



## SLIDING TO THE LEFT? CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN MODERN ORTHODOXY

During the second half of the twentieth century, many observers of American Orthodoxy were struck by its move to the right, and a small group of social scientists offered a number of basic sociological factors to explain why Orthodoxy in modern society adopted a stance of greater isolation and ritualistic stringency. Perhaps the first social scientist to point to that phenomenon was Charles Liebman, who indicated (albeit without explaining) the trend in his pioneering analysis of American Orthodox Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Almost two decades later, he wrote his seminal essay, "Extremism as a Religious Norm,"<sup>2</sup> which analyzed religious extremism in general and Jewish religious extremism in particular but did not deal specifically with American Orthodox Judaism. Rather, he focused on developments in Orthodox Judaism in Israel.

In a paper that focused specifically on American Orthodox patterns, Chaim Waxman distinguished between *haredi* Judaism and Modern Orthodoxy in terms of three variables.<sup>3</sup> The first involves attitudes toward the larger society and the larger Jewish community and essentially is a matter of "isolation," the stance of the *haredi*, versus "inclusion," which is that of the Modern Orthodox. A second variable entails attitudes toward modernity, general scholarship and science, with the *haredi* being antagonistic and Modern Orthodoxy being accommodating if not welcoming. The third involves a basic difference between the two communities in their attitudes toward Zionism and their active involvement in Jewish national rebirth and development, with the *haredi* being antagonistic towards the Zionist enterprise and the Modern Orthodox welcoming it as a religious value.<sup>4</sup> A number of examples of "haredization" were presented but perhaps its most conspicuous manifestations were in American Orthodox Jewry's greater punctiliousness in ritual observance, perceived by many to be a proclivity to adopt unduly stringent stances, *humrot*, on ritual matters, as well as a distinct inward turn highlighted by decreased cooperation with the Conservative and Reform branches of American Judaism. By the turn of the 21st century, these tendencies advanced to the point where a keen observer of the American Jewish scene perceived a *kulturkampf* in American Judaism, with the

Orthodox versus the non-Orthodox engaged in a “struggle for the soul of American Judaism.”<sup>5</sup> Most recently, Samuel Heilman argued that within Orthodoxy the *haredi* sector has won the battle and their religious values now characterize American Orthodoxy as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Our hypothesis is that American Orthodox Jewry is much more heterogeneous than the above-cited observers perceived, that the modern Orthodox sector, in particular, is neither of one stripe nor has it overwhelmingly “haredized” and, indeed, there have been some developments indicating significant ritualistic departure not only from *haredi* norms and values but from traditional Jewish religious behavior as well. We will discuss those developments as they relate to gender, theology, and organizational issues. The findings of our interviews on the state of American Modern Orthodoxy with more than fifty knowledgeable observers will then be presented, after which we will present our own, tentative analysis. While this article highlights many of the basic elements of this phenomenon, our ultimate objective is to study all of this empirically and to arrive at a more definitive assessment of American Orthodox Judaism.

#### GENDER ISSUES

One of the most discussed and pressing concerns for many modern Orthodox Jews is the role of women.<sup>7</sup> Increasing numbers of modern Jewish women have felt that they have very limited or no place in the Orthodox synagogue or the organized community. Historically, few opportunities existed for women to pursue higher levels of Judaic studies. In the synagogue, women have not been counted for a quorum nor have they been able to lead mixed prayer services or even pray together in the same way as their male counterparts. However, in recent years, a variety of attempts have been made to expand the educational opportunities available to women and increase their role in greater Synagogue life.

A driving force behind many of these efforts is The Jewish Orthodox Feminists' Alliance (JOFA), an organization of women and men that seeks “to expand the spiritual, ritual, intellectual and political opportunities for women within the framework of *halakha*.”<sup>8</sup> Beginning as a small group, JOFA has grown to more than 5,500 members. It held its first international conference in 1997 and has held one every two years since. These are major conferences, with more than a thousand attendees and from which have emerged numerous scholarly articles and books.

One controversial issue in this arena is that of Orthodox women's *tefilla* (prayer) groups. The first such group emerged on October 1, 1972, at the Lincoln Square Synagogue (LSS), in New York City, when then Rabbi Shlomo Riskin permitted women to hold their own service and dance with the Torah on the holiday of Simchat Torah. Although legitimated by a number of prominent Orthodox rabbis, many other Orthodox rabbis either frown upon such prayer groups or prohibit them outright on both halakhic and sociological grounds.

A further innovation and, some emphasize, deviation from tradition was the establishment of "Partnership Minyanim," modeled after the Kehillat Shira Hadasha, a congregation established in 2002 in the German Colony neighborhood of Jerusalem. That congregation has a divider running down the middle which separates men and women, but women do lead parts of the services on Friday night and Shabbat morning, as well as read from the Torah on Shabbat morning. They are also honored with taking out the Torah and returning it. Several Orthodox rabbis have written works legitimating these innovations, but most prohibit them.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the staunch opposition of many prominent Orthodox rabbis there are now more than several dozen Orthodox/observant women's *tefilla* groups in more than a dozen states in the U.S., as well as many more in Israel, Canada, the U.K., and Australia. Although not a "groundswell," these figures appear to belie the assertion by Joel Wolowelsky that, "The number of *tefillah* groups has hardly increased dramatically over the years."<sup>10</sup> There are also more than a dozen "Partnership Minyanim" in more than half-a-dozen states in the U.S., as well as others in Israel, Australia, and Canada. And the numbers appear to increase annually. During the summer of 2010, the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a popular Orthodox synagogue in Riverdale, New York, made headlines when it announced that a woman would be allowed to lead certain sections of the Friday night prayer with men and women seated in the pews.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the impact of larger social and cultural forces, the feminist awareness of increasing numbers of Orthodox Jewish women is probably also related to their increased levels of higher Jewish education over the past half-century.<sup>12</sup> Renewed ideological validation of higher Jewish learning for women was provided by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik when, in 1977, he gave the inaugural lecture at the opening of the Beit Midrash program at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women, thereby indicating his support of educational equality at the highest levels. Indeed, almost 40 years earlier, Rabbi Soloveitchik had espoused the goal of equal Jewish education for females in the Maimonides School which he headed in Boston.<sup>13</sup>

