halfway house to heresy.

*Masortiut*, the modern Israeli variety of traditionalism is a coalescence of different traditions under the impact of a similar environment and of similar pressures – both the pressure from the religious elite who adamantly insists on traditionalism's lack of religious legitimacy and from the pressures of modern culture and the secularist camp. The big differences that remain are those between *ashkenazim* (those who originate or whose families originate from predominantly Christian societies) and *mizrahim* (those, as we noted, who originate or whose families originate from predominantly Moslem societies). The latter constitute a much higher proportion of traditionalists. Only a minority of *ashkenazim* define themselves as traditionalists rather than as religious or non-religious (secular).

According to the most comprehensive survey on the subject (the Guttman Center Survey) 50% of all Israeli *mizrahim* identified himself or herself as *masortiim*, whereas only 19% of *ashkenazim* so identified themselves. In general the survey found that whereas *mizrahim* in Israel were far more observant of the tradition than *ashkenazim*, their religious identity was more moderate. Israeli scripturalists are, by and large, *ashkenazi*. And the same is true at the other extreme. Only nine percent of the *mizrahim* identify themselves as either non-religious (i.e. don't maintain any traditional observances) or anti-religious whereas 34 % of the *ashkenazim* define themselves in this manner.<sup>25</sup> And both the Guttman survey and our own interviews suggest that this gap between *mizrahim* and *ashkenazim* is also expressed in the manner in which traditional rituals are observed. As a rule, *mizrahim* are far more careful in observing the tradition in accordance with Jewish law than are *ashkenazim*. Among the *ashkenazi* traditionalists, not only is the observance of religious practices less intense, but, we suspect that unlike their parents, they have a fairly weak sense of traditionalism. Much of their religious observance is trivial in their own minds and abandoned with relative ease. The remainder of our discussion focuses primarily on *mizrahim* since they not only constitute the bulk of *masortiim* but we know a good deal more about them. However, our interviews that included *ashkenazim* allow us to introduce a comparative dimension as well.

We begin by exploring what “natural” means to the *mizrahi* traditionalist. What, in other words, is the phenomenology of traditionalism? We are relying both on the secondary literature, and a series of lengthy interviews we conducted with some 30 people who identify themselves as *masortiim*, mostly between the ages of 25 and 40 and a secondary analysis of some surveys of public opinion.

## The Phenomenology of *Mizrahi* Traditionalism

There is a rich secondary literature on *mizrahim* but few scholars have analyzed *mizrahi* traditionalism as a self-conscious alternative to strict observance.<sup>26</sup> The most common explanation for what is viewed as the religious laxity in the behavior of many *mizrahim* is to tie this laxity to the religious traditions of the *mizrahim* which, as Zvi Zohar has demonstrated, are more pragmatic and in that sense more relaxed than those of the *ashkenazim*.<sup>27</sup> But this would not explain why some traditions which are retained are rather difficult to observe (for example fasting on Yom Kippur or heavy smokers who refrain from smoking on Shabbat) whereas some traditions that are easier to observe (such as males covering their head at meal times) have been abandoned.<sup>28</sup>

The image of the *mizrahi* traditionalist that more than any other symbolizes his/her anomalous behavior is of one “prays in the synagogue on Shabbat and then travels by car to the beach”<sup>29</sup> or to a soccer game. This religious-secular compromise generates both unease and a measure of contempt among both *datiim* and *hiloniim*. Ethnographic studies, and our own interviews, provide us with a series of similar ostensibly anomalous examples including: wearing a yarmulke during prayer in the synagogue or during the reciting of Kiddush at the Sabbath table and punctiliously removing it afterwards; participating in a family meal Friday evening which includes the reciting of Kiddush but ignoring almost all the remaining Sabbath injunctions; or the punctilious observance of dietary laws including two sets of dishes in the home but exercising much greater leniency outside the home.<sup>30</sup> We were especially interested to find the great gap between observance within the home and the latitude, which our

respondents allowed themselves outside the home. Many of our female respondents reported on their rigid observance of the laws of family purity while ignoring laws pertaining to modesty of dress outside the home. A number of male respondents reported that whereas they put on *t'fillin* (phylacteries) every day, (Jewish men are commanded to don phylacteries prior to reciting the morning prayers) they did not recite the morning prayers. They neither attended synagogue on a daily basis nor even prayed in their own home. Many of our respondents reported that they regularly read chapters from the biblical Book of the Psalms or at least carried the book around with them. Many also reported that they not only fast on Yom Kippur but on the ninth of Av as well although they do not attend synagogue on that day. Some even reported that they washed their hands ritually before every meal, generally without saying the blessing that Jewish law prescribes. All our respondents carefully refrain from eating forbidden foods on Pesach, and are very strict in observing all the prohibitions in addition to fasting that are associated with Yom Kippur.

A distinguishing characteristic of traditionalists seems to be their solution to the tension between religion and modernity. Unlike the scripturalists who insist that all of life is governed by Jewish law (among the most extreme this includes the governing of bodily movement<sup>31</sup>), in a sense sacralizing every aspect of life, *masortiim* incorporate that which they consider religious or holy into the regular pattern of their otherwise modern lives. There are holy days, holy people, and holy events. Holiness demands very special behavior and makes very special demands. For some *masortiim*, if one cannot meet these demands, then he “exits” or leaves the realm of the scared or holy. If on a particular Sabbath one cannot or chooses not to meet the demands for Sabbath observance, then the

Sabbath loses its holiness for that person. Perhaps it is more correct to say that the *masorti* loses the merit of Shabbat and its sanctity. The *masorti* chooses to violate the Sabbath, and therefore has not right to enjoy its sanctity. The sanctity of the Sabbath is always present. The *masorti* must choose whether to enter into this world or remain outside.

Religious demands are sometimes weighed against personal considerations of comfort, convenience, and the doable, and are chosen accordingly. The “comfort” to which our respondents referred was often the ability to observe a modern style of life. In other words, in many cases the choice takes place in the effort to resolve the tension between the world of religious observance and modernity. The decision takes place by weighing reality against what is desirable.

