

The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Studies

Center for the Study of Haredi Society

**The Ongoing Transformation of Haredi Population in Israel:
Past Developments and Future Options in Education and Employment**

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The Center for the Study of Haredi Society (CHIS)

CSHS nests within the organizational framework of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), founded in 1978 as an independent, non-profit research organization and think tank and currently headed by Director General Meir Kraus. In 2013, JIIS decided to enhance its research activities by establishing CSHS, focusing on various issues concerning the current budding socio-economic transformation that is taking place, which is leading to the gradually increasing involvement of the haredi population in the general Israeli economy, society and civic affairs. CSHS aims to increase its impact on municipal and national policy makers through ongoing interaction with them regarding the choices of research topics that concern them, as well as bringing to their attention policy recommendations based on research projects.

Heading the Center is Prof. **Amiram Gonen**, professor emeritus of the Hebrew University. He is former head of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel and the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies and wrote several research reports on haredi society.

Rabbi **Bezalel Cohen** is a member of the board of the CSHS and currently head and founder of Hachmey Lev Yeshiva in which general studies for high school matriculation are included. He studied at several haredi yeshivas, served as research associate at the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies and Israel Democracy Institute. He is also the former head of education and employment programs for haredim at Israel-JDC. He is one of the founders of Kemach Foundation for Professional Advancement of Haredim.

Prof. Amiram Gonen and Rabbi Bezalel Cohen are the co-authors of the following report.

OVERVIEW

This report traces some main aspects of the changes which the haredi population has undergone in the recent decade and a half, particularly with the growing numbers of haredi persons involved in academic studies, vocational training and eventual gainful employment. These changes are an indication that a large number of haredi persons are eager to respond to the challenge of transforming the male component of their population to be more involved in the general economy and society and move away from the model of a scholars' society which brings about poverty and a heavy burden on society at large.

The report addresses the following topics:

Background

- The basic challenge: poverty generated by high population growth;
- Evolution of the haredi population in Israel as a “scholars’ society”; and its basic economy;
- The early emergence of vocational training.

Higher Education

- The spread of academic studies for haredi students;
- The role of philanthropic foundations in the provision of tuition scholarships;
- The need for a more intensive pre-academic preparatory program and ongoing auxiliary tutoring throughout undergraduate studies for haredi students;
- The need to balance between academic studies and vocational training;
- Increasing the share of important and demanded academic subjects;
- How long to continue to maintain in academic studies the high degree of haredi segregation and gender separation.

Employment

- On-going activities in job referral and placement;
- Still unattended issues in employment;
- The inadequate input of general studies in elementary haredi education.

Elementary and High School Yeshiva Education

- The total lack of general studies at yeshivas for boys of high school age;
- Setting up Haredi high school yeshivas as an alternative to the classical haredi yeshiva.

Summary of Open Options for Philanthropy

The Ongoing Transformation of Haredi Population in Israel: Past Developments and Future Options in Education and Employment

A. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The basic challenge

Israel faces a crucial challenge regarding its growing ultra-orthodox sector: how to integrate this population group more actively into the country's economy and society while maintaining the community's unique traditions and lifestyle. Several elements underlie this challenge:

- **Poverty:** Many haredi men do not participate in the labor force, and their families are economically supported by state transfer payments of all kinds, philanthropy and income provided by female spouses. As a result many haredi households are much poorer than the rest of the Jewish population in Israel. The current situation is the result of the evolution among the haredi population of what has come to be termed a “Scholars’ Society”, in which haredi men are expected to be fully engaged in Torah studies.
- **High population growth:** This economic challenge is particularly acute due to the high demographic growth rates as a result of high birth rates – 6.5 children per woman as opposed to 2.9 for the general Jewish population. Demographic forecasts show that this situation is due to intensify in the near future as a result of the demographic growth of the haredi population. Currently the haredi population is estimated to consist of over 830,000 persons, comprising about 11 percent of the population of Israel or 13.5 percent of the Jewish population. If the current haredi growth trend continues, haredi population will amount in 2028 to about a fifth of the Jewish population. The share of haredi pupils in the first grade by that year is expected to amount to about 40 percent. Demographic forecasts indicate that by 2059 the share of haredim in the Jewish population will be over a third. In terms of age structure, the haredi youth (0-19) will form about half of the country's population.
- **High fertility rates:** In earlier years the current high haredi birth rate of 6.5 per a haredi woman was even higher – around 7.5. Several reasons were suggested to explain this drop in the fertility rate among haredi women:
 - The rising rate of employment among haredi women;

- The cutting by the government of social transfer payments, including child allowances, since 2003;
- The growing number of *ba'alei teshuva* joining haredi ranks and importing lower fertility rates from their previous cultural setting;
- Slowly adopted norms of a smaller number of children per family by a currently limited proportion of the haredi population.