Within a few years, Drisha, an institution which achieved not only legitimacy but a reputation as providing a first-class institution of higher Jewish education for women, was founded in New York City, and subsequently, in 2000, Yeshiva University established its Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Studies with the explicit goal of developing “an elite cadre of female scholars of Talmud and Halakha (Jewish law) who will serve as leaders and role models for the Orthodox Jewish community.”<sup>14</sup>

In Jerusalem, Orthodox programs such as Matan, Michlelet Lindenbaum, and Nishmat, where significant numbers of American Orthodox women study, have had a significant impact on the levels of intensive and extensive Jewish education of Orthodox women. For many young American women and men who have experienced the post-high school “Year-in-Israel” yeshiva and seminary experience, the experience led to higher levels of religious observance.<sup>15</sup> This may help explain the pattern during the past several decades in the U.S. in which it became noticeably more popular for married modern Orthodox women to cover their hair in public. Indeed, there is now a sense of a need to find legitimation for those who do not cover their hair.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, it seems reasonable to assume that, with those increased levels, a growing number of such women have developed a clearer consciousness of themselves as Jewish women and some have aspired to greater involvement and presence in the public spheres of the Orthodox community.<sup>17</sup>

One of the major issues separating the Orthodox from the non-Orthodox has been that of the ordination of women. Recently, that line of separation has been blurred. In March 2009, Rabbis Daniel Sperber and Avraham Weiss bestowed the title “*Rabba*” (“Female Rabbi”) on an Orthodox Jewish woman who had served as a religious guide and offered spiritual and pastoral counseling at Weiss’ congregation.<sup>18</sup> The act has been greeted with significant scorn in the Orthodox community, but that is largely the reaction of men who let their opinions be known. What is not yet known is how modern Orthodox Jewish women, as well as Orthodox men who have not made public statements, perceive this development.

Although the ordination of women is currently beyond the pale, Orthodox women are taking on other religious leadership roles. For example, *Yo’atzot*—women who are recognized as authorities capable of providing information on halakhic aspects of family purity, sexuality and reproduction—are becoming increasingly normative in American modern Orthodox communities. Additionally, there are now several women who function as members of the clergy, albeit without the title of rabbi. For example, one New York City community, Lincoln Square

Synagogue, has a female who functions, as least in part, as a member of the clergy, although without the title “Rabbi” or “Rabba.”

#### THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Orthodox Judaism is frequently perceived as primarily focused on behavior, observance of *mitzvoth*, and encompassing only a few basic beliefs, such as the Divine origin and immutability of the Written Law. Rabbinic authority, which is rooted in the Oral Law, has enabled Orthodox Judaism to avoid some of the theological challenges that Christian fundamentalist groups have faced. For example, there are numerous authoritative Orthodox Jewish perspectives and interpretations that have reckoned with such notions as the age of the universe, the age of Earth, evolution, and others.

Be that as it may, beliefs are broadly assumed to be part of the Orthodox religious system, and they periodically become social issues. For example, one of the issues perceived to have capped the final break between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism during the 1940s and 1950s, was the issue of “Torah from Sinai,” the firm belief that the Torah was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. For the Orthodox, that belief, despite its variations, is fundamental. When increasing numbers of Conservative scholars questioned it, the movement as a whole was deemed by the Orthodox to be beyond the pale. Also, in 1945, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the Rabbinical Council of Greater New York, and others, excommunicated Mordecai M. Kaplan<sup>19</sup> who, prior to founding the Reconstructionist Society for the Advancement of Judaism, had been Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish Center in New York.<sup>20</sup>

More recently, there appears to have been a shift in the staunch opposition to anything but the traditional “Torah from Sinai” belief. Thus, James Kugel, Professor of Hebrew Literature at Harvard University, is also Professor of Bible at Bar Ilan University, an Orthodox institution, and has been a scholar-in-residence in a variety of Orthodox synagogues, despite his professing ideas that some Modern Orthodox Bible scholars view as unacceptable. For example, Yeshiva’s University’s Professor of Bible, Moshe Bernstein, opined that Kugel “has ventured beyond those constraints in his acceptance of the composite authorship for the Torah,” raised serious questions as to whether “someone who has publicly espoused the views that he has should speak at Yeshiva,” and concluded that Kugel should not have been invited to speak there.<sup>21</sup> However, the fact that he was and continues to be invited to speak before Orthodox audiences may be

indicative of a theological shift in modern Orthodoxy in which less traditional beliefs are gaining more acceptance in the community, even as some of the community's most prominent rabbinic leaders are "sliding to the right."

In another manifestation of an apparent theological shift, a number of Orthodox scholars have challenged a widely accepted Orthodox dogma which asserts the obligation to firmly believe in the "Thirteen Principles of Faith," recorded in the twelfth century by Moses Maimonides in his commentary on the Mishnah. That obligation has been articulated not only by those who identify with the *haredi* world but also by leading figures in Modern Orthodoxy. Indeed, the near-universal chanting in Orthodox congregations of the well-known *Yigdal* prayer, a concise form of Maimonides' principles, and its presence in all Orthodox prayer books highlight the general consensus, at least until recently, that the principles of faith are binding. Within the past decade or so the binding nature of those principles of faith has been questioned by several Modern Orthodox scholars, especially Marc Shapiro<sup>22</sup> and Menachem Kellner.<sup>23</sup> Although some Modern Orthodox thinkers and leaders clearly reject their ideas,<sup>24</sup> Shapiro and Kellner appear to have "eloquently and thoroughly articulated a view espoused privately by many scholars," and increasing numbers of "rabbis and lecturers felt justified in preaching a more theologically open Orthodoxy."<sup>25</sup>

In response to the sliding to the left in the Modern Orthodox community, Gil Student, the founder of one of the most eminent blogs in that community, *torahmusings.com*, suggested the term "Post-Orthodox" to describe a group that has veered from traditional Orthodox beliefs and practices, and he set down a new set of "thirteen principles" that are characteristic of Post-Orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup> The more-than 250 comments to that blog indicate widespread disagreement with the very notion of setting down principles as well as widespread heterogeneity of belief and practice within the Modern Orthodox community. If those comments are in any way reflective of that community, it can hardly be characterized as either *haredi* or as "sliding to the right."

#### THE DATA

An accurate portrait of American Modern Orthodoxy would require representative empirical data from leaders and members of Modern Orthodox institutions, including congregations and schools. As a preliminary first step we interviewed more than fifty male and female practitioners and/or observers of American Modern Orthodoxy

across the U.S. and Israel, including congregational rabbis, educators, heads of other Jewish communal institutions and organizations, and social scientists, and asked them for their perceptions of changes in Modern Orthodoxy and whether they view it as growing, surviving, or declining. Although the overwhelming majority of our respondents allowed us to reveal their identity, there were a few who requested anonymity. Therefore, we are presenting our findings without naming any of our respondents.