Religious demands are deemed absolute, but “not for me”. That is, the *masorti* accepts the principle – the same principle according to which the scripturalist conducts his life – but the principle remains at the level of the abstract and the general whereas life takes place in the real world of the individual. And here the demands of religion lose their absolute status, and compete with other values, notions, and customs with which they are not always compatible.

The religious laws that come closest to being absolute in practice are those laws concerned with proper respect for a dead family member, a parent in particular. What distinguishes *masortiim* from *datiim* is not the manner in which these laws are observed but in the hierarchical importance given to these laws; for example in the fact that *mizrahi* traditionalists will observe the laws and customs of mourning quite punctiliously although they may be quite lackadaisical in their observance of laws such as Sabbath

observance, laws to which religious authorities accord greater importance. Indeed, the custom among *mizrahim* is that when observing laws of mourning in this intense manner, the male signals himself as *dati* by wearing a yarmulke not only for the week of *shiva* but for the full thirty days of mourning.

The attitude of the *mizrahi-masorti* to the yarmulke is of special interest to us because it symbolizes the complex attitude of the *masorti* to the whole world of religion. From our interviews we understand that the wearing of a yarmulke is a symbolic act signaling the division between the world of holiness and religion, and the world of the secular and mundane.<sup>32</sup> In donning the yarmulke the *masorti* identifies himself as one who has entered, temporarily, the arena of religion, of the holy. Removal of the yarmulke signals his return to the everyday, where holiness is absent. By wearing the yarmulke and removing it (or not wearing it) the *masorti* signals to himself the boundaries of the holy and the different set of rules demanded of him. This symbolic meaning of the yarmulke constitutes a central component in the tendency of the *masorti* to compartmentalize the Jewish religion, to limit its sanctity and to draw the distinction between holy and profane. This symbolism is reinforced in the context of Israeli society where the wearing of a yarmulke denotes membership in the community of the religious. In this context, not wearing a yarmulke is of great significance for the *masorti* because it distinguishes him from the *dati*. Amongst our respondents there was general agreement that one who always wears a yarmulke and does not maintain a religious life is a charlatan.

In Israel, the yarmulke's style (whether it is knotted, black, velvet, colored, large, small), alludes to the religio-political group with which the wearer is identified. Hence we asked ourselves whether the choice of yarmulke style among *masortim* also expressed

some kind of group identity. To the best of our understanding, it does not. In synagogues in which the majority of the worshipers are *masortiim* one is struck by the range of yarmulke styles. Our general impression is that the *masorti* chooses his yarmulke according to subjective notions of aesthetics and what is or is not available; not in accordance with “political” criteria. However, our observations also suggest that on those occasions when the *masorti* did switch his yarmulke style, it was done self consciously. The switch reflected the type of scripturalist authority which he now accepted. In other words, the *masorti* chooses the yarmulke that marks the rabbinic stream which he, the *masorti* sees as his religious model of emulation.

Holy people, *saints*, play a major role among some but not all *mizrahi* traditionalists. *Mizrahi* traditionalists are not the only group to believe that certain persons [alive or dead] are endowed with special relations toward God. Such beliefs are found to a greater or lesser degree among all religious Jews and finds special emphasis among one brand of *ashkenazi* ultra-Orthodox and is rooted in the Jewish tradition. Nevertheless, the veneration of saints, the special festivities that mark the day of their death, the magical power accorded to the blessings of the living saints, and the “excesses” that accompany all this finds some resistance and a desire to restrict its expansion among the *mizrahi* scripturalist leaders. They take exception (albeit with care) to what they consider to be the excessive adoration of holy people. Tension between the leaders of the official or elite religion and the practice of popular religion in Islam and in the Catholic church is well documented. Studying how this tension plays itself out among the religious elite and the traditionalist masses of *mizrahim* may suggest new theoretical insights. We must also explore whether traditionalists observe customs that are totally foreign to the

Jewish tradition and which, for example, find their origin in Islamic custom. Much research remains to be undertaken.

Our attention was also engaged by the question of how *masortiim* viewed “morality” and its relationship to religion. We phrased our questions in terms of “who is a good Jew?” The vast majority of our respondents denied emphatically that a Jew who observed religious law punctiliously was a better Jew or a better person. Instead they defined morality, ethics and humanitarianism as the criteria by which to judge who is a good Jew. In other words, our respondents refused to identify religiosity with morality.

It is instructive to compare the *masortiim* whom we studied with those whom Nancy Ammerman calls “Golden Rule Christians”<sup>33</sup>. Ammerman distinguishes Golden Rule Christians from “Evangelical Christians” and “Activist Christians”. The evangelicals and activists emphasize social action and working for justice. For Golden Rule Christians, “‘meaning’ is not found in cognitive or ideological structures, not in answers to life’s great questions, but in practices that cohere into something the person calls a ‘good life’”<sup>34</sup>. Ammerman quotes one church member as saying “I think all He [God] stands for makes you hope that you could be a better person”. Another, when asked to describe the essence of God answered that it’s “the way you live your life. By that I mean, what good is it to know God if -- you can study, you can be an excellent Bible student but if you don’t practice what you have learned, then you aren’t making a better world for yourself or for anyone”<sup>35</sup>.

Our *masortiim* also describe what they call a good person. That good person is comparable to the good person as described by Golden Rule Christians. It is a person who cares for and helps others without regard to who those other persons are. Our respondents

claim that they strive to be such people, that such people rank very highly in their eyes. But, and here is the big difference with what Ammerman found – our respondents deny that there is a connection between being such a person and being a religious Jew or fulfilling one's religious obligations. Were we to press our respondents we probably could have elicited agreement that Judaism does demand of one the qualities that make for a good person. But that is not their intuitive sense. Their intuitive sense is that religion has to do with punctiliously fulfilling ritual demands and acquiring knowledge of sacred text. They know too many rabbis and have too many acquaintances that meet the requirements necessary to call oneself *dati* yet who are not good people. On the other hand they have acquaintances who are good people but clearly aren't *datim*. Indeed, in one interview the respondent hinted at the fact that whereas she was "only" *masorti* she was a better person than religious women of her acquaintance. Her husband who was sitting in the room while the interview took place then related a story in greater detail that demonstrated that his wife behaved, in a specific situation, in a more ethical and honorable manner than religious women.