Evolution of the haredi population in Israel as a “scholars’ society”

Several developments have led to this evolution:

- **Decimation of haredi population in the Holocaust:** A relatively larger proportion of the haredi population in eastern and central Europe was annihilated during WWII due to their former reluctance to emigrate to “*treife medines*” (non-kosher) elsewhere, including North America, Zionist and secular Eretz Israel;
- **The challenge to rehabilitate the former “world of Torah”:** The need to recreate the cadre of rabbis, *dayanim* (religious judges) and other clergy as well as fully learned scholars;
- Informal declaration of a haredi revolutionary state: Each young man should be fully mobilized to the task of rebuilding the “world of Torah”.
- **The special circumstances in Israel** in which there is a threatening presence of other Jewish competing alternatives:
 - A culturally threatening compulsory military service.
 - Culturally threatening Jewish state educational systems: secular and religious-Zionist.
- **Early accommodation by the Israeli establishment** by granting the haredi population:
 - A limited deferment from military service.
 - An autonomous haredi educational system.
- **Differences between haredi ethno-cultural groups:** The haredi population in Israel is divided among three main ethno-cultural groups, differentiated by ethnic origin and attitude towards intensive Torah learning, on the one hand, and toward earning work, on the other:
 - Lita'im* or *Lithuanian mitnagadim* of Ashkenazi origin in northeastern Europe who cherish above all intensive engagement in the learning of religious scriptures. This tradition has been developed in northeastern Europe (Lithuania and northeastern Russia and northern Poland). They were the originators of the “scholars’ society” through their development of a network

of yeshivas already in northeastern Europe in the 19th century. At that time only a handful of young elite scholars were trained for several years.

- **Hasidim or Hasidic** of Ashkenazi origin in southeastern Europe (Galicia, central Poland, eastern Hungary, Slovakia, and northern Romania). The Hasidic movement originally grew and spread as a popular alternative mode to the scholastic character of the Lithuanian one. In Israel, the *Hasidim* have gradually adopted some partial aspects of the Lithuanian scholastic mode and have developed their own yeshivas, while still remaining more inclined to engage in earning a living, mainly in commerce and crafts.
- **Sepharadim or Mizrachim** (of Eastern origin), extending from Persia and Bukhara in the east, Yemen in the south to Morocco in the west. They have shared with the Hasidic group the positive inclination toward working for a living and a rather limited tendency to be involved in intensive Torah learning. However, in recent decades they have been increasingly drawn to the Lithuanian mode, especially by their current elite, trained in Lithuanian yeshivas. But a substantial part of this group is still involved in active earning work, though, like the majority non-haredi population of Sephardic origin, they are less inclined toward academic education and more concentrated in vocational training, partly because of channeling practices of Israeli educational institutions.

The basic economy of the haredi scholars' society

General characteristics

Almost two-thirds of haredi households are considered poor. Several factors are acting to bring about this deep level of poverty among haredim:

- **A gradual reduction of the rate of participation of haredi men in the labor force** because of haredi men's cultural preference of being engaged in full-time Torah studies and leaving breadwinning to their wives. In the early 1970s the rate of participation of haredi men in the labor force was around 65 percent, and it decreased to less than 40 percent in the 2000s.
- **A low level of income earned** by haredi women as well as by those haredi men who opt to work and earn a living.
- **A large number of children per household** due to the high fertility rate of haredi women.

Sources of income in the haredi scholars' society

The main sources of income for haredi households are a mixture of earned income, state subsidies and allowances:

- **Income from reported employment.** Less than half of haredi men are reported as being employed, mostly at very low salaries. Meanwhile, less than two-thirds of haredi women are employed, mostly at low salaries and to a large extent in education or personal services.
- **Income from unreported employment** earned by an unknown proportion of both men and women who are engaged in unreported work, most often drawing quite a low income.
- **Income subsidies** paid by the government to households qualified as poor. About 60 percent of haredi households are qualified as such.
- **Discounts on local payments** to households qualified as poor. Many haredi households get significant discounts on local taxes or payments to educational institutions run by local authorities.
- **Child allowances**, paid to all households in Israel. With a large number of children common in haredi households, this source of income could play an important part in their total income.
- **Kollel scholarships.** Haredi men engaged in Torah studies at a kollel are paid a scholarship by the kollel at which they study. Funds for the payment of these scholarships, originating in philanthropic contributions from around the world, vary significantly by type of kollel and by the length of time spent in such studies during the day. Kollels that are well-endowed with philanthropic contributions pay a much higher scholarship than those poorly endowed.
- **Charity grants** distributed by philanthropic associations, foundations and individuals.