Our interviews revealed that there is no consensus on the state of contemporary Modern Orthodoxy. On the contrary, there are many different opinions about what it is, what is taking place within the movement, where it is heading, and how the respondents evaluate the patterns as they see them. Most saw it as a multidimensional movement with varying patterns and directions, and the respondents tended to evaluate the patterns in terms of their own personal perspectives and definitions of what Modern Orthodoxy is or should be.

A number of our respondents pointed to a difficulty in defining Modern Orthodoxy and, therefore, in making any definitive statement as to its current condition or in offering a prognosis. Nevertheless, many were able to offer tentative thoughts on the state of Modern Orthodoxy generally, and especially Modern Orthodoxy's relationship and potential impact on the *haredi* community. One respondent, an executive in the Jewish publishing industry, put it this way:

It's hard to define Modern Orthodoxy, so it's hard to say whether it's on the decline. My general sense is that—at least in comparison to non-Hasidic haredism—it is not only not on the retreat but can declare victory.

This respondent proceeded to enumerate a series of indicators of influence of Modern Orthodoxy on “non-Hasidic haredism” (NHH), such as the fact that the vast majority of NHH have at least a high school diploma and some go on to become professionals, such as lawyers and doctors; that females now receive significant secular and intensive Jewish education; that the NHH no longer view Yeshiva University as “the enemy”—“Rabbis Soloveitchik and Lamm<sup>27</sup> are in the ArtScroll Humash.<sup>28</sup> [Further] ArtScroll publishes the Rav [Soloveitchik] Machzor;”—they are as actively supportive of Israel as are the MO (Modern Orthodox); and they have an “openness to general culture...the world at large. Pick up a copy of the *Jewish Observer*<sup>29</sup> and read about Kids at Risk. That comes from somewhere.”

This influence of modernity on the Haredi community was also expressed by another respondent:

Yoel Finkelman<sup>30</sup> has shown that books by *haredi* presses on things like parenting, marriage, self-help, nutrition, etc., are influenced

heavily by secular literature on those topics. Where that will go is not clear, but it does suggest secular inroads. R Lamm has called technology “the battering ram of modernity,” and the same could be said of the social science fields. Yoel does not make predictions based on this, but it’s an interesting trend because perhaps eventually the cat will be out of the bag. Already on issues like spanking it’s recognized that there’s a problem here and it’s being resolved on the side of secular counsel.

This respondent, an academic, also asserted that there is a backlash in the *haredi* community to what is perceived as an over-zealous antagonism to modernity:

The ban issued in the Slifkin affair<sup>31</sup> troubled even Boro Parkers. There’s more trust in evolution etc. (BTW, here’s a recent pun of mine. What do you call it when a *gadol* [sage] signs a *herem* [ban] because other *gedolim* [sages] did? Answer: Jumping on the ban-wagon.)

Another respondent, who has played a significant role in the broader American Jewish communal world, likewise pointed to the influence of Modern Orthodoxy on *Haredim*, and opined,

In assessing the vitality of Modern Orthodoxy in the American context, one should also pay attention to developments in the *haredi* world—greater educational equality for women; increased access to higher education, the use of newspapers (opposed by Hassidic rebbes in Galicia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century); and so on. These developments are, I think it is fair to say, taken in imitation of Modern Orthodoxy.

Another respondent went even further to suggest that, in the U.S., the lines between *Haredi* and Modern Orthodoxy have become blurred:

My younger brother davens [prays] in a shteibel [makeshift synagogue] in Flatbush where virtually everyone has a college degree, works, is very Zionist – but they wear black hats. (By the way most of their children are in Lakewood [The largest and most prestigious yeshiva in the American *Haredi* community]). What are they?<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, another respondent suggested,

a lot of this has to do with your definition of MO. Indeed, one could argue that as many in the yeshivish world have achieved economic success and acquired the trappings of modern materiality, the distinctions between MO and Haredi have become obsolete. Moreover . . . the blossoming of the *kiruv* [religious outreach] business has also led to greater integration of broad cultural norms into the *yeshivish welt* [world of the yeshiva]. This is not purely because of b"ts [*ba'alei teshuva*, newly-Orthodox] but through the exposure of kiruv workers to their heterogeneous environments on a regular basis and their need to address their new constituencies.

Many respondents pointed to a move to the right in Modern Orthodoxy, but the meaning and implications of that move are subject to varieties of interpretations. To some, it is a very positive development. This is implicit, for example, in the response of a social scientist and Jewish educator who opined that,

there has been an enhanced articulation of religiosity or Orthodoxy, such things as more women covering their hair, the boys wearing *tzitzit* [fringed religious garment] and a greater commitment to Torah study. Clearly, the latter has been influenced by ArtScroll. There is also the reality that as secular life becomes more permissive, amongst the MOs there is a greater feeling that barriers are necessary.

The head of a major American Jewish organization was even more explicit in affirming positively the move to the right in Modern Orthodoxy:

Modern Orthodoxy has moved to the right, more *limud* [study of] torah, attendance at *minyonom*, etc., but still maintains their philosophy of engaging in the world but with more conviction and confidence in their Torah values. Modern Orthodoxy is growing as family size increases and more *ba'alei teshuva* become modern orthodox but not at the same rate of the *haredi* world.

While some focused primarily on the move to the right, others saw it as but one aspect of alternative developments in Modern Orthodoxy. As one communal rabbi and academic put it,

In the past decade there has been a move to the right as reflected in many aspects of YU and communities such as Teaneck [NJ] and the Five Towns [NY]. At the same time, there has been a healthy willingness to experiment with new innovations such as *yo'atzot*<sup>33</sup>... YCT and maybe even Yeshivat Hadar<sup>34</sup> which, while not Orthodox-affiliated, attracts Orthodox students and teachers.

Another academic at a major New England university averred,

today modern Orthodoxy looks different than it did in the 1960s. Two examples of change: many more young women cover their hair and *daven* [pray] on a regular basis than their mothers did, and some are interested in Orthodox feminism. Young Orthodox men and women today are much more earnest and sincere than those who grew up in our cynical generation. Many are influenced—at least for a while—by their yeshiva experiences. So they may look “frummer” to the outside in that they are careful about observance, but they are truly modern Orthodox in terms of their values and their engagement with the non-Orthodox and non-Jewish world of the arts & sciences, politics, etc.

