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The Attitude to “the Other” in Haredi Early Childhood Education

*The Roots of the Adversarial Approach of Haredi
Society in Israel*

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The Attitude to “the Other” in Haredi Early Childhood Education: The Roots of the Adversarial Approach of Haredi Society in Israel

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Introduction

Haredi society in Israel has attracted growing public and scholarly interest in recent decades, yet the Haredi education system (HES) has received relatively marginal attention. This position article examines how Haredi education (HE) shapes perceptions regarding attitudes toward the Other through two educational practices in Haredi early childhood education (HECE). The article contributes to the field of Jewish early childhood education (ECE) by examining how religious identity and attitudes toward the Other are constructed in early formal education. While scholarly attention has focused on Haredi society's political and economic dimensions, the role of ECE in laying foundations for collective identity remains unexplored. By analyzing two practices central to Jewish ECE - children's literature and weekly *Torah* portion teaching and examining how these universal Jewish educational tools shape orientations toward out-groups, this article raises broader questions about the balance between transmitting religious heritage and fostering openness toward diversity, a tension that resonates across various Jewish educational settings.

The first part presents characteristics and processes in HE, including the emergence of the State-Haredi (*Mamach*) track. The article's center examines HECE as a lens through which Haredi society can be viewed, focusing on the adversarial approach promoted through children's literature and weekly Torah portion teaching. The discussion links attitudes toward the Other in HECE with the absence of civic education from the entire Haredi system, including frameworks offering core studies.

Haredism originated in the late 18th century when Jewish society encountered modernity and secularism (Brown, 2017). The chief impetus for its emergence was fear of external influences. Beyond stricter *Halakha* observance and obedience to rabbinical leadership, separatism and conservatism are the most prominent elements characterizing Haredism (HaCohen, 2019; Spiegel, 2011). Although Israeli Haredi society educates to obedience, charity, and community solidarity¹, it is characterized

¹ Organizations such as ZAKA, United Hatzalah, and Ezer Mitzion are evidence of this.

by an adversarial approach toward Zionism, the State of Israel, and democracy (Brown, 2017).

In Haredi media, secularism, modernity, and Zionism are presented as deviations from the *Torah* path; secular education as failure (Neria Ben-Shahar, 2008; Spiegel, 2011)² and higher education as spiritual danger (Reiman, 2017). The media create regimentation and reduce deviations "from the path" (Gado, 2024). An accompanying characteristic is the essentialist view that the world comprises fixed entities—Israel and the Gentiles, men and women, ethnic differences (Perry-Hazan, 2019).

At the foundation of the article lies the assumption that beyond the diversity among the groups and streams that comprise Haredi society, one of its central characteristics is the way in which its members' sense of belonging to the in-group is constructed largely through negative attributions toward out-groups. In this way, a separatist and adversarial identity is established, designed to preserve group identity.

An analysis of residential patterns, education, military service, political influence, and the rise of the "society of learners" over the years indicates that trends of separatism and conservatism did not characterize large segments of Haredi society until the 1980s. Nevertheless, political, social, and ideological processes that began in the 1980s and 1990s shaped Haredi society as a conservative and adversarial society (Keren-Kratz, 2025), and this remains the character of most groups that comprise Haredi society today. However, in recent decades and even particularly in the last ten years, Haredi society has experienced significant changes. These are evident in increased participation in academia, in a more open and critical discourse, and in greater integration into the economy and military service.

These processes were initially shaped by non-rabbinical secondary leadership, such as the activities of Haredi women in the public sphere, and were later supported by rabbinical leadership (Gado, 2023b). Gado (2023a, 2023b) and Cahaner (2021) point to changing attitudes within parts of Haredi society toward state institutions

² Gigi et al. (2021) describe the tendency of the media as a whole to retain consumer loyalty by reinforcing feelings of belonging and solidarity with their ideological view and by presenting the "Other" –who is perceived as threatening their way of life and identity–in a stereotypical and generalized way. According to Rosen (2007), the secular press stereotypes ultra-Orthodox society to the same degree as the ultra-Orthodox media portrays secular society, an approach based on "rigid and incorrect generalizations."

such as the police, in everyday life, and in emergency situations such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. These differences between "Modern Haredim" and other Haredi groups are both expressed in Haredi media and shaped by it. For example, Gado (2023a) distinguishes between the conservative groups in Haredi society that consume only intra-Haredi media, which present a negative narrative regarding the police and those that engage with online general media, which present a more complex narrative. In the wake of the phenomenon that was termed "the new Haredim" or "Integrating Haredim", a countermovement was created that reinforced the trends towards conservatism and separatism (Cahaner, 2019; Layosh, 2014; Leon, 2014; Perry-Hazan, 2019)³. Keren-Kratz (2025, p. 30) defined this as: "Radicalization on the one hand and increased Israelization and Westernization on the other". Stern et al. (2021) found differences between Haredi subgroups according to streams, employment status, and position on the conservatism-modernity continuum. However, most Haredim eschew neighborly relations with populations remote from their way of life and distance themselves from non-Jews. Living next door to the Other is more problematic than workplace encounters, as it exposes the family to opposing norms. Friedman (2021) concludes that Haredi society is the most "undemocratic" Jewish group with the least affiliation with Israeli society.

Protecting children from foreign influences is central to mainstream Haredi education: avoiding challenging information, education to dogmatism, presenting insularity as the sole defense of true values, presenting the Other as a spiritual threat, and punishing deviation from the path (Caplan & Becher, 2022; Kali et al., 2019; Sivan & Caplan, 2003).

The Haredi Education System

HE differs for boys and girls in histories, curricula, and goals. Institutions are divided into groups and sub-groups, with few supervised by the Ministry of Education (MOE), some partially supervised, and most without supervision (Barth et al., 2023b;

³ Other researchers, such as Kranzler (2022) and Ben-Ami (2020), criticize the commonly accepted conceptualization regarding the "New Haredi." According to Ben-Ami, conceptualization should emerge from within the New Haredi phenomenon itself, rather than being framed through external ideologies such as "integration." He understands the New Haredi orientation to mean an effort to extend Haredism to broader spheres beyond the Beit Midrash. Eitan (2024) and Yaffe et al. (2024) propose an alternate classification of groups in Haredi society, while Navet (2025) challenges the reliance on sociological frameworks as a means of understanding the Haredi phenomenon. A detailed discussion of these debates lies beyond the scope of this article.