Nevertheless, we suspect that what our respondents told us is not the whole story. In the course of many of our interviews we "heard" our respondents identifying religiosity and morality. Indeed, on a number of occasions the passion with which our respondents insisted that there was no relationship between how religious a person was and whether he was a good person, reflected an opposite position. They expressed disappointment when they found fully observing Jews wanting from a moral point of view. In other words, we suspect that in many cases one could deduce (indirectly and not openly), that our respondents anticipated that the religious Jew would act in a more

ethical and humane manner than others. But the expectation that the religious Jew would serve as a kind of exemplary model for Judaism, for the Jewish way of life was often met with disappointment.

The identification between Judaism or a Jewish way of life and ethics and morality is also evident in the attitudes of *masortiim* toward *hiloniim*. Our respondents tended to identify *hiloniut* (a secular way of life) with *reykanut* (literarily: emptiness, an absence of values) and a kind of absence of humanity. The absence of belief in God (which is the mark of the *hiloni* in their eyes) is understood by *mizrahi* (though not *ashkenazi*) *masortiim* whom we interviewed, as signaling egoism and unbridled hedonism. The *hiloni* was described by some as concerned only with him/herself at the expense of others and at the expense of national as well as universal values and principles. If we think in terms of mirror images, *hiloniut* is the mirror image of *datiut* (being religious), but *hiloniut* is also the mirror image of principled, altruistic, moral behavior. By extension, therefore, religiosity does signal moral and ethical principles.

#### Conflicting Pressures on *Masortiim*

Amongst the three categories of Israeli Jews grouped by religious identity (*dati*, *hiloni* and *masorti*) only the percentage of *masortiim* declined (by seven percent) between 1990 and 1999. The proportion of the other two groups within the Jewish population remained constant or grew.<sup>36</sup> The influx of Russian immigrants is a partial explanation for the decline in the proportion of *masortiim* but we believe that the major explanation is the absence of socializing agents in addition to the family circle and close friends that reinforce *masortiut*. There are no schools or voluntary organizations that encourage

traditional behavior. In addition, as we argued elsewhere, the Israeli media ignores the *masorti* as distinct from the *hiloni* or the *dati* way of life and hardly offers it any form of representation.<sup>37</sup> As a result, *masortiim* live under constant cross pressures with no reinforcement outside their family or immediate circle of friends and the complexity of traditionalist practice – a complexity stemming from its idiosyncratic solution to the tension between modernity and religion – hinders its growth.

The identity problems of the *masorti* are compounded by the sense of many *masortiim* that the manner in which they conduct their religious life is almost unique. Some of our respondents believed that most Israeli Jews behaved like them. But the majority believed they were a small minority. One of the problems in sustaining a *masorti* identity is sense that one is “peculiar” and different. The *dati* Jew easily identifies other *datiim*. Since *datiim* tend to live in *dati* neighborhoods their religious identity is reinforced by those they see around them. The same is true of *hiloni* Jews. Religious and secular readily recognize one another by their public mannerisms but especially by their dress. *Masortiim*, however, who dress like secular Jews and who practice their Judaism in the confines of the home and family do not readily identify one another. Many of our respondents were shocked when told that *masortiim* constituted over thirty percent of the Jewish population of Israel. They live with the sense that they are alone making the temptations to join the ranks of either the secular or the religious that much more pronounced.

The major source of pressures on *masortiim* is the demand for coherence and consistency. In the eyes of *datiim* and *hiloniim* the behavior of the *masorti* seems inconsistent if not hypocritical. This pressure comes not only from *datiim*. *Hiloniim*, at

least by implication but sometimes explicitly, demand that the *masorti* decide to which side he/she belongs and to act accordingly.

The cultural context of Israeli life plays an important role in this regard. The demand of both sides that the *masorti* choose where he/she belongs is a demand to leave that liminal state of “neither here nor there”. Choosing one of the two sides requires the *masorti* to identify the other side as “other” and to structure his/her behavior in opposition to the other. We begin by describing some of the pressures that arise from the religious side.

### Religious pressures

As we already noted, the scripturalists see *masorti* behavior as flawed. It reflects a weakness of character if not a choice of sin rather than religious compliance. *Masortiut* is seen as partial heresy. Rabbis play a word game with the etymology of the term *masorti* in order to deny its legitimacy. *Masorti*, they say comes from the word *masor* (saw) and *nisur* (sawing) and not from the words *masoret* (tradition) and *mesira* (handing over). The *masorti* saws off a piece of Judaism for himself, chooses what is easy for him and throws away that which denies him the pleasures which secular culture offers. Rav Yosef Azran, a former Knesset representative from Shas (the bulk of Shas voters are *mizrahi masortiim*) expressed this idea in a television panel discussing the last Guttman Report. Azran reserved his criticism for the bulk of the *masortiim*, those who, in his opinion, were distancing themselves from the world of religion. (He excluded those who were originally secular and were now becoming more religious). In his words: “Why *masortiim*? Because it was hard for them to bear the yoke of religion, so they created an easy Judaism, whatever was easy for them. They keep cutting off more and

more until all will be gone.”<sup>38</sup> From the point of view of Azran and his fellow scripturalists, *masortiut* is not an error stemming, for example, from ignorance but rather a self-conscious transgression stemming from weak spirit, from a search for personal comfort at the expense of *halakhic* truth.

This critical stance toward the *masortiim* is not confined to *haredim*. It can be found in the camp of religious Zionism, a more open and modern camp than that of the *haredim*. A new television channel, one devoted entirely to the interests of the religious is scheduled to begin airing in the Spring of 2003. One of the stars of this channel spoke to the press about the nature of the satiric program he was preparing.