In response to a question about the current state of Modern Orthodoxy, another communal rabbi replied, “The question is what

is Modern Orthodoxy and would the Rav [Rabbi Soloveitchik] recognize it, given the Haredization of the RCA *geirus* [conversion] procedures, the nature of the RCA itself, [and] the hiring of non-YU rabbis by MO congregations.”

In a public address, this rabbi elaborated on his concern for the future of the Modern Orthodoxy with which he is familiar and to which he subscribes, the open, welcoming and nonjudgmental Modern Orthodoxy which followed the path of the Talmudic sage, Hillel, who placed emphasis on making peace with and loving people, making them feel comfortable, welcome and appreciated. This rabbi sees Modern Orthodoxy today as excessively rigid and exclusive, following in the path of Hillel’s adversary, Shammai, who purportedly demanded total commitment and was pleasant only to those who strictly adhered to all of the rules.

On the other hand, this rabbi said that “The numbers, the Joelization of YU,<sup>35</sup> the terrific response to Championsgate,<sup>36</sup> and other things like these, all point to a positive future.”

In fact, very few respondents were totally critical of what they view as a move to the right within Modern Orthodoxy. One rabbi, however, was very clearly pessimistic if not fatalistic:

In the past decade, Modern Orthodoxy has suffered serious erosion in the United States. This is manifested in many ways. I don’t believe Modern Orthodoxy controls any of the basic religious institutions: *mikvaot* [ritual baths], kashruth agencies, *eiruv*<sup>37</sup> makers. These have all fallen under the control of *haredi* Orthodoxy. Even the OU [Orthodox Union], which is supposedly the bastion of “mainstream” Orthodoxy, is essentially a *haredi* operation when it comes to kashruth; it wants legitimacy within the *haredi* community and acts accordingly. The RCA has essentially ceded halakhic authority to the *haredi* elements within the RCA, and there is no real “modern Orthodox” *pesikah* [halakhic decision-making] coming from the RCA. The classic example is the RCA’s capitulation in the area of *geirut*, where the RCA no longer will endorse the conversions performed by its own members unless the conversions go through a centralized bureaucracy that the RCA set up to stay in line with Israel’s Chief Rabbinate. When Orthodox Jews use the term “gedolim,” they are almost never referring to anyone Modern Orthodox; this is true of the Modern Orthodox themselves. If all religious authority is ceded to the *haredi* “gedolim” in all areas of *halakha*, this also seeps into *hashkafa*—and into communal sociological patterns.

The perception of and anxiety about a move to the right may be characteristic of specific localities. Several of our respondents mentioned the Five Towns, in New York’s Nassau County, as experiencing a dramatic move to the right, which may actually be the case and may be the result of demographic changes. Developments within another stronghold of Modern Orthodoxy, Teaneck, New Jersey, were

identified as having moved to the right by one respondent, but another respondent and a major Jewish foundation executive who lives in that community said:

I live in Teaneck, which continues to be a Modern Orthodox stronghold. Sure, there are more young people wearing hats, but overwhelmingly they head to careers or *chinuch* [Jewish education] rather than kollel; are staunch Zionists; react reflectively rather than reflexively to issues that are raised, and seem open to learning from people representing divergent Orthodox opinions. The biggest change, other than external dress, may be the ultimate triumph of the textual over mimetic tradition, as Dr. [Haym] Soloveitchik wrote about years ago, but I am largely a product of that too. We regularly have scholars in residence from a wide range of institutions in Israel, exposing us to a range of *talmidei chachamim* [Judaic scholars] (covering Tanach [Bible] and well as *gemara/halacha* [Talmud/Codes]) as well as thinkers. While I hear some Modern Orthodox friends in the Five Towns talk as if they are in a tiny minority or under siege, in Teaneck I feel comfortable and supported in my path.

A Jewish educator said,

The “move to the right” is more pronounced at YU. I wonder if it is true out there in most major shuls. It still seems to me that these shuls are full of people in favor of a college education, see the state of Israel as having immense religious value, do not set up community *shiurim* [Torah lessons] or lectures that exclude women etc.

One academic pointed to quite different developments in Yeshiva University:

YU’s Center for the Jewish Future is making inroads into communities that have been dominated by the right wing. It’s a big problem that cities like...are under *haredi* rule, and I don’t think... is on YU’s target list yet, but many more YU *musmakhim* [ordained rabbis] (more important, Torah Umadda types, those who value both Torah and general knowledge) are entering the rabbinate—huge jump, and many more are in Azrieli [YU’s Graduate school of Administration and Jewish Education]. Really dramatic growth. Richard Joel [YU’s President] has made it a priority to get YU “out there.”

Another academic suggested that,

the major change is the revival of liberal Orthodoxy in the form of YCT and the continuing pressures from the feminist front, which has now led to quasi-egalitarian halakhic minyanim [prayer quorums]. At the same time, Rabbi Herschel Schachter (RHS), Rabbi Mordechai Willig, and some others, have emerged as the leaders of what can be called Centrism. RHS is the most important rabbi in America and the fact that he can be seen as the successor of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik is fascinating, since he is so different from his teacher and has no interest in relating to the wider intellectual trends...I think that Modern Orthodoxy is stable and probably even growing.

This is not the Modern Orthodoxy of 40 years ago but a much more halakhically centered Modern Orthodoxy. Synagogues continue to open up.

To some, the fact that contemporary Modern Orthodoxy is different from what it was several decades ago and more is not necessarily a reflection of a basic change rooted in the movement per se. Rather, it is reflective of changes in the broader American society and culture. As the previously quoted Jewish educator put it,

The lack of intellectual ferment may be more about the general *zeitgeist* than about Modern Orthodoxy. We live in a less intellectual age with a powerful consumer culture. The *haredi* world is affected by it as well (look at the Art Scroll phenomenon).

