

HAREDI JUDAISM

ULTRA-ORTHODOX JUDAISM



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Haredi_Jew_Vilnius.jpg

CONTENTS

- What and Who are the Haredi?
- How did they come to exist?
- What is their influence today?
- What is their position on Zionism?
- Conclusion

WHAT DOES THE TERM HAREDI MEAN?

- Haredi/Haredim: ‘*Those who tremble*’, or, ‘*Fearful*’, because they fear God.
- Also known as Ultra-Orthodox or Jewish Fundamentalists.

“The word “Haredi” is a catchall term, either an adjective or a noun, which covers a broad array of theologically, politically, and socially conservative Orthodox Jews, sometimes referred to as “ultra-Orthodox.” What unites Haredim is their absolute reverence for Torah, including both the Written and Oral Law, as the central and determining factor in all aspects of life. Consequently, respect and status are often accorded in proportion to the greatness of one’s Torah scholarship, and leadership is linked to learnedness.¹”



¹ RAYSH WEISS, My Jewish learning, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>, accessed on 10/06/21 at 19:50PM.
² RAYSH WEISS, My Jewish learning, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>, accessed on 10/06/21 at 19:50PM

TALMUDIC STUDY AND OBSERVANCE OF TORAH

- “Jewish fundamentalism is here briefly defined as the belief that Jewish Orthodoxy, which is based upon the Babylonian Talmud, the rest of Talmudic literature and Halachic literature, is still valid and will eternally remain valid. Jewish fundamentalists believe that the Bible itself is not authoritative unless interpreted correctly by Talmudic literature².”
- Haredi stress the supremacy and authority of the Rabbis in all things. Rabbis are even seen as infallible when it comes to the interpretation and application of the Torah.

HISTORY

- The term 'Haredi' first used in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany and Hungary³.
- Adopted as the name of religious Jews that opposed any modern innovation within Judaism³.
- Ashkenazi or Eastern European Haredim emerged as a backlash group opposed to the Jewish enlightenment³.
- The Haredim today try to live similarly to how Jewish life was during the period they lived in Ghettos in Europe⁴.
- Black dress was the dress fashion of Jews in Eastern Europe around 1850³.

³ Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, London: Pluto Press, (2004), Pg. 8.

⁴ RAYSH WEISS, *My Jewish learning*, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>, accessed on 10/06/21 at 19:50PM

LIFESTYLE

- Haredi limit their contact with the outside world to prevent outside influence and contamination of their beliefs.
- Each community has its own Synagogue, Yeshivot and community groups.
- Secular education is largely forbidden, thus not many Haredim have degrees.
- Men dedicate themselves to full time Torah study and their Wives become the bread winners. This is surprising given their other restrictive rules about Women.
- Fastest growing Jewish group.
- Large families and single income households means Haredim communities suffer extreme poverty.



5 RAYSH WEISS, *My Jewish learning*, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>, accessed on 10/06/21 at 19:50PM

Picture from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breslov_kids_prepare_for_Shabbat_Mea_Shearim_Jerusalem_-_Flickr_-_yoavelad.jpg

DIFFERENT TYPES OF HAREDIM: LITHUANIAN TRADITION.

- Lithuanian Tradition/ Mitnagdim, “opponents”⁶.
- Stresses Talmudic study in the Yeshivot⁶.
- Founder is Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman. It grew as a counter movement to Hasidism⁶.
- Rabbis authority comes from their great learning⁶.



HASIDISM

- From the Hebrew word '*Hasid*' meaning Pious⁷.
- Founder is Israel Ben Eliezer. Passed on his authority to Holy men called Zaddikin. Each Zaddik has authority because of close relationship with G-d⁸.
- Stresses study of the Torah And Kabbalah (Mystical writings)⁸.
- Began in Poland and Lithuania in the 18th century⁷.
- A revival movement, seeking to restore intimacy with G-d and devotion to Him⁷.
- Practises such as ecstasy, visions, miracles, song and dance⁷.
- Rabbis (Rebbes) dismiss scholarship that lacks spirituality.⁸
- Comprises a great proportion of Agudat Israel (United Torah Judaism) today, one of the most important and influential orthodox organizations in Israel⁹.