Cohen, 2020; Kingsbury, 2020; Shahino-Kessler, 2024). The system has autonomy over content, staff training, and student admissions. The lack of oversight results in abusive employment of teachers and discrimination in admissions⁴ (Zernowitski, 2018). Zernowitski terms it "the backyard of Israeli education" and Friedman (2021) sees it as "ex-territorial" (p. 30).⁵

Processes of change are gradually taking place in HE. Broad systemic measures such as the 'Belz Program' failed (Hayun & Prawer, 2022; Spiegel & Barth, 2023), while limited-scope third-sector projects had partial success (Becher & Aharon, 2019; Spiegel & Barth, 2023). The main change is the establishment of *Mamach* in 2014, due to modern Haredim's emergence as a distinct group (Katzir & Perry-Hazan, 2018). This stream combines core curriculum with the official education system, an adjustment implemented due to group needs and MOE pressure under Minister Shai Piron (Cahaner, 2019; Derri & Barth, 2022).

Mamach remained limited for two reasons. First, opposition by the Haredi leadership, which views it as threatening Haredi educational autonomy.⁶ As of 2020-2021, *Mamach* had not gained a foothold in most Haredi local authorities (Finkelstein, 2022). The state authorities' poor management also limited the stream (Barth et al., 2020; Tvila, 2023; Zernowitski, 2023). Second, without legal enshrinement, the government cannot force local authorities to open such schools, and various stakeholders oppose legislation, for political reasons. Perry-Hazan (2023) argues that the new initiatives do not correspond to the scope of social processes in the Haredi community.

Thus, despite diminished public trust in the Haredi leadership following the COVID-19 pandemic, the structure of HE remained unchanged (Cahaner, 2021). In 2022, HE constituted 25.5% of the Hebrew-language education system and 19.5% of the entire Israeli education system. Most Haredi educational institutions (74%)

⁴ Proclamations of equality along the lines of: "From kindergarten...even in the seminars and yeshiva, members of all communities are educated together...in a spirit of friendship, brotherhood and equal opportunities" (Scharansky, 1999, p. 1054) do not withstand the test of reality (Cohen, 2020; Hayun, 2024; Kali et al., 2019).

⁵ One consequence associated with the abusive employment of Haredi KTs is their moving to work within state kindergartens (Sulkin, 2024).

⁶ "I can go to Netanyahu and tell him – if you establish State-Haredi [education], you won't have a government." Thus, declared MK Moshe Gafni during one of the recent election campaigns (Finkelstein, 2022, p. 253).

belonged to the recognized but unofficial stream (*Mukhshar*) that is only partially supervised by the MOE, while 22.5% were exempt institutions, mostly for boys, without any oversight, and only 3.5% belonged to the *Mamach* (Cahaner & Malach, 2022). In 2022 and in 2023, the data are similar (Barth et al., 2023a; Zernowitski, 2023). As of this writing, there is a noticeable upward trend in the *Mamach* education system. After a decade in which the percentage of *Mamach* pupils among all Haredi pupils increased each year continuously, though slowly, only up to 0.5% per year, this rate increased sharply in September 2024 to nearly 2%, despite active opposition from the Haredi parties (Shahino-Kessler & Goshen, 2024; Tucker, 2025; Zernowitski, 2025). The main reason for the transition was budgetary. The upward trend continued into September 2025⁷ but the call by all supporters of this stream remained:

The right of Haredi children to state-Haredi education should be regulated in legislation and regulations, so that the heads of local authorities would be legally obliged to allow any school that wishes to make the transition from private ownership to the state-Haredi school system to do so. Such a step would neutralize the pressure that the Haredi parties could exert on the heads of the local authorities (Zernowitski, 2025, p. 5).

Haredi Early Childhood Education

In most Haredi educational settings, there is gender separation between boys and girls from age three and above. In girls' ECE systems, all educators are women. In boys' education, the transition to instruction by male teachers (*Melamdim*) is taking place gradually, with considerable variation among different Haredi groups. Some kindergartens for boys aged 3-4 have an all-female staff. In contrast, in some Talmud Torah institutions, a female kindergarten teacher (KT) manages the "Heder," but a *Melamed* comes daily for a designated period to teach the fundamentals of reading. From age three, boys begin learning the letters of the alphabet using the traditional method, so that by age five they are expected to read from the prayer book (*siddur*). In early childhood settings managed by *Melamdim* without KTs, the daily schedule and classroom structure more closely resemble an elementary school model—classroom

⁷According to the newspapers ("Haaretz" 2025, 9 September, "Makor Rishon" 2025, October 10). Official data has not yet been published.

lessons with short breaks for play. In most girls' kindergartens⁸, there is no formal reading instruction using a method similar to that of the boys; rather, there is gradual exposure, similar to the emergent literacy approach in most kindergartens in Israel. Many KTs and *Melamdin* view the presence of female KTs in boys' ECE favorably. One KT, for example, addressed the emotional aspect, arguing that a female teacher's warmth is greater than that of a *Melamed*, while one *Melamed* referred to the professional training that KTs have, which enables them to provide much more than *Melamdin* can (Manzura, 2010).

Studies conducted on the HECE system point out the ways it constitutes a tool for socialization and a mechanism of community supervision, as educators and families alike are subject to a constant critique of their compliance with norms (Manzura, 1997, 2010; Heilman, 1992; Yaffe, 2009). Some KTs themselves present their role as gatekeepers against environmental dangers. For example, one KT argued that "a fence is preferable to a gate," praising the fence and disparaging the gate as metaphors for the spiritual protection of the children in her care (Manzura, 2010).

In girls' education, education to modesty and building a home of *Torah* is prominent, compared to *Torah* study as the center of life in boys' education⁹. Among both genders, education reinforces a sense of belonging to the community, values of obedience to authority, and an adversarial attitude toward the Other (Manzura, 2010; Rosenthal & Stier-Roer 2006; Yaffe, 2009). Teaching methods are often the traditional ones that reinforce conformity (Barth et al., 2020), and the collaboration between the educational framework and the home to maximize the success of education is prominent (Manzura, 2010). Haredi KTs define normative and ideal behavior in children as disciplined behavior, which includes a high degree of self-denial, restraint, and obedience, differing in their approach from KTs in the state stream, who view ideal behavior as a combination of, on the one hand, a liberated, independent, and

⁸ In this article, the term 'kindergarten' refers to educational settings for children aged 3-6, encompassing what in Israeli terminology includes both preschool (Gan) and pre-compulsory kindergarten (Gan Chova)

⁹ In the descriptions of Haredi women studying *Talmud* – a new phenomenon of the last decade – the role of the HES for girls is prominent as a central gatekeeper against women's entry into studying *Talmud* – the very core of *Torah* study (Reader-Indorsky, 2024).

self-confident child, and on the other hand, a child capable of self-denial, social cooperation, and politeness (De Malach-Shahak, 2007)¹⁰.