Sources of household financing

The main source of financing among the haredi population is:

- **Gemach (Interest-free loans):** Such loans are made by a community organization known by the acronym of *gemach* (*gemilut chasadim*). They are made available for helping households in paying for various needs. Many households recycle their loans by taking loans from other *gemach* organizations. There are no data on the magnitude of indebtedness among haredi households.

“Discovery” of the haredi scholars’ society by researchers

The realization of the emergence of an increasingly poor and state-dependent haredi scholars’ society has been growing since the 1990s with the publication of numerous research works. Several research publications were instrumental in bringing awareness to the government and other public

organizations regarding the existence of a pressing economic and social problem in the unchecked growth of a haredi scholars' society in Israel:

- Menachem Friedman in his "The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Society – Sources, Trends and Processes" (The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991) has defined and described the existence of a "scholars' society" among the haredi population.
- Eli Berman and Ruth Klinov in their "Human Capital Investment and Nonparticipation (or: Jewish Father Stops Going to Work)" (The Maurice Falk Institute for Economic Research in Israel, 1997) and Eli Berman in his "Sect, Subsidy and Sacrifice: An Economist's View of Ultra-orthodox Jews (Jerusalem Institute of Israel Studies, 1998) have offered an economic analysis of the preference of haredi men not to work and the economic support they get from their community.
- Amiram Gonen in his studies on haredi communities outside of Israel, in New York ("Between Yeshiva and Work: The American Experience and Lessons for Israel," The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2001) and London ("Between Torah Learning and Earning: A Society of Learners and Providers in London", The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2005) has shown that under conditions outside of Israel – no compulsory military service, no haredi political parties in parliament and no tradition of full-time Torah learning in the Holy Land – the vast majority of haredi men are gainfully employed, and full-time Torah learning is limited to their years of youth and early adulthood.
- Rabbi Bezalel Cohen has described and analyzed various aspects of the economic consequences of haredi economic distress as a result of an overgrown commitment to men's full-time engagement with Torah learning and the inability of rabbinical leadership to bring about a policy change ("Patterns of Economic Distress and Employment in Haredi Society – A View from Within," The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2005).

B. THE EARLY EMERGENCE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The need to train the haredi population for the entering into the labor force has been gradually recognized since the late 1990s. The first to be involved in this process were vocational training institutions, which viewed the haredi population as an emerging source of filling vocational jobs, now increasingly needed in the Israeli economy, and then often filled by foreign workers and previously by Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. The main institutions involved in this task were:

- **The Section on Vocational Training at the Ministry of Trade and Industry** identified haredim as a new source to recruit for the depleting vocational training programs after the depletion of the old sources, originating in the immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s. This section initiated many specific training programs in which haredi men and women received some sort of vocational training.
- **Tevet (תב"ת)** was set up as an organization by the Israeli government (Ministry of Economy and of the Treasury) and JDC-Joint Israel to build vocational training programs for minority groups such as Arabs and immigrants from Ethiopia; it has since incorporated the haredi population in its programs. In cooperation with the Section on Vocational Training at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Tevet has developed a series of many short vocational training programs for haredi men, including those still engaged in full- or part-time Torah learning as well as for haredi women eager to enhance their earning capabilities and professional advancement. The series, called in Hebrew "*Parnassa Bechavod* (פרנסה בכבוד - honorable earning of a living), included training for vocational professions such technicians, computer programmers, bookkeepers and tax counselors for men, and hydro-therapists or remedial teachers for women. Gender separation was strictly kept, as was the "spiritual" conformity of the study content to the haredi world view. Haredi leaders and activists consented to the series and cooperated with it.

Tevet also organized a special program of vocational training courses offered for free to haredi women, called **Tzofia**. The program was managed by a haredi women's organization by the name of Pelech.

- **The Haredi Center for Vocational Training** was first established in Jerusalem, and then opened branches in other concentrations of the haredi population: Bene Berak, Ashdod, Haifa, Bet Shemesh and Modi'in Illit, thus offering the necessary accessibility for haredi men still involved in intensive Torah learning at their local kollels or working haredi women and housewives interested in upgrading their employment capabilities with no need to travel to distant vocational training centers. The Center offered haredi men and women various levels of vocational training, including

the higher level of “practical or para-engineer” (הנדסאי=*handasai*) in fields such as building and architecture.

- **Various organizations** were established in some of the major haredi centers in which specific vocational training programs were offered. Some of the entrepreneurs were haredi, while others were already in the vocational training market and branched off to establish programs designed for haredi trainees. Even the Chief Rabbinate became actively involved in organizing courses to train haredim for all kinds of professions related to the Jewish religion such as shoichet (שוהט), moihel (מוהל) and sofer stam (סופר סת"ם).