I intend to devote a lot of time to the religiosity of the non-religious Israeli. They wear yarmulkes at funerals, seek counsel from mystics, and don’t observe the Sabbath but fast on Yom Kippur. The *hiloni-dati* [a secularist who adopts some religious practices] is pathetic in my eyes. He wants very much to be politically correct – both an Israeli and progressive and a little bit of a Jew...this is an internal contradiction.<sup>39</sup>

This attitude is found in most religious schools whether they are schools run by *haredim* or religious Zionists. The journalist Daniel Ben Simon came to Israel from Morocco at the age of 16.<sup>40</sup> The traditionalist style of Jewish life is all he knew. (I.e. riding to the beach or swimming pool in summer after attending Shabbat services. He came to Israel through the Youth Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency and was placed in a religious-Zionist boarding school where the principal explained that he would have to wear a kippah and pray three times a day. When the youngster explained that in Morocco he was accustomed to praying only on Shabbat and holidays the principal interrupted him and said he must decide if he was *dati* or *hiloni*. Ben Simon says he knew what *dati* was but he didn’t understand *hiloni*. The principal explained that a *hiloni* was someone who didn’t believe in God and doesn’t see the Torah as the supreme heritage of

the Jewish people. “Either you are dati or you are hiloni,” he added. “I’m a Jew” Ben Simon stammered. After some more prodding Ben Simon said, “I think I am both *dati* and *hiloni*”. “There is no such thing” the principal said, “You are either dati or hiloni. There is nothing in the middle”.<sup>41</sup> The treatment of *masortiut* and *masortiim* in religious schools merits a separate study although we devote a few words to it below.

This delegitimation of the *masorti* contrasts with the attitude of Sephardic (*mizrahi*) rabbis in the past; an attitude characterized by relative tolerance through a lenient interpretation of the *halakha* aimed at preventing the exclusion of *masortiim* from the community of the faithful, an exclusion that was the fate of the totally secular. The attitude of Ovadia Yosef, the most important *halakhic* decisor and unquestioned religious leader of *mizrahi* Jews in our generation, is a model for this type of tolerance. Studies of his *halakhic* decisions point to his manipulation of the law in order to preserve a place for *masortiim* within the community. For example, and this is only one example of many, Yosef distinguished between the two separate commandments to observe the Sabbath. One insists that the Jew “observe the Sabbath day”, the other that he “remember the Sabbath day”. According to Yosef, if the Jew “remembers” (e.g. by reciting Kiddush), even if he doesn’t “observe” he has fulfilled the basic commandment and is not subject to the sanctions imposed on a Sabbath violator (for example not being given any ritual honor in the synagogue).<sup>42</sup> Meir Buzaglo brings other examples to illustrate the same point that older *mizrahi* rabbis were rather lenient with regard to *masortiim*. But he notes that these *halakhic* solutions are not answers to the *masorti*’s dilemma. The basic tensions between the *halakhic* demands which the *masorti* recognizes as legitimate and the *masorti*’s own behavior remain as core tensions in the rhythms of the *masorti*’s life.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, we sense that as the strength of the scripturalists within the camp of Israeli *mizrahim* grows, attitudes toward *masortiim* have become less accepting.

A central component in these tensions is the conception of the *hiloni*, in the eyes of the rabbis, and the attraction of the modern-secular way of life for the *masorti*.

Scripturalist spokesmen portray the *hiloni* as the opposite of all that is good and proper. The *hiloni* is vacuous, irresponsible, and immoral. Even when they show an understanding toward the *masorti* and try to draw him closer to them, the *mizrahi* scripturalists continue to voice their total rejection of “modern” life which they often identify with democracy. The *masorti*, even when he escapes this criticism is as it were infected with the disease of secularism.

Finally, we must recall that as a rule, even the positive attitude of the older generation of *mizrahi* rabbis toward the *masortiim* was based on the expectation that in the end, perhaps as a consequence of the rabbis’ lenient and open attitude, the *masorti* would adopt an Orthodox way of life. In other words, the *masorti* is accepted, but the condition being that the *masorti* recognize the flaw in his behavior, in his inconsistency, and admit that he is mistaken.

In the last three decades, with the emergence of Shas, a *haredi*-scripturalist movement, the pressures on the *masorti* have become more institutionalized. Nissim Leon describes it as “the reorganization of *mizrahi* religion under the hegemony of Sephardic masters of learning”.<sup>44</sup> This is expressed in the appointment of *haredi-mizrahi* rabbis to head synagogues whose congregants are primarily *masortiim*. This leads to a kind of religious extremism or in our terms scripturalist values replacing traditional ones. Leon describes this as “a move from a lenient religious culture to a strict religious culture

expressed in strict adherence to the *halakhic* text, at whose center stands the local rabbi transformed from an *halakhic* leader to a community leader whose charisma doesn't stem from his image as a mystic but as one learned in sacred text.<sup>45</sup>

### Secular pressures

The demand for consistency also comes from the secular side. However, in this case the rhetoric is less one-sided. The *hiloni* demands that the *masorti* "make himself clear"; that he choose one of two coherent paths; secularism (*hiloniut*) or religion (*datuit*). The *hiloni* acknowledges the right of the individual to live as he/she chooses. But sometimes without realizing it, the *hiloni* confines the choice to the two end points of the continuum. The dominance of this end point discourse finds expression in the demand for choosing a pure model. This is a discourse which confirms itself in its very presentation. When political, social and cultural discussion concentrates on the differences and tensions between *datiim* and *hiloniim*, everyone is naturally expected to identify themselves with one of the two sides leaving no room for an intermediate position. This, at least, is how it appears in the eyes of the *masorti*.

It is also worth recalling the distinction, at least within academic circles, between traditional and modern. One of the characteristics of the non-modern ("primitive" in the pre-politically correct era), is religion. This distinction between the modern and traditional that also guided social and educational policy, demanded that the *masorti* modernize him/herself. The need was felt to desocialize the *mizrahim* (undermine traditional society) and then resocialize them into modern Israeli society.<sup>46</sup> A major component in modernization was abandoning religion. That was the demand implied in the political and academic establishment's insistence on consistency and coherence, for

locating oneself in one of the two dichotomous categories and abandoning the “primitive” traditionalism for the sake of modernity.<sup>47</sup>

*Masortiut* threatens both extreme positions – secularism on the one hand and religion on the other. *Masortiim* provide a living example of the possibility that there is an alternative to rejecting either modernity or religion. This is true of Reform and Conservative Judaism as well but their presence in Israel is too weak for them to constitute a threat. The dichotomy of religious-secular builds the identity of each side. Each benefits from this binary image. The religious camp is crowned with a monopoly on the definition of the Jewish religion, the secular on the definition of freedom and progress. Recognition of the presence of the traditionalist undermines all this. We don’t really believe that more than a few of the protagonists are conscious of this. But we suspect that it is nonetheless a factor in their resistance and even more so in their ignoring the phenomenon of *masortiut*.