In the past decade, alongside the establishment of the *Mamach*, which includes kindergartens, changes have occurred—some limited in scope and accompanied by resistance—also within the *Mukhshar* Haredi ECE system. For example, the “Creative Thinking” program, which is designed to expose children to basic scientific concepts, has received only partial cooperation from KTs and *Melamdim*. This is despite the fact that the program was culturally adapted and run by Haredi educators (Manny-Ikan & Efrati, 2015, 2017). There was opposition to this program among parents, especially in the boys' education frameworks, while the program director himself saw it as a one-time opportunity for enrichment and claimed that the young children will never see science again, describing the parents' objections as it appeared in a Haredi newspaper:

It appeared with the slander of how King David is associated with scientific activity... The *Melamdim* came [for teacher training] because the principals told them to go, but there was this fear that they were going out to learn something related to science (Manny-Ikan & Efrati, 2017, p. 10).

Another example is a project conducted between 2013 and 2015 that encountered fewer objections and trained developmental coordinators from among Talmud Torah teachers to identify children at risk (Manny-Ikan & Rosen, 2016). A subsequent initiative, implemented in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic in Haredi kindergartens serving both boys and girls in areas subject to ongoing security risks, involved the creation of “peaceful rooms,” designated physical spaces, and the promotion of emotional discourse through staff training and family engagement. The results showed positive outcomes across all groups, despite initial reservations about new content, ambivalence toward therapeutic approaches, and limited self-awareness, particularly in boys' education, regarding emotional development and the importance of emotional language in early childhood (Cohen & Barth, 2023).

¹⁰ Unlike the educational staff in regular Haredi early childhood settings discussed in the article, some of whom are not exposed to other groups in Israeli society, Haredi female educators in special education settings are relatively more exposed to other populations (national-religious, secular, new immigrants, Arabs). For the effects of this exposure on their attitudes towards the 'Other', see, for example, Ravitz, 2024.

An important central development that has occurred in recent years is the integration of educational advisors in Haredi kindergartens (Abuhatzzeira & Barth, 2023). Derri and Barth (2022), in the only study conducted to date on State-Haredi kindergartens, describe challenges that characterize the broader Haredi education system for both girls and boys, including traditional teaching practices, resistance to the introduction of innovative methods, poor employment conditions, and the employment of staff who do not meet professional standards. In boys' Cheiderim [Talmud Torahs] for kindergarten children, the teaching staff lack sufficient professional knowledge, and studies indicate developmental delays in boys in a variety of areas. In comparison, the perception of working conditions and of the profession among female KT's and the evaluation by kindergarten supervisors of the State-Haredi KT's were significantly higher than those among Haredi KT's in the *Mukshar* education system.

The Roots of the Adversarial Approach in Haredi Early Childhood Education

The adversarial approach is expressed in HECE frameworks in a variety of practices – in visual and verbal communication, both oral and written, as well as songs, daily rituals, and holiday and birthday celebrations (Manzura, 1997, 2010). According to Yaffe, whose research pertains to Bais Yaakov kindergartens for girls (2004, p. 306):

The clear-cut dichotomous distinction between the girls in the group and those who do not belong to it is a central part of the life of the kindergarten, and it is interwoven in the language of the KT's... the weekly parsha lessons, the stories... The girls are engaged in this distinction, bring it up, and measure others by its light. It allows them to know how to behave (this is how Jews behave, this is how gentiles/seculars behave) and with whom they are allowed to associate.

Following, we will illustrate the adversarial approach through two common narrative practices: Using children's stories and the weekly Torah portion (*Parshat Hashavua*). The adversarial approach in these practices addresses various types of "otherness," mostly from the out-group—the non-Jewish Other or the secular Jewish

Other¹¹ and some from within the in-group. This is a different type of Other—one who belongs to Haredi society but is portrayed in certain contexts as being on its margins and occupying a lower position in the hierarchy. In the current study, this figure is termed the "internal Other": the Sephardi, the newly religious (*Ba'al teshuva*), the working man, or one who behaves as an "Other." In the educational context, one of the messages accompanying engagement with the Other is that disobedience to authority and deviation from the path bring members of the group, including the children themselves, closer to the out-group and endanger their place as part of the in-group.

Most examples presented in this section are taken from observations and interviews with KTs and *Melamdin* conducted by the first author in educational settings for boys and girls aged 2-5 in different groups in Haredi society – Lithuanians, Hasidim, and *Ba'alei Teshuva* (Manzura, 1997, 2010). Parallel studies which examined the education of girls in Beit Yaakov kindergartens aged 4-6 reinforced the claims of this article regarding the adversarial approach in Haredi ECE (Yaffe, 2004).

1. Using children's literature

In Haredi educational frameworks for young children, just like in most other kindergartens, KTs make extensive use of children's books. However, unlike other educational settings, in Haredi settings one does not find books considered classic Israeli literature, whether original or translated, but rather books written almost exclusively by Haredi authors, or books that have been adapted for the Haredi population¹². Sulkin (2024) describes processes of differentiation in HECE, which are reflected, among other things, in the lack of familiarity of Haredi KTs with a repertoire that can be defined as 'Israeli'. In her study, which also included secular and state-religious KTs, most of the Haredi KTs were not familiar with authors and literary works that are considered classics in Israeli culture. In Sulkin's view, this finding has "a long-term impact on Israeli society and its cohesion" (p. 191).

¹¹ In various contexts, the Other is presented as "dangerous - evil" or as "unfortunate – a *tinok shenishba* [a Jewish child captured and raised by gentiles, therefore ignorant of Jewish law] (Eisenstadt, 2004; Leon, 2001).

¹² For example: *Migdal shell kubirot baniti* [A tower of cubes I built] - the Haredi version\Dvora Omer. Dani Sefarim Publisher.