A number of respondents pointed to a basic lack of prominent, authoritative leadership within Modern Orthodoxy. One educator averred that, "One is hard pressed today to find a true Modern Orthodox intellectual thinker in the diaspora, with, of course, some notable exceptions: Barry Freundel, Michael Broyde, David Berger, to name a few." Two of the Israeli respondents also characterized American Modern Orthodoxy as lacking in leadership. One said, "In my opinion, American Modern Orthodoxy is weakening because it has no credible, authoritative leadership capable of setting forth an enthusiastic and relevant vision, a leadership that enjoys halakhic authority and communal courage and determination." [Our translation]

Another respondent opined that, "The number of people who feel that they are allowed to be a voice has expanded enormously. This is true in *Halakhah*, in meta-*Halakhah*, and in *hashkafah* [perspective]." This respondent suggested that the declining hierarchalism in Orthodoxy in general and Modern Orthodoxy in particular coincides with the passing of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, in 1986.<sup>38</sup> In previous decades, he asserted, if Rabbi Feinstein and Rabbi Soloveitchik agreed on any position it became the authoritative one in Modern Orthodoxy, but now there is no authority to whose position everyone would adhere.

## CONCLUSION

As indicated, very few of our interviewees perceive an exclusively right character to Modern Orthodoxy. They view the movement as more complex than simply right or left, and much more research is needed to accurately portray its precise character and development. However, assuming that the overall picture which we derived is relatively accurate, it behooves us to try and explain why the perception of

contemporary Modern Orthodoxy is so different from that of the past decade which saw it as having been “haredized.”

One possibility is that those who saw Modern Orthodoxy being overtaken by a rightward trend were incorrect. They may have been expressing their own fears without taking a broader view of what was actually happening. Also, they may have been looking at specific Orthodox localities from which, perhaps due to demographic change, more modern members may have moved away while those of a more *haredi* disposition have moved in. This, however, does not necessarily mean that American Modern Orthodoxy was moving to the right; only that some neighborhoods moved to the right while others, which previously may not have even been neighborhoods with an Orthodox Jewish population, now have Modern Orthodox communities. We suggest that, though some aspects of the above may be the case, there has, in fact, been a real shift in American Modern Orthodoxy in recent years, and that this shift is the result of internal developments within Modern Orthodoxy itself as well as developments within the larger American society and culture. As discussed above, women’s prayer groups emerged in the 1960s and their numbers have grown since, indicating that the issue of women and the synagogue/prayer was a very real one. In the spirit of August Comte<sup>39</sup> we suggest that also in society, although not as definitively as in Newton’s third law,<sup>40</sup> actions cause reactions. The increasing public significance of women’s prayer groups led to a reaction by a group of prominent Modern Orthodox rabbis which, in turn, led to expressions of further dissatisfaction, combined with efforts to innovate change within the Modern Orthodox community. In 1997, JOFA and Edah were founded, and both held conferences which attracted wide interest. Two years later, in 1999, YCT established its rabbinical school and, despite predictions of its imminent demise, it has continued to grow.

Initial reaction within YU, especially RIETS, was scorn and rejection. YCT was rejected as being unworthy of serious consideration and those associated with it were condemned as traitors, not only to YU but to Orthodoxy as a whole. After the 2003 installation of Richard Joel as President of YU there was a marked change. Joel, the first non-rabbi to serve as YU’s president, had been the president and international director of the Hillel Foundation for the prior fifteen years and was credited with revivifying the organization. He brought to bear his wide and deep ties within the entire American Jewish community, as well as his highly-regarded administrative skills, in his mission to familiarize that larger community with YU and its activities, as well as to make YU more responsive to both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. One year after his inauguration, Joel named Rabbi Kenneth Brander, an energetic and highly successful rabbi, who had played a

major role in the rapid development of the Modern Orthodox community in Boca Raton, Florida during his fourteen-year tenure there, as dean of the soon-to-be established Center for the Jewish Future (CJF).<sup>41</sup> CJF, which went into operation in 2005, strives to harness and exploit the intellectual resources of the university in order to stimulate and strengthen Jewish communities across the country and abroad. Significantly, throughout all of these efforts to reach out to the larger Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities, Joel maintained positive relations with the rabbis at RIETS and he belied the predictions of some of his detractors as well as supporters that he and the RIETS rabbis, and especially the dominant figures among them, would clash over irreconcilable differences.

In addition, there have been efforts in a number of quarters outside of YU to resist the haredi influence and to bolster Modern Orthodoxy's self confidence. One major step was the publication of a new translation of the *siddur* [prayer book], the Koren-Sacks siddur, that challenges the dominance of the ArtScroll Prayer Book which, despite its clear haredi perspective, has been by far the most widely-used prayer book even in Modern Orthodox congregations. The new prayer book, as well as new translations of other sacred texts, appear to have been met with enthusiastically.<sup>42</sup>

That these communal outreach efforts have reportedly been successful suggests that there are receptive communities out there composed of varieties of perspectives, and that they have not all haredized. Indeed, this was suggested by the large number of attendees at the aforementioned JOFA and Edah conferences since their inceptions in 1997. It was further empirically evident in the data amassed, in 2002, by Milton Heumann and David Rabinowitz in a Young Israel synagogue in the New York–New Jersey area, which found that a minority held “conservative” or “very conservative” perspectives on the eight issues presented, while an approximately two-thirds majority held “modern” to “very modern” perspectives.<sup>43</sup> What has apparently changed is not so much the presence of significant numbers of Modern Orthodox with very modern values and perspectives but, rather, the readiness of those with less modern values and perspectives to engage with them.

This development is, in part, related to the increasing significance of women in public Judaism not only within the Modern Orthodox community but within *haredi* society as well. As discussed above, during the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a revolution in the area of Jewish learning for Orthodox women, *haredi* as well as Modern Orthodox. This has spawned a cadre of Orthodox Jewish women seeking to maximize their potentials within the Orthodox community and who no longer accept limitations on their activity which

have no firm halakhic basis and are primarily based on non-Jewish mores. Thus, during the past decade it has become increasingly acceptable in the Modern Orthodox community for women to recite the “*Hagomel*” blessing after surviving a dangerous circumstance, and the “*Kadish*” when in mourning, in the synagogue. It has also become increasingly acceptable for Orthodox Jewish women to offer eulogies in public.<sup>44</sup> These and more are innovations of the past several decades which have by now become widely accepted. Moreover, increasing numbers of those who do not accept all of the innovations are at least willing to discuss them with those who do.<sup>45</sup>

Israel has clearly played a role in the increasing heterogeneity of American Orthodoxy. Although it is a much more traditional society than the U.S., and Israeli Judaism is much more traditional than American Judaism,<sup>46</sup> Israeli Orthodoxy, especially the non-haredi parts, appears to be more open and tolerant of diversity than American Orthodoxy, including Modern Orthodoxy.<sup>47</sup> The strong connections between American Orthodox Jewry—*haredi* as well as Modern Orthodox—and Israel have influenced American Orthodox Judaism in a variety of spheres,<sup>48</sup> and it seems difficult to imagine that behavior which is not defined as deviant in the Israeli *dati* [“religious”; typically, Modern Orthodox/Religious Zionist] community will be judged deviant in the American Modern Orthodox community. It may be so judged by some Modern Orthodox rabbis but not by all of them, and surely not by all who identify as Modern Orthodox.