One of the fields where cross pressures on the *masorti* are most pronounced is in education. There are a few but very few schools that provide a place for the expression and reinforcement of a child’s identity as a *masorti* (primarily a result of a sympathetic principal and/or teachers) but there is no school system that does so. Most children from *masorti* homes attend state schools in which the environment is *hiloni* or state-religious schools in which the environment is *dati*. In both types of schools, even when *masortiim* constitute a majority of the student population, *masortiut*, if it receives any attention at all, is treated as a peripheral phenomenon. Curricula in both types of schools have no place for the system of beliefs and rituals or the hierarchical structure of *masorti* practices. The attitude of both school systems reflects the same discomfort with the

hybrid nature of *masortiut* to which we already have noted. By implication if not design, they press the student to adjust himself to the way of life that the school itself projects.<sup>48</sup>

### Internal pressures

Up to this point we have described some of the external pressures on *masortiim* to conform to either the secular or the religious way of life. But there are pressures, no less strong, generated by *masortiim* themselves. These are by nature more complex, not as straightforward, generally functioning at the subconscious level. These pressures result from the internalization of external pressures; the *masorti* internalizes the demand for consistency and these become part of his/her internal world. From a psychological point of view we suspect that these are the most important of the pressures.

These pressures emerge from discussions with our respondents. We confine ourselves here to our *mizrahi* respondents. Some openly expressed discomfort with their own religious behavior and painted a religious way of life as the ideal and their own life as falling short, as flawed, as something they hoped to correct. Other respondents didn't express themselves so directly, some even denied that their behavior was religiously flawed, but nevertheless expressed the basic hope that they would become "stronger" religiously. Many reported that they expected that they would be more observant in the future although in some cases the expectations was for a slow process of "strengthening". Not a single one of our *mizrahi* respondents expected to be less religious in the future. We interpreted this as an affirmation of the conception that the religious way of life was a better life. This was not true of our *ashkenazi* respondents.

The internal pressures stem from a sense of guilt which the *mizrahi masorti* bears. The scripturalist demand for "religious perfection" has been internalized by the

*masorti*. He accepts the notion that the religious Jew represents authentic Judaism and the desirable way of living a Jewish life. When asked to explain why the respondent's own behavior falls short of the ideal we were offered a variety of reasons – but the feeling of guilt remained. Nevertheless, as we indicate in the concluding section, this sense of guilt is the concomitant to a way of life that is consciously chosen.

*Hiloni* pressure also leads to self-denigration. In this respect as well the *masorti* views himself as flawed, not from a religious point of view but from the modernizing point of view. The negative self image of the *masorti*, the association of *masorti* and *primitivi* (primitive) is in some cases so pronounced that as the Guttman Reports shows, many who live a *masorti* life choose not to identify themselves as such and identify themselves as *hiloniim*.<sup>49</sup> It is also important to recall the identification of *masortiut* with *mizrahim* in the minds of many Israelis. The cultural and socio-economic status of the *mizrahi* renders *mizrahi* identity as peripheral. Considering the generally peripheral image of a religious identity in Israeli society, *masortiut* combines two stigmatized identities: *mizrahi* and quasi-religious. No wonder that some *masortiim* prefer to be identified as something other than *masorti*.

Another sort of pressure which the *masorti* confronts is the temptation which the liberal-*hiloni* style of life accords. It is viewed as a liberated life in which the individual's basic responsibility is to oneself. It is a life which is relatively free of strong communal and collective constraints, free from the responsibility to history and the archaic demands of religion. These responsibilities are often described in terms of coercion, as coercing or imposing themselves on the individual whereas the secular-liberal life frees one from these constraints. One manner of confronting these temptations

is for the *masorti* to privatize his/her own conceptions of what is Judaically proper. Thus, as we indicated above, the *masortiim*, regardless of how observant they may be in their own lives, refuse to impose religious observance on the Israeli public,<sup>50</sup> although many express the hope that the Israeli “street” will bear a religiously distinctive character.

### Conclusion: *Masortiut* and Multiple Modernities

In rereading our interviews that we conducted (a process that continuing), and in reconsidering what we have learned, we feel that the concept *multiple modernities* is most appropriate in seeking to fit the phenomenon of Israeli *masortiut* into some wider framework. The most important respect in which *masortiut* is a decidedly modern phenomenon is that the traditionalist consciously chooses his identity. It is not forced upon him nor, in light of the pressures from both the secularists and the scripturalists can it, by any stretch of the imagination, be taken for granted. The *masorti* is quite familiar with the other, culturally dominant alternatives. He hears their demands, is aware of their system of values, and conscious of the fact that both secularism and scripturalism offer a consistent way of life which imbues the follower with a sense of confidence in his/her own identity – a quality that many of the traditionalists with whom we speak admit they lack. Nonetheless, the *masorti* chooses to be *masorti*. He is conscious of his identity, of its special character and of its advantages (as he/she sees them of course), and to its unique place in the map of socio-political identities in Israel.

The element of choice, whose importance we can not over emphasize in any discussion of the modern face of traditionalism, arose in our interviews in a most direct manner, most often at the initiative of the respondents themselves. All our *mizrahi*

respondents noted that they had learned traditionalist behavior from their homes, they all recognize the importance of the manner in which they were raised, but they also reported that at a certain stage in their lives, generally between the ages of 18 and 21 while doing their compulsory army service, they consciously chose to adopt for themselves the *masorti* identity which they had learned at home. Most often they mentioned that an important factor was their own commitment to the state of Israel, to the Jewish people, to religion to Jewish history to their families or to some combination of these factors. Here, for example, is how one of our female respondents phrased it: "You can say that it is a commitment to family, to parents, and also a commitment of a larger nature (*b'gadol*), to all of Judaism ... The tradition is like an umbilical cord. This is where you come from. It's rational as well as emotional". Our respondent told us of the moment when she became conscious of this rational choice, while recognizing the social cost involved in this choice.