According to Yaffe (2001) and Segev (2013), Haredi children's literature has a dual role: on the one hand, it reflects reality as it is and on the other, it shapes and reinforces social norms that the writer and in effect, the rabbinic leadership that grants approval (*hechsher*) to books regards as desirable. It seems that the Haredi story does not necessarily reflect "reality as it is" but rather a proper reality and thus serves as a deliberate ideal. For example, despite the changes that Haredi society is undergoing regarding the place and roles of the father and mother in the family and at work (Dagan-Buzaglo et al., 2022), it is evident that Haredi children's didactic literature preserves the place of the father as a *Torah* scholar and the mother as a housewife raising the next generation (Manzura, 2010; Segev, 2013)¹³. According to Segev, in contrast to the image of the woman that is realistically represented in religious [non-Haredi] children's literature, in Haredi children's literature the mother is presented, contrary to reality, as an ideal figure who invests all her time and energy in raising the children.

The approach of HECE literature is to use literature as a didactic tool for socialization (Malchi, 2019), and this is implemented particularly in stories that deal with comparisons between good and evil, "us" and "others," as well as those who toe the line versus those who deviate from the straight path, who are considered Others. The story 'The Contented Sheep' (Cohen, n.d.), talks about a young sheep who rebels against the norms of the flock, but at the end, after learning the hard way, she says to her mother: "From today, when you say eat - I will eat... From today on, what they tell me is what I want to do! From today I am a contented sheep!" The story conveys a message about the price of rebellion and deviation from the norms and the way to become a contented sheep through pleasing others. According to Tavor (2016), the story encourages obedience, avoiding critical thinking, and following the herd. As Ringold and Baratz (2009) put it: "When a social deviation is identified, it is possible, through storytelling, to derive a moral lesson and return the aberrant or the deviant to the straight and narrow" (p. 42). Similarly, the hidden message in the story 'Calm on the Farm' (Beckerman, 1996): Harmony on the farm was disrupted when the animals did not fulfill their purpose and was restored when the animals went back to fulfilling

¹³ In a study conducted by Manzura (2010), the KT used the book *Mar'ot la-paot* [Mirrors for the Toddler] (Bloch & Gumbo, n.d.). The book describes situations from daily life, Shabbat, and holidays. In the vast majority of situations related to religious observance, only boys appear in the text and illustrations. The father and the boys build a sukkah while the girls prepare decorations. When related to food preparation, only girls appear except for the father's baking matza for Passover.

their roles. These stories about animals create, on the one hand, a distancing from the young listeners, yet serve as a parable that teaches about the danger of disobedience to sources of authority. Accordingly, according to one KT in a girls' kindergarten, this story about the farm serves as a means of educating girls about their roles as daughters and future mothers (Manzura, 2010).

In HECE literature dealing with attitudes toward the Other, the external Other can be found in the character of the secular Jew. Consequently, there are many negative stereotypes of secular children (Tavor, 2016) and, in general, a suspicious orientation towards Israeli-Western culture (Segev, 2013; Yaffe, 2001). An example of this can be seen in the book series "Avremele and Yaron" (Beckerman, 1989). In Part I, the Haredi child Avremele meets the secular child Yaron at the grocery store. At the beginning of Part II, Avremele's and Yaron's mothers also meet at the grocery store. Yaron is invited to visit, but before the visit, Avremele's mother instructs her children "not to mock or laugh at him." During the visit, Yaron is presented as ignorant and pitiable, who only learns secular subjects... "which every gentile also learns", who trips on the stairs in the dark, both literally and figuratively: "I was sure that even on weekdays you are not allowed to turn on a light." In Part III, Yaron joins in the preparations for *Shabbat* and comes with his mother to *Shabbat* meals and gradually they undergo a change. The illustration completes what the text does not explain – the mother appears at the end of the story with a headscarf. According to Segev (2013, p. 343): "If the characters are illustrated accompanied by stereotypical symbols, this is the image that will be etched in the children's imagination in the context of the narrative even if there are no echoes of these stereotypes in the text."

The gentile as the "Other" ("the absolute Other," as termed by Heilman, 1992), is a central character in children's books that adapt and expand upon the sources of Chazal (the rabbinic sages). In many of them that are told in kindergartens, the gentile represents the ultimate evil. In the story presented in the following interesting example, a gentile woman appears—the mother of Antoninus, the future emperor—as a positive character who assists the mother of Yehuda, the future Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. When Yehuda was an infant, his mother was summoned by the Roman authorities, who had forbidden the commandment of circumcision. On her way to the palace, she encountered the infant Antoninus in his mother's arms. The gentile mother offered to temporarily swap the babies, so that the gentile infant would be shown to

the rulers in the palace, while she, the gentile woman, would watch over the Jewish infant, thereby saving him from the decree.

One KT tells her three-year-olds: "The gentile's wife was a good woman to some extent," and at the end: "And when the babies grew up, they became good friends even though he was a gentile." In an interview conducted afterwards, she shares:

I saw that it didn't make much sense for the children. What is this... a gentile being a friend of a Jew? So, I told them - no. Later, he became the king of the gentiles and Yehudah became the rabbi of the Jews and [Antonius] didn't cause trouble for the Jews, so they were friends. So that made more sense [to the children] (Manzura, 1997).

This example points to the KT's difficulty in portraying the gentile Other in a humane and positive manner, even when the character is presented as such in books adapted for Haredi society.

As an example of the "internal Other," one can observe the attitude of some KTs toward stories about men who are not Kollel scholars but rather go out to work. One KT expressed opposition to telling stories about "craftsmen", claiming that she does not want the boys to identify with working characters. On the one hand, she sees a problem in the fact that:

Every time a plumber comes in, they think he's an Arab", but on the other hand, "you can't build this as a topic where the child won't say 'I want to be like that'... A child who sees a craftsman's drawing somehow identifies with it... We just had *Shavuot*, you taught about *Torah*, and now you're going to say ?that there are people who choose to work

Support for these examples can be found in a study conducted by Rosenthal (2015, 2018). Children's literature used by KTs to instill values was examined in three different settings – in state-religious education, in HE, and in the Reform movement kindergartens. The value of "mutual respect" in the sense of "accepting those who are different/being responsive to differences/tolerance and openness" appeared frequently in the statements of educators from state-religious and Reform kindergartens and less than half of the time in the statements of Haredi educators.