All of these activities were able to add quite a few haredi men and women to the lower ranks of the trained work force. The challenge had still remained to introduce them to the middle-ranking professions and even higher-ones.

C. ACADEMIC STUDIES

Several institutions participated in the early emergence of academic studies for haredim. The process has been a gradually developing combination of initiatives by activists and entrepreneurs, mostly haredi, initiatives of academic institutions recognizing the growing demand for their services and the growing recognition of the Council of Higher Education, led at the time of Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg. The first academic institutions to be engaged with haredi students were the following:

- The first attempt at setting up a program of academic studies for haredim was led by Shas party activists who asked the American-based **Touro College** to provide academic education to haredi students. The prime motivation has been to enable Shas membership to undertake government and other public positions demanding university degrees. Touro College was ready to provide studying conditions according to haredi cultural norms, such as gender separation.
- **The Council of Higher Education (CHE)**, dissatisfied with the level of academic studies at Touro College, terminated it but while being urged by some haredi activists to act to open separate haredi frameworks for academic studies, has embarked on its own program to provide publicly-financed academic studies targeted for haredim and according to their norm of gender separation, following the realization that this format would reduce one of the barriers standing in the way of haredi men and women to academic studies. Two institutions were approved: **The Jerusalem Haredi College** and **the Bene Berak Haredi College**. However, they were not established as independent fully-accredited academic institutions, but were rather designed as organizational “platforms” for teaching, examining and degree-granting by fully-accredited academic institutions such Bar Ilan University, Haifa University and Hadassah Academic College. These two haredi “platforms” were set up to be gender-separated.
- **Lev Academic Institute** (known also as the Center for Higher Technology), a religious publicly-financed academic institution in Jerusalem, devoted mainly to engineering and natural science subjects, and practicing gender separation from its early start, has begun to develop separate “institutes” for the teaching of haredi male and female students. Later, it incorporated in its teaching system the Lustig Haredi Women’s College in Ramat Gan, again devoted to technological subjects.
- **Ono Academic College**, a privately-financed academic institution located in the town of Qiryat Ono, a suburb of Tel Aviv, has pioneered in the private sector by establishing a separate campus for haredi students in the neighboring town of Or Yehuda. It was the first private academic institution to identify the growing demand for academic institutions among the haredi population.

It concentrated on offering courses in law, business administration and accounting, which were at the time in high demand among Israeli students in general. This Ono Haredi Campus soon emerged as one of the major producers of haredi graduates, men and women, in spite of the fact that tuition costs were three times higher than those in publicly-financed academic institutions. The Ono Haredi Campus managed to provide ample scholarships to many of its haredi students. The Wolfson Foundation was one of the early funders of these scholarships.

- **The Open University** has been the first to introduce haredi students to an academic institution without gender separation. The project was initiated by Amiram Gonen and Rabbi Bezalel Cohen. Full tuition scholarships were funded jointly by Dr. Albert Dov Friedberg of Toronto and the Open University and were restricted to haredi men, being mostly affected to the prevalence concept of the “scholars’ society”. The advantage for haredi students was the fact that the Open University was designed from its beginning as an academic institution not requiring a high-school matriculation certificate (*bagrut*). It also provided ample study texts and online materials that enabled students to depend on distant learning. It also had branches in many towns across the country and thus made academic studies accessible to the haredi population that was, by then, spreading away from its two long-standing geographical concentrations of Jerusalem and Bene Berak. The Open University, recognizing its lack of mathematics and English language, offered haredi students special preparatory courses in these two subjects.
- **Expanding the network of haredi academic frameworks –Mahar (מהר"ר) project:** After over a decade of experience with the two haredi “platforms” (see above), CHE has embarked on a project of attaching haredi academic frameworks or campuses to many other academic institutions. The project included CHE’s per-student special financial support for the establishing and the managing of these separate frameworks as well as full tuition loans to students that could turn mostly into grants in preferred subjects such as engineering and computer science. Some living stipends are offered as well in these preferred subjects. This is the first time CHE is directly involved in tuition loans and living stipends, indicating the particular importance it attaches to supporting academic studies of haredim and especially to their study of preferential subjects.

Following tender published by CHE, quite a few academic institutions followed suit and have opened such a separate haredi campus, sometimes set quite geographically apart from their main general campus. The first academic institutions to respond actively to CHE’s Mahar project were Ashkelon Academic College, Bezalel Academy for Art and Design, Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem Engineering College, the Technion in

Haifa, Sami Sham'oun College of Engineering in Be'er Sheva and Zefat Academic College. The newly established Haredi Straus Campus of Hadassah Academic College was the one to recruit a substantial proportion of the new haredi registrants to this new CHE project in 2013. A survey of all registrants indicated that over 40% of them were in such haredi campuses located in the peripheral areas of the country, indicating a growing demand for academic studies among the haredi population living in the country's periphery which, until 2012, had little opportunity to participate in an academic setting suited to its cultural preferences. This 2013 survey also shows that registrants are equally divided between women and men, reaffirming other indications of a recent increase in the participation rate of haredi men in academic studies.