After matriculation, in the army, after leaving home I was stationed in a base far from home...you don't live in the circle of parents, so you set the rules for yourself. You decide what you are going to do on Shabbat, you decide what you will eat and not eat, you go out with friends and decide on your behavior, and I decided to isolate myself from my surroundings.

We don't doubt that many secular and religious Israeli Jews see their identity as a matter of choice. But a comparison of the choice of *masortiut* with that of secularism on the one hand and scripturalism on the other demonstrates the greater complexity of the first. We argue that the *masorti* identity is based on a choice that is of greater significance than the alternative choices because in most cases the secular and the religious Jew never really have the identity options of the *masortiim*. In many respects the scripturalist and the secularist identities, to the extent that they are matters of

choice and not simply givens from the home and the cultural environment, are formed as mirror images of their polar opposites.

It is our sense that the only alternatives from which most of those born into scripturalist and secularist homes can choose is to either remain as they are or totally transform their identities. Not surprisingly, they tend to become extreme in these new identities. At least so we are told anecdotally. The *masorti* identity, on the other hand, is always of a mixed, hesitant, tempered nature. It must always, so it seems, justify itself and, as we have noted, is often accompanied by feelings of guilt. The possibility of alternate choices is always present because the options are always present and fairly easy to adopt.

In conclusion, the notion of “multiple modernities”, the notion that modernity is arrived at in a variety of ways seems to provide a more useful theoretical paradigm than the secular modernization paradigm. Multiple modernities and our example of *masortiut* provides us with far richer opportunities to explore the relationships between modernization, and religious, ethnic, national and collective identity.<sup>51</sup> In the Israeli context, in the context of the discourse concerning a “Jewish State” or a “State for the Jews” the relationship of religion, nationalism, ethnicity and modernity is a complex one. The relationship between national symbols, ceremonies and values (the civil religion) and the system of Jewish-religious values, beliefs and ceremonies troubled the Zionist enterprise from its very outset, underwent many changes and has been the topic of research in recent years.<sup>52</sup> But the modernity-secularism discourse renders *masortiut* and *masortiim* into something of an anomaly; something requiring a solution rather than an identity expression which sheds light on new ways to view

Israeli society. In the context of a Jewish national state, the traditionalist option may yet reveal itself as a solution to the continuing tension inherent in the Jewish national enterprise – the tension between a universal and a particularistic identity, between a state which is “democratic” and one which is “Jewish”.

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<sup>1</sup> In the latest Guttman Report, see the next endnote, not one respondent who identified him/herself as Conservative or Reform also identified themselves as dati. Most categorized themselves as either masorti or as not dati. A few Reform identified themselves as anti-dati.

<sup>2</sup> Among those whom we would term *hiloni* 43 percent identified themselves as non-*dati* and five percent as anti-*dati*. In other words, using our terminology, one which Israelis themselves use, 48 percent of the sample would categorize themselves as *hiloniim* when offered the standard choice between *dati*, *masorti*, or *hiloni*. The most comprehensive studies of religious observance in Israel are the “Guttman Reports”: Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn, Elihu Katz, Jewish Israelis: A Portrait (Jerusalem: Avi Chai and the Israel Democracy Institute, in Hebrew, 2002); [the highlights of the study appeared as a separate booklet under the same name. Unless otherwise cited, our citations of the report refer to this booklet]; Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn, Elihu Katz, Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews (Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Institute of Applied Social Research, 1993) [the Highlights of that Report are reprinted in Charles Liebman and Elihu Katz (eds.), The Jewishness of Israelis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), which also includes an analysis of the 1993 Report].

<sup>3</sup> Meir Buzaglo, “The New Traditionalist: A Phenomenology”, in Ephraim Hazan and Haym Saadon (eds.) Collected Essays on the Heritage of North African Jewry (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, in Print, in Hebrew). For a summary presentation of the distinction between modern and traditional societies see Yaakov Katz, “Traditional Society and Modern Society”, in Shlomo Deshen and Moshe Shokeid (eds.) Jews of the Middle East: Anthropological Perspectives on Past and Present (Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1984, in Hebrew), pp. 27-34.

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Shokeid, “New Directions in the Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews”, in Shlomo Deshen and Moshe Shokeid (eds.) Jews of the Middle East: Anthropological Perspectives on Past and Present (Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1984, in Hebrew), pp. 78-91, quote from p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Yaakov Shavit, “Supplying a Missing System – Between Official and Unofficial Popular Culture in the Hebrew National Culture in Eretz-Israel,” B[enjamin] Z Kedar (ed.), The Folk Culture (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1996), pp. 327-345.

<sup>6</sup> Shokeid, “New Directions...”, p. 79-80.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman, “Introduction”, in Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman (eds.) Nation and religion: perspectives of Europe and Asia. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1999), pp. 1-14; Talal Asad, “Religion, nation-state and secularism”, ibid, pp. 178-196; Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> The use of the term “pre-modern” appears in the introduction by Shlomo Deshen and Moshe Shokeid to an article by Yaakov Katz, “Traditional Society and Modern Society” reprinted in a collection edited by Deshen and Shokeid. (see endnote 3). The choice by the editors of this article, a summary article on modernization, as an introduction to a volume dealing with *mizrahi* Judaism, with special emphasis on the religion of *mizrahim*, is instructive as to the theoretical framework in which traditionalism was studied. See also Shlomo Deshen, “The Religiosity of Middle Easterners in the Crises of Immigration”, in Deshen and Shokeid (eds.) Jews of the Middle East:... pp. 71-77

<sup>9</sup> See Moshe Shokeid, “The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews”, in Shlomo Deshen, Charles S. Liebman and Moshe Shokeid (eds.) Israeli Judaism (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), pp. 236-7.