Parshat Shavua

Parshat shavua are excerpts from the five Books of Moses (Chumashim) that are read sequentially on Shabbat in synagogues. At the same time, the stories in the weekly portions are told during the week in all Haredi early childhood settings¹⁴. The contact sheet summarizing the parsha studied in kindergarten is brought home on Fridays to continue the study at home. The stories usually are not told in the spirit of the *p'shat*, the historical, textual meaning but in *d'rash* that shape a dichotomous perception of good-bad, righteous-wicked. Most KT's do not prepare the *Parsha* from the *Chumash* itself, but rather tell it from books adapted for children, which include commentary and *Midrash* (homiletical interpretation), as well as illustrations that reflect an adversarial and dichotomous worldview (Manzura, 2010; Yaffe, 2004).

Other educational approaches to teaching the *Parsha* in ECE, such as the approach that focuses on the *p'shat* or that which incorporates *Midrash*, a more expansive homiletical interpretation told in a separate session, are central to state religious education (Achituv, 2013), but in HE they are only used marginally.

The following examples demonstrate how, through the weekly *Torah* portion—with even greater intensity than children's literature—young children are educated to distinguish between the in-group and the out-group and to be wary of proximity to the Other. Given the perception of the parsha stories as sacred and inherently authoritative, their impact on children is amplified. Furthermore, the KT's tendency to incorporate anachronisms in the spirit of *Midrash*, blending past and present¹⁵, makes the *Parsha's* protagonists present in the children's lives at a stage when their perception of historical time is limited.

The following example illustrates the power of constant repetition of the same stories, characters, and messages. The messages regarding the Other that accompanied the first part of the story shape the children's perceptions of the Other as the story continues:

¹⁴Although the weekly Torah portion is taught in all settings, the goals differ for boys and girls. For boys, the study of the parsha is seen as part of becoming a devoted *Torah* scholar. A KT said that the boy belongs to the parsha, to the *Shabbat* table, to the people of the *Torah*, to the *Torah* of his father. The girls support the fathers and boys, as the KT said- the boy is inside the book, and the girl is outside the book.

¹⁵ As one KT relates: When Moses came to the Jews in the desert, the Jews were in the synagogues learning the commandments... In Haran, Abraham established a large yeshiva (Yaffe, 2004, p. 114).

Lot's shepherds were not righteous, so they entered someone else's garden (Child: Oh! They were bad!) That's right. They were not righteous. Abraham said to Lot: "Why don't you educate your shepherds?" But Lot wasn't that righteous either. And he said: (in an Arabic accent) "What do you care?" The following week, the KT continues: "The wicked people in Sodom decided not to let in guests (Child: Only Jews). Everyone there were gentiles. There were no Jews there. (Child: There was only one Jew). Was God happy with such people? (Child: I saw wicked people traveling on the *Sabbath*)..."

One of the KTs explained in the interview: "At a young age, a child needs to know that Jacob was the righteous one and Esau the wicked one." The dichotomy, she says, also allows for distancing from the non-Haredi religious Other:

It is written that it is forbidden to speak bad of others, but my father once said: When I come to my child, I show him certain [religious] sectors. I tell him: Don't get confused. It is true that he also wears *Tzitzit*... but they are not good. They are not for us.

Alongside the negation of the Other, the characters of the forefathers and foremothers are idealized, as a KT said about the nation's forefathers: "You are not allowed to doubt the righteousness of these personalities at all." The nicknames attached to the figures – our mother Rachel, our father Abraham, Joseph the righteous vs. Esau the wicked – also encourage a stereotypical perception and prevent children from autonomous thinking about the character in light of their actions.

The following example illustrates the integral combination of *P'shat* (literal meaning), *Drash*, commentary, and moral lessons regarding the attitude toward the Other.

When Joseph saw that his brothers were distressed, he raised his voice in a loud and bitter outcry. Pharaoh was so frightened that he fell off his chair and when the men of Egypt heard the cry, they picked themselves up and ran away like mice. It's not like Jews who are in danger, because one Jew helps another. But gentiles? They attacked each other... Non-Jews don't care about others at all; they don't have the love and affection of "you should love your fellow as yourself."

While the first sentence is a description of the encounter between Joseph and his brothers as described in the bible, the second sentence is an addition that is not implied by the *P'shat*, and in the third the kindergarten children are told the conclusion drawn by their teacher. The description, which is not based on the *P'shat*, ridicules Pharaoh and the Egyptians and, more importantly, distinguishes between Jews and gentiles in the realm of mutual assistance and love of one's fellow.

Yaffe (2004) quotes the words of one of the KTs:

In every generation someone is trying to kill us. In Egypt, Pharaoh; in the city of Shushan, it was Haman and Ahasuerus. On *Hanukkah*? It was Antiochus. Fifty years ago... Hitler. Now who wants to kill us? [Children: Pharaoh, the one who carries out the terror attacks]. That's right, the Arabs want to take our land and kill us (p. 117).

Although this example describes the evolution of evil within an organized historical sequence, Yaffe (2004) argues that there is no distinction between the past and the present, between history and current events. Pharaoh, Hitler, the terrorists, all are equally alive, concrete, immediate, real. This is how the story serves the needs of the community's struggle for its very existence out of an acute consciousness of crisis and self-defense.

The dichotomy between biblical figures who belong to the people of Israel and those who do not is particularly complex when it is presented through members of the same family—for example, between siblings, or as in the following example, between a father and his son. In this case, the boundary between the Other from the out-group and the Other who belongs to the in-group becomes blurred. One of the *Melamdin* describes Abraham and his father Terah in the spirit of the *Midrash* in a manner that teaches about Terah's struggle against the Jewish faith as represented by his son:

Our forefather Abraham's father was a gentile, and his name was... Terah. Do you know what his father wanted to do to him? We won't tell. And his mother hid him in a cave... His father didn't make him *Peos*, didn't send him to *Heder*. Because his father was a gentile. He didn't want Abraham to learn *Torah*... Who made such a big, beautiful world? (Child: God). That's right, but Terah wasn't in the *Heder* so no one told him.

Through this story, the *Melamed* conveys an adversarial message, as if echoing the words of the KT cited above: A child needs to know that Abraham is the righteous and his father is the wicked. In the following example, a *Melamed* tells 3-4 year old boys about Dina, daughter of Jacob, as an internal Other—as someone who deviated from the path: "Dina wandered around outside. Jacob tells Dina not to wander among Arabs. But she went out to her friends and wandered around, and then who did she meet? (Child: An Arab) Shechem son of Hamor."¹⁶

In the following example, through a dramatization of the story of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the KT hints at the danger of disobedience to authority. The serpent in the story is the Other whom one must be wary of resembling. While telling the story, the KT shows the children a paper snake:

God took scissors (takes down large scissors from the hook). Whose scissors are these? God's. With this, they punish the snake. God cut off its legs (cuts off the legs of the painted snake). You deserve it. You behaved so badly... You will not get chips, snacks, and delicious food. The snake will eat dirt and ashes, lots of stones and sand... And we, too, will do whatever God tells us, and what the KT says, and what Mommy and Daddy tell us, and we will grow up and be righteous.