All of these efforts to open up academic studies to haredi men and women have led to a constantly growing number of haredi students. In the school year of 2011/12 the number of haredi students was 7,350. It is estimated that the number reached as high as 10,000 in the year 2014/15.

D. THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

One of the severe barriers to the academic studies undertaken by haredi students is their inability to pay tuition due to the dearth of economic resources. Most of them are already married and have to provide for their families with the meager income they draw from various resources. The parents too can often not afford to support their grown up offspring in this endeavor; sometimes they are reluctant to do so or are even unaware of the need because of not being told. As a result, philanthropic foundations have gradually realized that the provision of financial assistance to haredi students is a crucial challenge to address and an important task. Several such foundations rose to the occasion:

- **The Wolfson Foundation** was recruited by the Ono Haredi Campus, as mentioned above. At the time, there were no other sources available. Later, other sources became available.
- **Yedidut Toronto Association** was established shortly after the beginning of Dr. Albert Dov Friedberg's involvement in the provision of scholarships to haredi students in partnership with the Open University, based on its own fundraising for this purpose from its own contributors around the world. The number of students in this particular project was limited to 120 for the average length of four years of undergraduate studies. When the number of applicants for scholarships continued to grow, Dr. Friedberg expanded his contributions and added this line of activity to other philanthropic activities in Israel and put them under one roof to be established as Yedidut Toronto Association. By then its tuition scholarships amounted to 70 percent of tuition costs and the range of academic institutions in which such scholarships were granted was appreciably widened.
- **Kemach Association** (קרן ק.מ.ת.) started its operation in the provision of tuition scholarships for haredi students following the example of the scholarship project at the Open University. Mr. Leo Noe of London was the initial funder and was later joined by others. In its early years Kemach closely followed rabbinical rules on the age of applicants, first restricting it to 25 years and above for married men but over time, as demand expanded, the age limit has gradually relaxed. Early on, Kemach was the main provider of scholarships to haredi students at separate haredi campuses or "platforms". For some years Kemach was the major contractor for the distribution of Tevet scholarships for haredi students funded by the Ministry of the Treasury. Yedidut Toronto participated in it for two years and then withdrew to the provision of scholarships based on its own philanthropic funds only. When a decision was made by CHE to provide tuition scholarships and living stipends to its Mahar project students, Kemach was again chosen to be in charge of distribution. It has thus become a multi-purpose organization "offering various solutions for haredi men turning to professional studies for further employment opportunities."

- **Halamish Program (חלמי"ש)** is a privately funded program devoted to providing tuition scholarships to haredi students studying engineering and hard science subjects who prepare for work in Israel's industry. It operated only in a few academic institutions offering these subjects such as the Lev Institute in Jerusalem, the Technion in Jerusalem and Sami Sham'oun Technological College in Be'er Sheva.

E. ISSUES OF ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL STUDIES

The following chapter delineates a series of standing issues underlying many of the activities associated with academic studies for haredi students. The list can serve as a guide for the particular needed efforts still demanded in order to improve the quite impressive process of transformation being undergone in recent years:

The need for a satisfactory pre-academic preparatory program

It was immediately clear that there was a need to attend to the lack of high school education among haredi men because of their full-time devotion to Torah learning at the age when others are engaged in subjects required for entering academic and vocational institutions, primarily mathematics and English language. Haredi women students did not have this problem because in their high school and post-high (known as “seminars”) education they had to take most of the core courses.

Facing this situation, CHE demanded that all prospective haredi students must participate successfully in a Pre-academic Preparatory Program (PPP), a format that had existed for many years earlier for persons applying for academic studies who did not have a good enough high-school matriculation record or for some reason did not complete their high school education. CHE approved the establishment of haredi-segregated and gender-separated such pre-academic programs in each academic institution with a targeted setting for haredi men students. In institutions where there has not been a separate haredi framework of studies, haredi prospective students have to join the PPP serving all students in each of these institutions. The Ministry of Education, responsible for high school education, subsidizes the costs of the PPPs and also extends scholarships to those who need them.

But there are enough indications that for many, if not for most, haredi students, a one-year PPP program is not enough to breach the gap between the lack of a solid four-year high school education and the challenges presented by studies in many of the more technologically- and methodologically-oriented professional subjects such as engineering, hard science, psychology and economics, least to say medicine. In these academic subjects, the most pressing part of the PPP program is in mathematics and English language, which are essential to them. There are indications that the insufficient preparatory work done in the PPP program is the cause of severe difficulties and obstacles for haredi students to successfully complete their undergraduate studies.