<sup>10</sup> See Shlomo Deshen, “The religiosity of the *Mizrahim*: Public, Rabbis, and Belief”, Alpayim 9 (1994, in Hebrew), pp. 44-58; Moshe Shokeid, “New Directions in the Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews”; Stephen

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Sharot, "Judaism in Pre-Modern Societies", in Deshen and Shokeid (eds.) Jews of the Middle East:.... pp. 35-50; Mordechai Bar-Lev and Peri Kedem, "Ethnicity and Religiosity of Students: Does College Education necessarily Cause the Abandoning of Religious Tradition?", Megamot 28 (2-3) (1984, in Hebrew), pp. 265-279; Moshe Shokeid, "The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews", in Deshen, Liebman and Shokeid (eds.) Israeli Judaism, pp. 213-237; Hannah Ayalon, Eliezer Ben-Rafael, and Stephen Sharot "The Costs and Benefits of Ethnic Identification". The British Journal of Sociology 37(4), (1986), pp. 550-568; Shlomo Deshen, "On Religious Change: The Situational Analysis of Symbolic Action". Comparative Studies in Society and History 12(3), (1970), pp. 260-274; Shlomo Deshen, "Israeli Judaism: Introduction to the Major Patterns". International Journal of Middle East Studies 9, (1978), pp. 141-169; Harvey Goldberg, & Claudio G. Serg' "Holding on to Both Ends: Religious Continuity and Changes in the Libyan Jewish Community, 1860-1949". Maghreb Review 14, (1989), pp.161-86; Harvey Goldberg, "Religious Responses among North African Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries". In J. Wertheimer, (ed.) The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary with Harvard University Press, 1993) pp. 119-44; Harvey Goldberg, "Religious Responses to Modernity among the Jews of Jerba and of Tripoli: A Comparative Study". The Journal of Mediterranean Studies 4, (1994), pp.278-99; Harvey Goldberg, "A Tradition of Invention: Family and Educational Institutions among Contemporary Traditionalizing Jews". Conservative Judaism 47 (2), (1995), pp. 69-84.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Harvey Goldberg, "Historical and Cultural Dimensions of Ethnic Phenomena in Israel", in A. Weingrod (ed.) Studies in Israeli Ethnicity (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1985), pp. 179-200; Eliezer Ben-Rafael, The Emergence of Ethnicity: Cultural Groups and Social Conflict in Israel. (London: Greenwood Press, 1982); Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Stephen Sharot, Ethnicity, Religion and Class in Israeli Society. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1991); Harvey Goldberg, "The Changing Meaning of Ethnic Affiliation". Jerusalem Quarterly 44, (1987), pp. 39-50; Harvey Goldberg. "Ethnic and Religious Dilemmas of a Jewish State: A Cultural and Historical Perspective", in Akira Usuki (ed.) State Formation and Ethnic Relations in the Middle East. (Osaka, Japan: The Japan Center for Area Studies, 2001), pp. 47-64.

<sup>12</sup> Yoram Bilu and Eyal Ben-Ari "The Making of Modern Saints: Manufactured Charisma and the Abu-Hatseiras of Israel". American Ethnologist 19, (1992), pp. 29-44; Yoram Bilu "Moroccan Jews and the Shaping of Israel's Sacred Geography", in Deborah Dash Moore and S. Ilan Troen (eds.) Divergent Jewish Cultures: Israel and America. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 72-86; Yoram Bilu "Dreams and the Wishes of the Saint", in Harvey Goldberg (ed.) Judaism Viewed from Within and from Without: Anthropological Studies. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987) pp. 285-313; Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu "Saint Sanctuaries in Israeli Development Towns: On a Mechanism of Urban Transformation". Urban Anthropology 16, (1987), pp. 234-272; Harvey Goldberg "Potential Polities: Jewish Saints in the Moroccan Countryside and in Israel". In M. Bax, P. Kloos and A. Koster, (eds.) Faith and Polity: Essays on Religion and Politics. (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit University Press, 1984), pp. 235-50; Alex Weingrod, The Saint of Beersheba. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Susan Sered, "Women, Religion and Modernization: Tradition and Transformation among Elderly Jews in Israel," American Anthropologist 92, (1990), pp. 306-318; See also Susan Sered, "Women and Religious Change in Israel: Rebellion or Revolution". Sociology of Religion 58 (1997), pp. 1-24.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Bjorn Wittrock, "Rethinking Modernity," The Annals of the International Institute of Sociology 8 (2002), pp.51-73 and most of the articles in Deadalus, 129 (Winter, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Shokeid, "The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews", p. 237.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed presentation of the idea of multiple modernities see Daedalus, 129 (Winter 2000). See especially, S.N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," pp. 1-29.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). Ernest Gellner, addressing the same phenomenon (he even uses the term scripturalism), prefers to label it as "fundamentalism". See Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

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<sup>18</sup> Haym Soloveitchik, "Migration, Acculturation, and the New Role of Texts in the Haredi World" Martin Marty And R. Scott Appleby (eds.), Accounting for Fundamentalism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 197-235.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the early historian of hasidut, Simon Dubnov attributes the bitter conflict from the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth century between Hasidism and its opponents to the former's rejection of the primacy of text. S.M.Dubnov, Toldot Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv: Dvir, in Hebrew, 1975).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.201

<sup>21</sup> For an extended discussion of these options see Charles S. Liebman, "Religion and the Chaos of Modernity: The Case of Contemporary Judaism," Jacob Neusner (ed.), Take Judaism for Example: Studies Toward the Comparison of Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 147-164.

<sup>22</sup> David Hall (ed.), Lived Religion in America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Shokeid, "New Directions in the Religiosity...", p. 88.

<sup>24</sup>This characteristic recurs time and time again in our interviews as well as in all the opinion surveys of Israelis on the topic of religion and the public arena. Traditionalists are characterized by their moderation on the topic of imposing Jewish law in the public arena. See for example, Shlomo Hasson and Amiram Gonen, The Cultural Tension within Jerusalem's Jewish Population (Jerusalem: The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1997, in Hebrew).

<sup>25</sup> Levy, Levinsohn & Katz, Jewish Israelis: A Portrait, pp. 14-15

<sup>26</sup> One exception is Harvey Goldberg "Ethnic and Religious Dilemmas of a Jewish State:..."