The value of obedience to authority helps internalize the distinction between good and evil and between us and others. It is reinforced in various other weekly *Torah* portion stories, such as in the story of the Creation: "All of Creation obeys, and so do we."

Another example:

The heaven always remains above because it obeys the voice of God, because God told them... God only had to speak, and the waters immediately obeyed His voice. God only had to tell the earth to grow grass and flowers, and at once the earth obeyed the voice of God. God created the entire world so that people could sit and study *Torah*.

One KT finds it difficult to see a child's expression of personal desire as a legitimate act. When she hears that a girl in another kindergarten said, in response to the

¹⁶ In these words, the *Melamed* chooses not to tell the story in the spirit of the *P'shat*, but rather in the spirit of the *Midrash*, which views Dina, who went out "to see the daughters of the land," as an example of immodesty that leads to licentiousness.

prohibition of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, that she would have eaten from the fruit of the tree, she reacts as follows:

I would tell her: "You are just like the snake. He also said I will eat anyway. Whoever does it specifically in spite, then that is what happens. You are like the snake. It is not smart to do things that are forbidden. We have to learn the lesson from this. Why should I eat what my mother doesn't allow? In the end, I will be punished."

In the KT's words, one can see a warning that not only doing an action but even expressing a forbidden desire turns the child into being like the "Other." The combination of statements in this spirit with an authoritarian, transmissive, and authoritative approach has considerable influence on shaping appropriate attitudes and perceptions. In the following two examples, the dichotomy is represented through the colors black and white. In the story of the Flood as told by one of the KTs, the birds are anthropomorphized, and the dove is called "righteous":

I will send out the black raven, look how ugly it is, kraa, kraa. My beautiful, beautiful dove, come and sit on the palm of my hand. [Noah] gave the dove food because it was righteous. It obeyed Noah.

Black and white representing ugliness and beauty, evil and good, is also used with regard to human figures. The message in the example of the raven and the dove, which was implicit, becomes explicit in the following example, in which the KT refers to Sarah: "There are very unbeautiful people in Egypt. They are black faced. They are Negroes. And Sarah was very beautiful."

One of the KTs describes the effect of the adversarial narrative on the children:

Once a man came to bring kerosene to the building, so the children asked me: "Is he righteous or wicked?" I told them that he tries to be righteous, but he sometimes gets confused, the evil inclination comes to him, and he listens to the voice of the evil inclination. What happened? They shouted at him, "Gentile," so I told them: "First of all, even if he's a gentile, don't shout because it's not..." and besides, I explained to them that he's not a gentile... It was hard for them. They didn't really understand the concept of secular. What we learned about was righteous, mediocre, and wicked people... I tell the child: "Look, you

weren't that righteous, now you've *done Teshuva* [repented] and you're righteous again."

In these words, the KT expresses her discomfort with the children's identification of gentile with secular Jew, and her attitude toward the secular Jew as someone who may become newly religious (*Chozar Biteshuva*), and thus is fundamentally different from the gentile. Another KT, who teaches in a Hasidic girls' kindergarten for children of *Ba'alei Teshuva*, points to a hierarchy that exists among the Others within the in-group, who are located on the margins of Haredi society in her perception. She refers to those who have repented, that is, done *Teshuva* [known as *Ba'alei Teshuva*] in general and to *Ba'alei Teshuva* of Sephardic origin in particular. In the interview, this is how she describes the kindergarten that her own children attend: "From homes of fathers with religious roots, a healthy home, no *Ba'al Teshuva* past with a mixture of all kinds, one Sephardic and one Oriental Jewish. [In their kindergarten, only from] purely Yiddish Hasidic homes." From this description, it emerges that even the community in which this KT works is perceived by her as an Other of lesser value than the community to which she herself belongs—where everyone is from originally Hasidic families, without Sephardic Jews or *Ba'alei Teshuva*.

In contrast to the *Torah* negative figures stand the models for identification and emulation. The stories of the *Parsha* highlight the models of the righteous as having values of faith in God, studying *Torah*, being content with little, and obedience. In the education of girls, the KTs also emphasize the values of modesty, self-sacrifice, and acts of kindness – characteristics that, in her view, do not exist among gentile women. A KT in a girls' kindergarten says: "Yitzchak did not want to take [a wife] from the daughters of Canaan who were not modest or good." In contrast to gentile women, Eve is presented as a model identical to the Jewish woman who serves as a helpmate to her husband: "Eve was created as a helpmate to Adam. How? She cooks, she does laundry so that Adam can study *Torah*."

The final example is an extreme one that is not typical to most Haredi KTs, rather, it characterizes a sermon common in the Haredi media and in rabbinical appearances before large audiences (Amran, 2006; Caplan, 2007). After the *Melamed* dramatically describes the story of Esau selling his birthright to his brother Jacob, he uses the story as an opportunity to impart the values of *Torah* study and being content

with little such as are personified in Jacob and to discourage the materialism embodied in Esau:

Esau, everything he saw, he wanted a lot. That is a gentile. A Jew is happy with what he has, he is happy with what God gives him... A father who goes to *Kollel* and studies *Torah* wants God to send him a livelihood because he needs money so he can buy *Tefillin* for the older children, so that there will be light in the house... He needs to pay the water bill, so that there will be food, cheese, milk, chicken, meat... But a father doesn't want to have a lot of money so he can put it in warehouses and keep boxes with millions. A gentile works and works... When they ask him, what do you work for? I want a lot of money... A gentile also buys things he doesn't need. A gentile also does all kinds of nonsense. He doesn't know what he wants from himself. But a Jew is content with what he has... Because the greatest happiness is that "I am a Jew who can observe the commandments, I can study *Torah*..." But Jacob knew Esau, that Esau is just like a Gentile. Esau is a Gentile. Everything he sees he wants a lot of... Do the Gentiles have a mouth? (Child: No) They don't even have sense. They don't have anything. They only have sense to eat chips and steak (Child: That's not *Kosher*). Anyone who eats without *Kosher* certification will end up being stupid... (Child: They have a *Keffiyeh*). The *Keffiyeh* doesn't matter. Even all the gentiles of America and China and Japan, even the President of America a thousand million billion times can't be like a Jew (Child: Even the Queen of America)... Even the Queen of England is worth nothing next to the smallest Jew. Look, our Yitzhak here reads beautifully, prays beautifully, listens to what the rabbi says... He's worth a billion times a billion more than the Queen of England, who is a millionaire and has silver and gold and she is honored. Why? Because we are Jews... Everything that God gave them, all this so that they could make shoes in Italy and our children here in the *Heder* would wear them, gave them the brains to make pants in America so that our children in the room would wear them, gave them the brains to make all kinds of fabrics in Hong Kong so that we would have shirts, he gave them the brains to make all kinds of fabrics in Argentina so that they could raise sheep and goats so that we could take their wool and righteous Jews would make *Tzitzit* for us... (Child: Even to make us

a synagogue). They build everything for us. Everything in the world is only for the Jews. But let's continue, we've deviated a bit from the topic of the *Parsha*."