In addition to the improvement of the PPPs, there is also a need to develop an effective ongoing **auxiliary teaching program** during academic studies. Many haredi students experience difficulties as a result of the lack of knowledge and skills as they continue in their academic studies.

Some unstructured and even haphazard aid is sometimes extended to them, but in most cases they are left disadvantaged in comparison to other non-haredi students in the system, often leading to delay in completion of courses, a need to repeat them again after failing exams, or even dropping out of academic studies. No substantiated research is available on this aspect, but from the experience gathered by the authors, this is a serious problem that has to be addressed. Haredi male students, because of their unsatisfactory preparation during their high school years (*yeshiva ketana*), need to be provided with all kinds of “crutches” on the way to academic graduation. It will also help a lot when obtaining a “practical engineer” education.

Policy decision needed: There is a need to look more in-depth into the PPP program for haredi students based on research and analysis and then to weigh the practical ways for building an appropriate format of a PPP program. Another issue is the extension of the study of mathematics and English language into the second and third year, parallel to regular academic studies. Additional substantial financial resources will be needed to improve the PPP programs for haredi students. Philanthropic foundations may look into this option of joining to face this challenge.

Vocational training versus academic education

As government and public organizations turned their attention to the preparation of haredi persons to earning occupations, the question arises of which course is the right one – vocational training or academic studies. In the early years of changing policies of government agencies, the ruling attitude was that the best, fastest, easiest and least-costly track for haredi men to acquire earning skills is through vocational training. The reasons given for that were many:

- "Haredi men have no time for a long training" - Haredi men marry at a young age and have to earn quite immediately and therefore have no time for long-term academic studies.
- “Haredi men need *parnassa* (earning) and not studies – they have their own Torah learning” – therefore they prefer fast and simple vocational training).

However, the last decade has witnessed a growing readiness of haredi men and women to undertake academic studies after many decades of abstaining from such courses. Such a change is often associated with the realization that academic studies may contribute to higher income and social standing associated with future employment. The last decade has also seen the growth of supply of academic studies offered by a variety of public and private organization.

In recent years there has been a growing recognition that in some academic fields, such as law and business administration, there has been an overproduction of haredi graduates who cannot find an appropriate job.

Policy decision needed: A major policy decision has to be taken on this issue after in-depth research into future demand for graduates of academic studies vs. demand for those of vocational training.

Increasing the share of important and demanded academic subjects

Most haredi students are enrolled in law, business administration and accounting, subjects perceived as in demand in the labor market and rather easy for haredi men with deficient high school-level preparation. Haredi campuses of privately-financed colleges, particularly the one at Ono College, are almost exclusively devoted to offering these subjects to haredi students. The result has been that a growing number of haredi graduates of these subjects are having difficulties securing a place of work. In law and accounting, this problem starts with the inability to find a place of internship needed for professional certification.

At the same time, not enough haredi students are studying subjects such as engineering and physical sciences, which demand a heavy load and a well-founded prior high school level preparation. The government tries to deal with this issue by offering living stipends for students enrolled in such subjects, but the level of support is not encouraging enough to make a significant change.

Policy decision needed: There is already a beginning action taken by CHE to differentiate in the level of financial assistance between strategic and non- strategic academic subjects. Philanthropy, industry and business could be recruited as partners in this task.

How much of a separate setting for haredi students and for how long?

Most haredi students prefer a haredi-segregated non-coeducational setting. Haredi students enrolled in coeducational academic setting do so because they cannot find their desired subjects in the separate setting or because they are willing to deal with such a setting in their own way. As haredi academic studies have begun to spread to more academic institutions due to the last major Mahar policy decision by CHE, there emerged in some of them, and especially in The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, a limited but “noisy” opposition to a separate setting that contradict the liberal ideals of gender equality.

Policy decision needed: A decision has to be made as to how long the current support should be given by CHE only to separate haredi settings. This decision is particularly relevant to the policy of offering loans/partial scholarships to students of these frameworks. The question arises of whether such financial support should be extended to haredi students opting to study under no separation, many of whom do so in order to be able to follow academic studies unavailable at the separate haredi frameworks. What measures should research has to be carried out as to the changing attitude through time among haredi prospective students. Research measures must be carried out regarding the changing attitudes over time among haredi prospective students.

F. EMPLOYMENT

Initial Success

Rates of participation in the labor force continue to rise among haredi women. The rates for haredi men, on the decline for 30 years during the creation of the haredi "scholars' society," have recently been on the upsurge but are still much lower than those for non-haredi men. While in 2002 only 27 percent of haredi men aged 25-54 participated in the labor force in 2012 this rate rose to over 46 percent.