<sup>27</sup> Zvi Zohar, Tradition and Change: Halakhic Responses of Middle Eastern Rabbis to Legal and Technological Change (Egypt and Syria, 1880-1920) (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1993, in Hebrew)

<sup>28</sup> Buzaglo, "The New Traditionalist: A Phenomenology" cites other examples.

<sup>29</sup>Shokeid, "New Directions...", p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> See especially: Shokeid, ibid., Shokeid, "The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews"; and Deshen, "The Religiosity of the *Mizrahim*...".

<sup>31</sup> Gideon Aran, "The Haredi Body: Chapters From An Ethnography in Preparation," Emanuel Sivan and Kimmy Kaplan (eds.), Text, Rhetoric and Behavior: Collected Articles on Haredi Society in Israel (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and the Kibbutz Hameuchad, in Hebrew, forthcoming)

<sup>32</sup> See also Shokeid, "New Directions..."

<sup>33</sup> Nancy Ammerman, "Golden Rule Christianity," David Hall (ed.), Lived Religion in America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 196-216.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 202-203

<sup>36</sup> Levi, Levinsohn & Katz, Jewish Israelis... p. 5.

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<sup>37</sup> Yaacov Yadgar and Yeshayahu (Charles) Liebman, “Jewish Traditionalism and Popular Culture in Israel”. Iyunim 13 (forthcoming, in Hebrew).

<sup>38</sup> Rav Yosef Azran in an interview with Aliza Lavi, in the program “Shavua Tov”, Israeli TV Channel 1, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002. We are grateful to Dr. Aliza Lavi for securing this quote for us.

<sup>39</sup> The quote, by Kobi Ariel, in an article by Aviv Lavi, “Rating’s Judaism”, Haaretz- Musaf (November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002), pp. 30-34, quote from p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> The story is related in Daniel Ben Simon, “*Dati or Hiloni*,” Dedi Zucker (ed.), We the Secular Jews: What is Secular Jewish Identity? (Tel-Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, in Hebrew, 1999), pp. 102-110.

<sup>41</sup> The attitude of the young Ben Simon is echoed in a recent interview with another Moroccan, this one aged 60. Shlomo Bar, a popular vocalist and drummer has become ”observant – in his own style...Often he mentions God and quotes from Jewish sources...But if you ask him whether he’s observant, he says, simply ‘I’m a Jew’”. Tamara Novis, “Raising the Bar,” Jerusalem Post, City Lights (August 1, 2003), p. 10

<sup>42</sup> Benny Lau, “Defining the Masorti Jew,” Conference on Jewish Approaches to Conflict Resolution, Bar Ilan University, Nov. 11, 2002. See also Ariel Picard, “Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and his Struggle with ‘the Generation of Freedom’” (forthcoming, in Hebrew).

<sup>43</sup> Buzaglo, “The New Traditionalist...”

<sup>44</sup> Nissim Leon, Sephardim and Haredim: An Ethnographic Inquiry of Shas Movement’s Influence on the Identity Discourse in Israel (MA thesis, Department of Sociology, Tel Aviv University, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Rivka Bar Yoseph “Desocialization and Resocialization: The Adjustment Process of Immigrants” in Ernest Krausz (ed.) Immigration, Ethnicity and Community (New Jersey: Transaction Books, Studies of Israeli Society, 1980), pp. 19-27.

<sup>47</sup> Some of the more brutal applications of this philosophy to the area of education are found in Reuven Feuerstein, Children of the Melah: Cultural Underdevelopment Among Children of Morocco and Its Educational Implications. (Jerusalem: Machon Szold and the Department of Children’s Immigration of the Jewish Agency, in Hebrew, 1965). For an analysis of this approach see Meir Bozaglo, “Mizrahiut, Tradition and the Melting Pot: Toward An Alternate Narrative,” in Z. Harvey, G. Hazon-Rokem and Y. Shiloach (eds.), Zion and Zionism (Jerusalem: Misgav, in Hebrew, forthcoming).

<sup>48</sup> For a critical review of educational ideologies and their attitudes toward Mizrahi traditionalism see Meir Buzaglo, “Educational Ideologies: The Mizrahi Point of View”, in Yaacov Iram, Samuel Scolnicov, Jonathan Cohen and Elli Schachter (eds.) Crossroads: Values and Education in Israeli Society (Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Education, 2001), pp. 480-521.

Further evidence is found in the deliberations of a recent conference published in the *Zohar* journal. *Zohar* consists of a group of young Orthodox rabbis at the liberal end of the religious continuum, who made a mark for themselves in their willingness to accommodate marriages of non-Orthodox Jews within the broadest limits of Jewish law. The Avi Chai Foundation invited *Zohar* rabbis to a meeting in which they were to assess the desirability of creating an educational system for *masortim*. (*Zohar* 12, September, 2002, pp. 111-126). Many of the participants, even as they expressed their basic support for such a move, also expressed their fears from the creation of such a system. Among the fears they expressed were that such a system would encourage absence of knowledge and an unwillingness to be observant, and that it would end up with “a bit of yiddishkeit; but this is not enough” The rabbis all agreed, however, that there was a great opportunity to draw the *masorti* public closer to full fledged religion (i.e. Orthodoxy). See also Eldad Cohen, Religious Zionism- Between National Haredism and Liberal Religion: The Socio-

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Religious Split Within Religious Zionism in the Educational System (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, Department of Political Studies, M.A.Thesis, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> There are additional reasons for this identification some of which are discussed in our chapter on secularism in Israel.

<sup>50</sup> In addition to the evidence from our own interviews see: Hasson and Gonon, The Cultural Tension within Jerusalem's Jewish Population, and Levy, Levinsohn and Katz, Jewish Israelis...

<sup>51</sup> Van der Veer and Lehman, "Introduction"; Asad, "Religion, nation-state and secularism" ... For a critical assessment of the secularization thesis see Rodney Stark, "Secularization R.I.P.," Sociology of Religion, 60 (Fall, 1999), pp. 249-273.

<sup>52</sup> See for example, Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State . (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).