Unlike other examples, in this case the *Melamed* educates the children to view the Other as devoid of independent existence, and even as a demonic, mouthless creature, destined to serve the observant Jew—including the children in the class themselves.

The comments and questions of the children in the various citations reflect their desire to understand what is being told in light of prior knowledge. Thus, in this example, the children's comments "They have a *Keffiyeh*" and "They should also build us a synagogue" can be seen as an attempt to understand the attitude towards Arabs in the context of the teacher's words about the attitude towards the gentile.

To summarize, from the description of the narratives told through young children's literature and the weekly *Parsha*, what stands out is the great preoccupation with reinforcing the proper path to follow and to distinguish between those who are ours ("*Fon Unzereh*"- in Yiddish) and the "Others." This strengthens the argument about the centrality of the essentialist perception in the HE for separatism. In this way, the gatekeepers of the Haredi world, as the KTs perceive themselves, serve the interest of creating a strong infrastructure for preserving the values of Haredi society. (Mansura, 2005; Yaffe, 2004).

Discussion and Conclusions

This section addresses the possible implications of HECE in Israel, which is the focus of this article, on the establishment of attitudes and behaviors of the Haredi adult. These attitudes and behaviors have roots in the subsequent years of the Haredi child's education, including the absence of civic education, which reinforces the adversarial approach in this educational system. Haredi models from Haredi groups outside Israel and from Haredi society in Israel prior to the 1980s will be presented as having the potential to establish a HES that is not adversarial. Following the conclusions, the article's contribution and limitations will be presented.

Attitudes express the values of individuals and thus mediate between their values and their behavior. Therefore, content areas of values predict content areas of behaviors (Maio & Olson, 1994); accordingly, it can be inferred that the collective

values that the individual internalized during the socialization process influence their behavior as an adult. This article points out how HECE shapes solid foundations for an adversarial approach.

Studies show that from about the age of three, awareness of group affiliation develops, followed by the development of intergroup bias, which means preferring one's own affiliation group over other groups. This bias involves negative attitudes toward outgroups and is linked to the concept of essentialism, which also characterizes the way of thinking at a young age, attributing a fundamental and permanent difference to the outgroup in relation to the group of affiliation (Nashia & Diesendruck, 2023). Multicultural educational interventions in early childhood that include getting to know the Other and receiving information about him, such as through the Persona Doll approach¹⁷, have been found to be effective in preventing the formation of essentialist perceptions, negative attitudes, and stereotypes regarding the other (Nasie et al., 2022; Nasie & Diesendruck, 2023).

Family, community, and the wider social contexts are meaningful socializing forces that affect young children's development and learning (Bronfenbrenner 1979). In the case of HECE, the combination of a perception of group belonging and intergroup bias with an approach that encourages obedience and following "the path" promotes the consolidation of stereotypical perceptions of others. Furthermore, we argue that these roots of the adversarial approach, which are planted at such a young age, have continuity in HE within elementary and secondary educational frameworks for both boys and girls. One of the central manifestations of this is the absence of civics studies and civic education in the HES in all its forms in Israel.

According to Barth et al. (2023a), even in girls' institutions offering "the full core curriculum," citizenship education holds a marginal place, and Barth et al. (2022) identify three types of barriers—social, value-oriented, and organizational—that hinder the incorporation of civic education in this system. Shahino-Kessler (2024) confirms that "the basic curriculum does not relate at all to civic, Israeli, and democratic education" (p. 11). Friedman (2021) notes that in Haredi boys' schools

¹⁷ This approach uses child-size (persona) dolls, each with an individual personality and an ethnic-social-cultural background. The approach, which originated in the United States and was adapted to the Israeli context, is perceived as effective for developing social skills in early childhood, encouraging curiosity and inclusion toward social diversity, and fostering sensitivity toward social biases (Smith, 2013).

there are no civics studies at all, while in girls' schools the study is partial and biased, contributing to alienation from the state. This is evident in the textbook "As a Brand-New Citizen" (Ostri, 2018), which presents state institutions as part of "the struggle of Haredi Judaism to preserve the foundations of the Jewish religion within the political framework that aspires to uproot it" (p. 19). The State Comptroller (2021) similarly points to unique deficiencies in HE regarding coexistence and notes that the Haredi sector has difficulty in inter-sectoral partnership due to their worldview.

Researchers from within Haredi society have addressed this complex issue. Pfeffer (2018) argues that while general studies do not contradict basic Haredi worldviews, civics studies that teach autonomy and the right to leave Haredi society contradict fundamental Haredi values, foremost among them "separatism." He proposes that publicly funded HE must include appropriate civic education that teaches tolerance and acceptance of the Other, while unfunded private education may be exempt. Yaffe (2022) emphasizes that the absence of civics studies contributes to "radicalization and worsening of the tension and alienation between Haredi society and the general society" (p. 192), and that the narrow, particularistic worldview limits Haredi citizens' ability to accept different lifestyles. As a solution, Yaffe proposes assimilating a "thin" set of values that will enable living together and promote intercommunal solidarity, envisioning graduates who "will participate fully in Israeli society and its institutions" (p. 195).

According to Spiegel (2011), the HES shapes the attitude of its graduates regarding integration into the economy and the military and their view of the State of Israel as a "hollow democracy." Surveys among various groups in Haredi society present a profile that suggests that, overall, the sense of belonging to Israeli society among members of Haredi society is the lowest of all Jewish groups (Friedman, 2021). Furthermore, according to Stopler (2017) and Statman (2023), Haredi society is an illiberal community with great political power that challenges the weak liberal framework in Israel while demanding from the state considerations that will allow it to insulate itself from the general liberal society. Support for this can be seen in the ways the Haredi establishment has coped with the challenges posed by the state during the Iron Swords War, such as the issue of military conscription (Hayun, 2023).