On-going activities in job referral and placement

The government, through its Ministry of the Economy and its associated agencies and partnerships, has put a lot of effort into developing employment among haredi men and women. Its partnership with the JDC has brought about the establishment of a network of referral and placement centers called **Mafte'ach** (מפת"ח) in order provide access to these training programs and to jobs after their completion of the training in them. The Tzofia vocational training program, mentioned in a previous chapter, included all the accompanying needed services for ensuring employment, such as referral and job placement.

Recently, the Ministry of the Economy and the Municipality were instrumental in establishing a one-stop center in Jerusalem and Benei Berak, the two major haredi concentrations, to be engaged in many of the tasks connected with employment for haredim, from referral to vocational training programs to job placement. Kemach won the tender on managing the new one-stop referral and job placement center in Jerusalem. It remains to be examined whether a large, integrated and perhaps bureaucratic establishment will fit many of clannish Hassidic men and women. In response, the Belz Hassidic group is operating its own referral and placement body, catering to its own members as well as to members of other Hassidic groups.

There are many other smaller players in the field of referral and placement. The Haredi Center for Vocational Training is intensely interacting with employers, thus enabling not only job placement but also making available on-the-job further training and even scholarships from employers for the initial training. The Kemach and Yedidut Toronto foundations also do this with students to whom they provide scholarships and loans for studies. Yedidut Toronto widened its operations regarding the support of haredi students to career counseling. Some haredi campuses do the same.

Issues of employment still unattended

It seems that advising students on the search for jobs is well covered. The Ministry of the Economy has allocated much money for this. The challenges to be met are mainly in the job market itself. Here are some of the main ones:

- The reluctance of many employers and fellow workers to take on a new recruit of another somewhat threatening culture that demands strict kashrut and strict keeping of the Sabbath and holidays.
- The unwillingness to have separate working quarters for haredi workers, in particular for women.
- The price paid by segregated places of work for haredi women in terms of much lower salaries than they could earn in gender-integrated places of work.
- The low pace of on-the-job professional advancement when working only with haredi women.

It seems that these problems need some time to be accommodated or settled. There is very little research address to such issues.

G. EDUCATION

The general situation

Haredi education, in particular, presents a significant challenge to the integration of the haredi population into the country's economy and society, especially with regards to haredi men. Haredi education is strictly divided between boys and girls, not only in terms of physical separation but also in the teaching content. But while the education of haredi boys prepares them eventually become full-fledged members of the "Scholar's Society", totally engaged in Torah learning, the education of hared girls prepares them for participation in the labor force in addition to turning them into pious and devoted members of their haredi society. This challenge has been emphasized in the recent years of transformation with regards to vocational training and academic studies among haredi men. They face barriers and obstacles that arise from their insufficient or even total lack of knowledge and skills acquired by Israeli school boys during their years of state elementary and secondary education; meanwhile, haredi male youth spend most of their time in school, particularly at the yeshiva (high school) level, in Torah learning. It is quite clear that unless some substantial changes are brought about through the introduction of such knowledge and skills to the haredi education of boys, all the hardships, obstacles and barriers will persist on the way to the integration of haredi men into the general economy and society in Israel. This challenge is therefore crucial, but it is lined with much opposition from many among the haredi population.

The situation is quite different with regards to haredi education for girls and young women. Unlike the male channel of education, the female channel is not as dominated by religious studies. Haredi girls get an adequate high school education in many of their schools and more so in the seminar (called so for their historical role as a teachers' training institution). In many of these haredi girls' high schools and seminars the level of studies is high, so much so that it prepares them well to excel in vocational training and academic studies in later years. These women graduates arrive there without having to take the pre-academic preparatory program, as is mandatory for most haredi men.

As is well evident, the underlying reason for the substantial difference between female and male education in haredi population is the evolving different role of each gender in the haredi scholars' society. The men were increasingly assigned to Torah learning while the women became the main providers of livelihood. In earlier decades the main source of income earned by

women was in the education of the younger generation of girls. The income in this kind of occupation was meager. Moreover, with growing numbers of women trained to be teachers, there were not enough placements for many of them, and other alternative occupations had to be found outside the internal haredi economy. To develop knowledge and skills for such occupations, courses in mathematics, computer programming, science, English language, management and alike were introduced in the curriculum of haredi women's high schools. As a result, many haredi women filled a variety earning positions in the general economy and came close to the rate of participation in the labor force common among the non-haredi Jewish population – in the high sixties.

Since the main current challenges lie in haredi boy's education, the next section will describe it in some detail while overlooking the description of haredi girls' education, the essence of which has been portrayed in short above.