Such overwhelming rejection is even more unlikely because of the increasing pluralization of authority in the Modern Orthodox community and, indeed, in Orthodox Judaism as a whole.<sup>49</sup> As indicated above, several of our respondents suggested that Modern Orthodoxy is increasingly fragmented and lacks authoritative leadership, especially but not exclusively in the area of halakhic decision-making. Ironically, part of this is a result of the approach of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who encouraged his students to become learned scholars in their own right and to make their own decisions. Some took his having signed their certificates of ordination as proof of their having achieved that status and contributed thereby to the pluralization of rabbinic authority. In addition, modernity and post-modernity have contributed to the sense of autonomy on the part of increasing numbers of individuals. Technology as the great equalizer also provides increasing numbers of people with a sense of their own ability to render decisions of all kinds. The availability of databases of enormous collections of rabbinic literature, and the dramatic expansion of translations of many of the volumes in those databases, have rendered the sources available

to a much broader population thereby enabling many more people to acquire knowledge previously available only to a small minority. In a sense, “Rabbi/Dr./Prof. Google” is probably the most significant authority but it only relays sources that are available; it is the individual who then chooses which sources to adopt as authoritative.<sup>50</sup>

There are some scholars who have suggested that the “sliding to the left” in Modern Orthodoxy may result in the emergence of a new denomination, especially after the founding, in November 2009, of a new Orthodox rabbinical organization, the International Rabbinic Fellowship (IRF), devised by Rabbis Avi Weiss of YCT and Marc Angel, Rabbi Emeritus of New York’s Cong. Shearith Israel, the oldest congregation in the United States. It set as its mission, “to bring together Orthodox Rabbis for serious study of Torah and Halacha, for open and respectful discussion, and to advocate policies and implement actions on behalf of world Jewry and humankind.”<sup>51</sup> At its first conference, the IRF, which claims a membership of many rabbis across the country, focused on two of the most controversial issues in contemporary Orthodoxy. It appointed a committee to examine the issue of conversion procedures with an eye towards a more lenient and welcoming approach than that of the RCA and the Israeli Rabbinate, and it urged the consideration of admitting women into IRF membership.

Responding to the establishment of the IRF, Jonathan Sarna is quoted as having said, “In American religion, when you have a new seminary and a new board of rabbis, including many who are not acceptable to the RCA, one begins to wonder if in fact we are seeing the development of two movements that use the term Orthodox.”<sup>52</sup> We are skeptical of the emergence of a new denomination, primarily because most of those who are part of the new organization and institution, IRF and YCT, identify as Orthodox and wish to remain as such. The establishment, in 1935, of the Rabbinical Council of America in contrast to the more haredi Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada (*Agudat Harabbanim*) did not result in a new denomination,<sup>53</sup> and we do not anticipate that the establishment of the IRF will either.<sup>54</sup> Just as in 1935, when the fact that many of the RCA members were also members of the *Agudat Harabbanim* helped to prevent an irreparable split, so, today, many of the members of the IRF are also members of the RCA, and many of the faculty of YCT have strong ties with YU. In addition, the fact that a group or institution is viewed as beyond the pale by one segment of Orthodoxy does not mean that Orthodox Jews as a whole will view it as such. Modern Orthodoxy itself is an example. It has been vociferously critiqued by some prominent *haredim* but its adherents are still

perceived as Orthodox. Moreover, although the notion of obedience to higher authority is more pronounced in Orthodox Judaism as compared to the other branches/denominations, it is structurally more heterogeneous than the non-Orthodox denominations. Ironic as it may appear, the Orthodox have many more seminaries and rabbinic organizations than do the non-Orthodox. Even among the Modern Orthodox, although YU is the “flagship” seminary it has no monopoly. Many who identify as Modern Orthodox have never studied there, and there are some prominent Modern Orthodox rabbis who have not either.

Finally, the present does not appear to be a propitious moment for establishing new denominations. This seems to be indicated by the experience of the Union of Traditional Judaism (UTJ) and its movement, which began within Conservative Judaism but broke and formed its own rabbinic organization and seminary. It has not developed into a distinct denomination even though it appears that the cleavages between the founders of UTJ and mainstream Conservative Judaism appear significantly wider than that between the founders of the IRF and mainstream Orthodox Judaism.<sup>55</sup> The present, if anything, is an era of trans-denominationalism, post-denominationalism, and/or non-denominationalism, in which increasing numbers of younger Jews are eschewing denominational labels.<sup>56</sup>

Assessing the current state of Modern Orthodoxy, one of our respondents astutely observed,

If you measure Modern Orthodoxy by its institutions – How tall is the tallest mountain? – then... Modern Orthodoxy is weaker than it was twenty years ago. But if you add up all the different hills... we are no weaker than we ever were... There are many more people keeping kosher now than there were [fifty years ago]; we are much stronger in terms of *shemiras hamitzvos*,... unmeasurably so... [This is true for Modern Orthodoxy as it is for *haredi* Orthodoxy], as institutions decline, labels decline...

A deeper, more detailed analysis of American Modern Orthodoxy requires much more extensive empirical data, including but not limited to a representative sample of the norms, values and thoughts of members, in addition to rabbis, of Modern Orthodox congregations across the country. As of now, our observation and data suggest that American Orthodoxy is much more diverse and complex than the “move to the right” characterization implies. In terms of what that portends for the future, we concur with the observation of a respondent who, when asked whether the declined hierarchical state of Modern Orthodoxy he described is a positive or negative development declared, “Time will tell whether this turns out to be a good idea or a

bad idea....It certainly contrasts with the historical model of American Orthodoxy which was relatively hierarchical.”

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#### NOTES

1. Charles S. Liebman, “Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life,” *American Jewish Year Book*, No. 66, reprinted in Charles S. Liebman, *Aspects of the Religious Behavior of American Jews* (New York, 1974), pp. 111–88.