Picture from: https://www.google.com/search?q=israel+ben+eliezer&safe=strict&sxsrf=ALeKk00L-PM6nGxG17ih7PpOjsHC_XjtHg:1623249868792&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjvhr7-5lrxAhUUrhQKHb17BSYQ_AUoAnoECAEQBA&biw=806&bih=737#imgrc=ZG-EVMRhQFJICM

HAREDI POLITICAL IMPORTANCE IN ISRAEL

- Although the Haredim are a small minority in Israel, they hold a huge amount of power in the Knesset¹⁰.
- Haredim outside of Israel acquire funding and political support for Haredim in Israel.
- Haredim are split into two political parties: United Torah Judaism is the party of the Ashkenazi Haredim, and Shas is the party of the Oriental Haredim who are of Middle Eastern origin¹¹.
- In 1996 the combined parties along with the National Religious Party (Non-Orthodox Religious Jews) won 23 seats in the Knesset¹².
- Although secular party Likud won the majority of seats, (32), the Knesset has to function with the other groups collaboratively, and so the Haredim hold much influence in the Knesset¹².
- Enmity growing in Knesset because of opposing Zionist and Anti-Zionist views between the 'right and religious' parties and the left¹³.
- It doesn't seem coherent that the Haredim separate themselves from the outside world to prevent contamination of their beliefs, and yet are so active in Israeli politics. This also doesn't make sense since they deny the legitimacy of the State of Israel.

¹⁰ Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, London: Pluto Press, (2004), Pg 5.

¹¹ Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, London: Pluto Press, (2004), Pg. 7

¹² Pilkington, *Teach Yourself Judaism*, Pg. 246.

¹³ Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, London: Pluto Press, (2004), Pg. 6.

ZIONISM

- Haredim deny the legitimacy of the State of Israel and are opposed to the modern Zionist movement¹⁴. This seems strange since they hold such power in the Knesset.
- Haredim believe that the land was given to the people of Israel by God and then it was taken from them because of their disobedience to the covenant¹⁴.
- When Jews begin to obey the Torah, God and only God will bring the Messianic age wherein they will see the restoration of the land to the Jews¹⁴.
- They oppose the notion that by settling in Palestinian territories Jews are helping bring about the redemptive age¹⁴.
- HOWEVER, they hold even more strongly than Zionists that the Jewish people has *exclusive God-given rights* in its Biblical homeland¹⁴. It's for this reason they are so active in Israeli politics. Their main interest in the Knesset is to acquire money to sustain Yeshivot.

ZIONISM

- Not all Haredim reject Zionism or the State of Israel. Shas does not. most of its supporters have done military service¹⁴.
- Even more adamantly anti-Zionist is the group NETUREI KARTÉ, Guardians of the City:

“The Zionist state denies the Jewish people its essence and uniqueness, transforming it into a nation like all other nations, whose existence is not dependent upon the observance or abnegation of the Torah. The state before us was created as a substitute for the sanctity and godliness of the people of Israel in order to transform its unique deeply rooted essence into a territorial, gentle political one. The Zionist state represents total heresy, uprooting the soul of our faith from its root and violating the covenant which God made with us in HOREV. ¹⁴“

CONCLUSION

- The Haredim are a complex group of religiously devout Jews whose lives are rooted in the study of the Babylonian Talmud and the authority of the Rabbis.
- Although living in insular communities to prevent contamination from the outside world, they are very active in Israeli politics and hold significant political power in Israel.
- Although denying the legitimacy of the State of Israel on the basis that it has been made by man before the Messianic Age has come, rather than by God in response to observance of the Torah, they continue to live in the land and are very active in the Knesset in order to ensure their communities continue to thrive.
- Although denying modern Zionism as heresy, they do believe that the Jewish people have exclusive God given rights in their Biblical homeland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Books:**

- Shahak, I, and Mezvinsky, N, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, London: Pluto Press, 2004.
- Pilkington, C M, *Teach Yourself Judaism*.
- Cohn-Sherbok, D, *Introduction to Zionism and Israel From Ideology to History*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012.
- Segal, E, *Introducing Judaism*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

- **Websites:**

- WEISS, R, *My Jewish learning*, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>, accessed on 10/06/21 at 19:50PM.
- Bacon, G, "Agudas Yisroel" , *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Agudas_Yisroel, accessed on 10.06.21 at 17:00.