Haredi boys' education

Elementary-age education

Most haredi boys participate in some measure, though unsatisfactory, of general studies beyond the heavy dose of religious education. Recently, the Ministry of Education is involved in an effort to bring in parts of haredi elementary education into the realm of state education, thus raising the level of general studies to be offered to a growing sector of haredi boys. However, a significant part of haredi elementary education for boys, studying in haredi schools known as *Talmud Torah* or *cheider*, is lacking in general studies and particularly in English language and mathematics, the two general subjects necessary for future active participation in the economy and society as adults.

One of the main reasons for the difficulty in introducing a higher level of what has come to be termed *limudei liba* (Hebrew acronym for core studies in elementary education) has been the ineffective supervision powers by the Ministry of Education, in the face of harsh and persisting opposition by haredi rabbinical leadership. The sustained opposition stems from the long virtual autonomy that haredi education has enjoyed while the Israeli state system has been unaware of the future implication of a rapidly growing proportion of haredi non-participants in the labor force. Another reason for opposing core studies is the fear of the impact they might have on the haredi world view and religious commitment of the younger generation. The traumatic

remembering of the “flood” of secularization and modernization of East European ultra-orthodox Jewry during the late 19th century and early 20th century is still deeply entrenched.

Recently, the Ministry of Education formed a special “Haredi District” to enhance its supervision of the sector of haredi schools in which such supervision stands some chance. It remains to be seen whether these efforts will be sustained after a new government will be established after the March 17, 2015 elections. The return of haredi parties to the governing coalition after some years of absence might change the situation for the worse. But it is also possible that the process will persist due to increased demand on the part of some of haredi parents, increasingly aware of the benefits of a significant portion of modern education for the future of their children. Another important source of hope is the involvement of a dedicated haredi staff, recently trained in academia and devoted to the national task of improving haredi education. Often, such a kernel of an able and devoted cadre is what is most needed for the perseverance and eventual flourishing of a project.

Education at high school and post-high school age

At the age of 13, haredi boys are shut off from any contact with general studies. While girls move to the 'seminar' level and continue to be involved with general studies, boys move to study at a *yeshiva ketana* where they are totally immersed in Torah studies with no dose of general studies whatsoever. At the age of 16-17, boys continue take up intensive Torah studies at a *yeshiva gedola* up until the time that they are married. This two-tier yeshiva education, in which no general studies are present, though subsidized to differing degrees by government, is a major obstacle to a growing number of young haredi men considering vocational training or academic studies in order to enhance their standing in the employment market. Nevertheless, the growing involvement with academic studies of haredi men has brought to the foreground the problematic nature of haredi education in terms of the barriers it builds for the integration of these men in the general economy and their contribution to the economic welfare of their families.

Bypassing the barrier to core studies - haredi high school yeshivas

There are only a handful of institutions at the age level of *yeshiva ketana* that include general studies in their curriculum, offering their male pupils a balanced syllabus of Torah and general studies, thus enabling the attainment of a high school matriculation (*bagrut*), a prerequisite for university or college education. These institutions are known in Israel as *yeshiva haredit tichonit*

(haredi high school yeshiva), following to a large extent the North American model. One of the latest developments of such a yeshiva has taken place in Jerusalem. Rabbi Bezalel Cohen, one of the authors of this report, is behind this idea and acts as the head of the yeshiva. The few earlier ones were established outside Jerusalem.

Haredi high school yeshivas are frowned upon by much of the rabbinical leadership, which views these institutions as an anathema and a threat to the full immersion in Torah studies in the established *yeshiva ketana* track. Being boarding schools and small in number, these institutions charge much higher tuition costs and are therefore available to a very small fraction of the haredi population. However, there seems to be a growing demand for such an educational track among haredi households as the need for academic education for their sons becomes clearer to them.

Policy decision needed: The format of haredi high school yeshivas seems to be an efficient way to offer haredi parents and their male offspring a haredi optional track in addition to the existing one where religious content takes all the time at the high school age. It is based on choice and therefore dependent on the demand for such an option, now increasingly intriguing haredi parents and youth. If a network of such institutions were to be developed in regions in which potential customers reside as a result of philanthropic support, including tuition scholarships and living stipends, a real change can be affected without trying the ram core studies through the walls of existing yeshivas. Such a growing network may make a considerable change.

SUMMARY OF OPEN OPTIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

Out of the further needed action on the part of philanthropic foundations portrayed in this report, here are the three most challenging and doable ones:

- The strengthening of the pre-academic preparatory program in universities and academic colleges.
- Establishment of an ongoing auxiliary tutoring service for haredi students throughout their undergraduate studies.
- Setting up Haredi high school yeshivas as an alternative to the classical haredi yeshiva. This line of action will serve to remove barriers to academic studies experienced by haredi students as a result of their lack of exposure to general studies and skills during their yeshiva years.