2. Charles S. Liebman, “Extremism as a Religious Norm,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 22 (1983), pp. 75–86.

3. Chaim I. Waxman, “The Haredization of American Orthodox Jewry,” *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, No. 376, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, February 15, 1998.

4. Tovah Lichtenstein, in a personal communication, suggested that another very important distinction between haredim and the Modern Orthodox is to be found in their respective attitudes toward Jewish education for women, with the Modern Orthodox being egalitarian and the haredi being discriminatory.

5. Samuel G. Freedman, *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry* (New York, 2000).

6. Samuel C. Heilman, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Berkeley, 2006).

7. For example, Georgetown’s Orthodox Keshet Israel Congregation introduced a 4-part series in celebration of its centennial, “Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation.” The second part was devoted to “Women and the Future of Orthodoxy.”

8. JOFA, <http://www.jofa.org/about.php/who/mission>.

9. On tefilla groups, see Moshe Meiselman, *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law* (New York, 1978); Avraham Weiss, *Women at Prayer* (Hoboken, NJ, 1990); Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer, “Women’s Prayer Services—Theory and Practice,” *Tradition*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1998), pp. 5–118; and Ailene Cohen Nusbacher, “Efforts at Change in a Traditional Denomination: The Case of Orthodox Women’s Prayer Groups,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 95–112. On partnership minyanim, see Mendel Shapiro, “Qeri’at ha-Torah by Women: A Halakhic Analysis,” *Edah Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2001/*Sivan* 5761), available online; Daniel Sperber, “Congregational Dignity and Human Dignity: Women and Public Torah Reading,” *Edah Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (2002/*Elul* 5763); Daniel Sperber, *The Path of Halacha: Women Reading the Torah: A Case of Pesika Policy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2007); idem., *Ways of Pesika: Methods and*

*Approaches for Proper Halakhic Decision Making* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2008); Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism* (Lebanon, NH, 2004); and Gidon Rothstein, "Women's Aliyyot in Contemporary Synagogues," *Tradition*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer 2005), pp. 36–58.

10. Joel B. Wolowelsky, "Conscientious Conscientiousness," *JOFA Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), p. 8.

11. The Jewish Week, [http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/breaking\\_news/riverdale\\_orthodox\\_shul\\_have\\_woman\\_lead\\_kabbalat\\_shabbat\\_tonight](http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/breaking_news/riverdale_orthodox_shul_have_woman_lead_kabbalat_shabbat_tonight).

12. The growth in organized Orthodox women's prayer services is probably not unrelated to the even broader growing interest in women's prayer. Indeed, women's prayer as a significant religious phenomenon that has recently become a major subject of discussion and analysis. A widely recognized contributor to its development was the book by Aliza Lavie, an Israeli political scientist and social activist, *Tefilat Nashim*. Published in Hebrew in 2005, it quickly became a best-seller, has been translated into English, and won the 2008 National Jewish Book Award in Women's Studies, Aliza Lavie (ed.), *Tefilat Nashim: Pesifas Nashi Shel Tefilot Vesipurim*. (Tel Aviv, 2008); idem (ed.), *The Jewish Woman's Prayer Book* (New York, 2008).

13. Seth Farber, *An American Orthodox Dreamer: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Boston's Maimonides School* (Hanover, NH, 2004), pp. 68–87.

14. Yeshiva University, <http://www.yu.edu/gpats/page.aspx?id=5642>

15. Shalom Z. Berger, Daniel Jacobson, and Chaim I. Waxman, *Flipping Out? Myth or Fact: The Impact of the "Year in Israel"* (New York, 2007), pp. 35–46.

16. For example, Michael J. Broyde, "Hair Covering and Jewish Law: Biblical and Objective (*Dat Moshe*) or Rabbinic and Subjective (*Dat Yehudit*)?" *Tradition*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2009), pp. 97–179.

17. See, for example, Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah*, p. xii.

18. Julie Weiner, "Todah 'Rabba?'" *Jewish Week*, January 26, 2010.

19. His introduction to his translation of a Mussar (ethical) work, *Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Upright)* (Philadelphia, 1936), a mainstay in many Orthodox yeshivot, was torn out of many copies of the volume in Orthodox libraries.

20. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York, 1997), p. 140. The British variation of Conservative Judaism is the Masorti movement, which began with defection of supporters of Rabbi Louis Jacobs when he was denied appointment as Principal at Jews College and reappointment as Rabbi to the New West End Synagogue in London, by Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie because of Jacobs' disagreement with accepted Orthodox versions of the belief in "Torah from Sinai." Meir Persoff, *Faith Against Reason: Religious Reform and the British Chief Rabbinate, 1840-1990* (London, 2008).

21. Moshe Bernstein, "Why Lines Need to be Drawn (and Where)," *Commentator*, February 11, 2009.

22. Marc B. Shapiro, "Maimonides' Thirteen Principles: The Last Word in Jewish Theology?" *Torah U-Madda Journal*, Vol. 4 (1993), pp. 187-242; *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (London, 2004).

23. Menachem Kellner, "Returning the Crown to its Ancient Glory: Marc Shapiro's *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised*," *Edah Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2004); *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (London, 1999; 2nd ed., 2006).

24. David Berger, review of Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?*, *Tradition*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1999), p. 83; Yitzchak Blau, "Flexibility with a Firm Foundation: On Maintaining Jewish Dogma," *Torah u-Madda Journal*, Vol. 12 (2004), pp. 179-91; David David Berger, "Review," *Tradition*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1999), pp. 81-89; and his review of Shapiro, "Limits of Orthodox Theology," *Torah u-Madda Journal*, Vol. 12 (2004), pp. 179-91.

25. Gil Student, "Crossroads: Where Theology Meets Halacha—A Review Essay," *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (October 2004), pp. 274-95.

26. Post-Orthodox, <http://hirschurim.blogspot.com/2010/01/you-might-be-post-orthodox-if.html>.

27. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University; prominent Rabbi and philosopher.

28. As will be discussed later, ArtScroll is a leading Judaica publisher with a haredi perspective.

29. Now-defunct magazine addressed to the Haredi community which, from 1963 until mid-2009, was published by Agudath Israel of America.

30. Yoel Finkelman, "Tradition and Innovation in American Haredi Parenting Literature," in *Innovation and Change in Jewish Education, Studies in Jewish Culture Identity and Community* (ed.) David Zisenwine (Tel Aviv, 2007), pp. 37-61.