Along with all this, the growing Haredi marginal groups are challenging the classical Haredi perception in the contexts of economy, society, education, and more. These groups are shaping new civic leadership (Esban & Becher-Cohen, 2020), a new ideology and rabbinical leadership (Eitan, 2024; Gado, 2023b) and changes in the education system, centered on the establishment and consolidation of the *Mamach* (Cohen, 2020). The solutions offered by these groups have parallels both in Haredi communities outside Israel and in Haredi society in Israel prior to the 1980s:

The Lithuanian-American “integrated enclave” model embraces modern American values and lifestyles and can serve as an inspiration for Israeli Haredim and “can give Israeli Haredism tools to deal with questions of education, teaching, and educational ideology.” This model demonstrates the power of the combination of the Haredi community’s internal motivation to combine high-quality religious and secular studies with the power of the state to assimilate and enforce norms in HE (Malach and Ettinger 2021; p. 104). Unlike the American Haredi model of the integrated enclave, it seems that the challenge of living together in Israel is complex and fraught with unique conflicts, requiring a consolidation of forces between Haredi society and other groups in Israeli society and governmental, academic, military and civilian stakeholders (Kingsbury, 2020; Pfeffer, 2018).

The additional, local model of Haredi society in Israel in the first decades after the establishment of the state and until the 1980s constitutes one of the foundations shaping the activities of actors from within Haredi society who are working toward integration into society and establishing *Mamach* (Brown, 2017; Rochberger, 2026). Before the 1980s and 1990s, large segments of Haredi society were part of broader Israeli society in various aspects. After these years, processes began that changed the character of Haredi society and led to internal tensions, an ongoing economic crisis, and conflicts with Israeli society. The early Haredi model is described as follows:

Until the 1980s, most Haredim “coexisted in mixed residential areas with secular, traditional, and national-religious populations. The employment rate among Haredi men was comparable to that of other Israelis, and secular subjects were part of the curriculum in Haredi schools. Moreover, many Haredi men served in the Israeli army and held a positive view of the state, celebrating its accomplishments” (Keren-Kratz. 2025, p 1).

The conclusion emerging from this article is that the motivation of certain Haredi groups working toward integration into Israeli society is not sufficient, and the state has a central role in strengthening the trend towards integration (Kingsbury, 2020; Pfeffer, 2018; Yaffe, 2022). In the context of HE, significant state support is required to promote the *State-Haredi* system, both financially and legally (Shahino-Kessler and Goshen, 2024; Zernowitski, 2025). Unlike the current situation whereby HE is focused on permanent separatism, the *Mamach* could offer an educational framework where the particular Haredi cultural heritage is taught, with a temporary ideology of separatism aimed at enabling a future, authentic interaction with other groups in Israeli society from a position of strength¹⁸. Regarding the rest of the Haredi educational frameworks, the state must make a distinction, as suggested by elements also from within Haredi society, between public and private frameworks and create a balanced system of requirements alongside appropriate budgeting (Pfeffer, 2018).

Current reflections

This article was written during challenging and complex times for the State of Israel and for all the groups that comprise the mosaic of Israeli society. Crisis situations are a time of testing and a trigger for internal transformations within Haredi society (Yaffe, 2022). The events of October 7 and the "Iron Swords" war constitute a difficult testing time for the complex relationship between Haredi society, Israeli society as a whole, and the "state." In 2021, Friedman argued that the failure of Haredi integration into the military reflected a shift in reasoning — no longer *Toratam Umanutam* ("their Torah is their profession"), but "their Haredism is their profession." According to Friedman, the attempt to instill a sense of value and commitment to jointly shouldering the security and civil burden "failed miserably" (Friedman, 2021, pp. 14-15).

Despite changes that have occurred in civic engagement among the Haredi public and in the responses of the rabbinic leadership and Haredi media at the beginning of the Iron Swords War (Gado, 2023b; Neria Ben-Shahar, 2023), as of the time of writing this article, the changes in Haredi society's participation in the military effort are limited and slow, and the crisis surrounding the conscription law that is

¹⁸ Thus, Reingold and Barz (2009) argue that particularistic multicultural education is founded on the premise that, in order to empower members of cultural minority groups, separate educational systems must be constructed for them.

tearing Israeli society apart is ongoing (Hayun, 2023). The political forces presented in this article as opposing changes in the civic, educational, and economic systems are withstanding the growing pressure on Haredi society for security participation, both from many groups within Israeli society and from actors working for change from within Haredi society itself.

Contributions, Limitations, and Recommendations

This article makes several distinctive contributions to the scholarly understanding of Haredi society and its relationship with broader Israeli society. First, it employs ECE as an analytical lens, shifting scholarly attention from the more commonly studied domains of adult behavior, political activity, and economic patterns to the formative processes that precede and shape them. By focusing on children aged 2-6, the article captures the moment when collective identities are first constructed and internalized. Second, the article integrates developmental psychological concepts—such as intergroup bias, essentialism, and the formation of group belonging that emerge around age three—with sociological analysis of religious enclave communities, illuminating how natural developmental processes are harnessed by Haredi educational practices to create particularly robust boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. Third, the conceptualization of the "internal Other"—the *Sephardi*, the *Ba'al Teshuva*, the working man—adds nuance to the binary understanding of Haredi attitudes toward outsiders, revealing a hierarchical structure within Haredi society itself that has received limited attention in existing scholarship. Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, the article establishes a causal chain from early childhood socialization to the absence of civic education throughout the Haredi educational system, demonstrating that this absence is not merely an administrative gap but rather the logical extension of an adversarial worldview systematically cultivated from the earliest years—a reframing with important implications for policy interventions. At a time of unprecedented tension between Haredi and non-Haredi sectors in Israeli society, this analysis provides essential context for understanding the depth and durability of separatist orientations while simultaneously identifying ECE as a potential site for meaningful intervention.

The examples presented in this article include a variety of KTs and *Melamdin* within Haredi society but do not include representation of *Mamach*. Such

representation is particularly significant in the context discussed here. Therefore, it is recommended to direct research spotlight toward the perceptions of educators and policy leaders in *Mamach*, as well as the perceptions of parents who choose this educational stream.

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