31. Jennie Rothenberg, "The Heresy of Nosson Slifkin," *Moment Magazine* (October 2005), pp. 37ff.

32. It is because of developments such as these and others that Waxman (2007) argued the need for a new typology of American Orthodox Judaism. Chaim I. Waxman, "Needed - New Typologies: The Complexity of American Orthodoxy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," in *Ambivalent Jew - Charles Liebman in Memoriam*, edited by Stuart Cohen and Bernard Susser (New York, 2007), pp. 135-53.

33. A new profession of women certified to be halakhic advisors for women with questions in the areas of marriage, sexuality and women's health.

34. An egalitarian yeshiva in New York City.

35. The influence of Richard Joel as President of YU.

36. An assembly sponsored by Yeshiva University, in which a heterogeneous group of more than 300 Orthodox leaders from around the world exchange ideas.

37. A symbolic enclosure which allows carrying on the Sabbath which would otherwise be forbidden.

38. By then, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was ill and no longer functioned in any public manner.

39. The French philosopher (1798–1857) who is credited with having been a founder of the discipline of sociology which he initially termed “social physics.”

40. Isaac Newton (1643–1727) is famous for, among other things, his three laws of motion, the third of which states’ “To every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction.”

41. The selection of this name was, perhaps, not coincidental. The former CJF, the Council of Jewish Federations, had renamed itself the United Jewish Communities (UJC), so the well-known initials, CJF, were available. Ironically, in 2009 the UJC changed its name again, this time to the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA).

42. Jeremy Stolow, *Orthodox by Design: Judaism, Print Politics, and the ArtScroll Revolution* (Berkeley, 2010); Martin Lockshin, “Get Ready for Duelling Frum Prayerbooks,” *Canadian Jewish News*, May 7, 2009; Yoel Finkelman, “A Prayer Book of One’s Own,” *First Things*, No. 196 (October 2009), pp. 11–12. Significantly, the Koren-Sacks siddur is being promoted by Orthodoxy’s powerful synagogue organization, the Orthodox Union. The RCA has announced the impending publication of the “revised RCA siddur,” which may succeed in many Modern Orthodox synagogues, especially those that announce page numbers, because it is challenging to introduce a new siddur on a mass level if people will still be using the ArtScroll siddur. To some observers, however, the belated arrival of the revised RCA siddur may be taken as a manifestation of basic organizational weakness, and the decision to publish the new siddur with ArtScroll may be taken as a sign of the RCA’s rightward leanings.

43. Chaim I. Waxman, “American Modern Orthodoxy: Confronting Cultural Challenges,” *Edah Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (May 2004), p. 2.

44. This is no longer uncommon even at the Har Hamenuchot cemetery in Jerusalem, in the presence of the haredi *hevra kadisha* (burial society) which dominates the cemetery and its activities.

45. For example, a variety of perspectives were presented and discussed by the participants in the panel on “The Changing Role of Women and Ritual,” sponsored by Torah in Motion in the Or Chaim Yeshiva in Toronto, November 20, 2010. In the Israel *dati* community, unmarried mothers via artificial insemination is no longer deviant and is even permitted by some respectable rabbinic authorities there. See Chaim I. Waxman, “It’s All Relative: The Contemporary Orthodox Jewish Family in America,” *Conversations, the Journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals*, No. 5 (Autumn 2009), pp. 12–13.

46. Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn and Elihu Katz, *A Portrait of Israeli Jewry: Beliefs, Observances and Values Among Israeli Jews 2000* (Jerusalem, 2002).

47. As indicated above, the more egalitarian synagogues first emerged in Jerusalem and institutions of higher learning for Orthodox Jewish women are much more developed and prevalent in Israel. Indeed, the greater flexibility of Israeli Orthodoxy limited to women issues. When an organization of religious gays, *Havruta*, held its first anniversary event in Jerusalem, the guest of honor was none other than Rabbi Yaakov Medan, who is one of the heads of Yeshivat Har Etzion. A number of other prominent Orthodox religious personalities participated as well (Yair Ettinger, "Of Pride and Prayer," *Haaretz*, February 26, 2009). The Israeli television series, *Serugim*, which focuses on young religious people in Jerusalem, portrays a wide range of behavior, including homosexuality.

48. Chaim I. Waxman, "If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem . . . : The Impact of Israel on American Orthodox Jewry, in *Religious Zionism Post Disengagement: Future Directions*, edited by Chaim I. Waxman (New York, 2008), pp. 415-32.

49. It is more than just interesting to note that although the haredi community has been characterized by strict obedience to central rabbinic authority, "Da'as Torah," today that is much less the case. There is now a significant number of individuals who are haredi in observance but do not accept the "Da'as Torah" to whom traditional haredim look up. This development is, in large measure, a reaction to bans pronounced by prominent haredi rabbis to books, such as those of the previously mentioned Rabbi Natan Slifkin and Rabbi Nathan Kamenetzky ([http://levinejudaica.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=38](http://levinejudaica.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=38)).

50. Cf. Michael Rosensweig, "The Study of the Talmud in Contemporary Yeshivot," in *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, edited by Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein (New York, 2005), pp. 111-20.

51. IRF, <http://internationalrabbinicfellowship.org>

52. Sarah Breger, "Do 1 Rabba, 2 Rabbis and 1 Yeshiva = a New Denomination?" *Moment*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (November/December 2010), p. 63.

53. Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," in *Aspects of the Behavior of American Jews*, edited by Charles S. Liebman, (New York, 1974), pp. 123, 141-44; and Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Silver Era: Rabbi Eliezer Silver and His Generation* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 105, 294.

54. It is interesting to note that, in his pioneering study of American Orthodoxy, which originally appeared in as a lead article in the *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 66 (Philadelphia, 1965), Liebman had observed that the "RCA has moved to the right in recent years . . ." (p. 143)

55. It should also be noted that, in addition to being a former president of the RCA, IRF co-founder, Rabbi Dr Marc Angel, is of Sephardi

heritage, and the Sephardi tradition has always been much more tolerant of religious variation than the Ashkenazi tradition. Marc D. Angel, *Foundations of Sephardic Spirituality: The Inner Life of Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Woodstock, VT, 2006).

56. Steven M. Cohen, "Non-denominational & Post-denominational: Two Tendencies in American Jewry," *Contact*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer 2005), pp. 7-8.