

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **WHO I AM: TO FEEL THAT I'M NOT ALONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

#### **PROLOGUE**

##### **MAINTENANCE OF MIZRAHI HAREDI IDENTITY IN OPEN SPACES**

I was almost done with my field work when I finally found what I had been looking for all along—or so I thought. Hagit, a community worker for the Bnei Brak municipality, told me about a group of Haredi women in Pardes Katz who held monthly activities. She gave me the telephone number of the club's coordinator and said: "You've got to talk to Esti, she's something special, I'm crazy about her. When I can, I go to their activities, I get carried away by her energy. Talk to her—it's worth your while."

Esti invited me to the club's next event, and so opened for me a window onto a plane of activity that I had not previously encountered. Some of the women I met at Esti's programs were ones I had encountered previously at the community center or at Rabbi Zer's lectures—but this time the context was new and different. Here the women sought to spend time with others like themselves, to address the life experience of the Mizrahi Haredi woman and her family, and to weave a network of connections that would support that life.

For outside onlookers, the need for such a club might seem strange. After all, on the face of it, it looks as if Pardes Katz is full of religious and Haredi families. You see it in the way people dress, and in the overflow crowds at Rabbi Zer's Wednesday night lectures. It seems undeniable that the neighborhood is in the process of becoming ultra-Orthodox. Yet, at the same time, 3,000 immigrant families from the former Soviet Union have settled in the neighborhood. Their children refilled the secular state schools that shrank as the community moved towards greater religious observance and identification and Mizrahi families transferred their children to religious schools. Housing prices are relatively low, and the neighborhood's central location in the Tel Aviv metropolitan region have made it attractive to immigrants. Further diversity comes from the fact that, in the 1990s, many apartments and temporary structures were used to house foreign workers of a variety of nationalities. A closer look showed me the groups of Eastern European laborers who gathered in the cafes on Ha-Halutzim Street in the evenings; the children with Slavic features who, unlike Haredi children, wore shorts in the summer; the Chinese housed in prefab structures next to the Or David yeshiva. It may well be that my selective gaze at first sought out the visible religious and Haredi population, while missing everything that pointed in a different direction. That's apparently why I was surprised when Leah, who helped Esti run the club, told me:

It's hard for me in this environment, I don't have friends here, there aren't Haredi women in our buildings. I had a Haredi neighbor here but she left, we'll see who comes, and hope that it will be somebody good, with God's help. God forbid, I don't shut myself off, I have relations with all the people, even with the elderly, you ask how they're doing, how the children are, but I like to have a friend in the

apartment across the hall. On Friday night she comes by, we sit and talk, here I can't drink coffee with my neighbors [because they don't keep kosher]. You're in the middle of baking and suddenly you're out of baking powder, what, are you going to run the store at the end of the street? I want someone next door. It bothers me. Today, thank God, I've got children at home, big girls, they help. But I still need conversation. How long can you spend on the telephone with a friend? That's why in my opinion the most important purpose of this club's activity is solidarity. To unite, to feel that you aren't alone in the neighborhood, that there are others like you, that way the children get to know each other a bit, even the husbands make connections. Also to show the municipality that there is a Sephardi Haredi public here and that it has needs. But first of all solidarity. So that we women have company, and our daughters and girls and children, too. We want to feel good, to get out, to get free, to be with friends outside the house. When you come down to it, that's very nice. We try to bring in subjects that everyone likes, we listen to everybody. If we know that one family is in need, we try to help. I enjoy the club because we are unified. I know each of the women personally. It's not like when you pass one another on the street. You have time to get well-acquainted. It's starting to be like a family, something bothers you, so you go to someone that you didn't have a connection with before.

Leah made me look at the social fabric in an entirely different way. The experience of home and neighborhood redivided itself into religious and not religious, those cared for by the municipality and those neglected by it. The in-depth interviews I conducted with Esti and Leah, and my observation of the club's work, traced out the internal view, what anthropologists call the "emic"—the way in which the subject under study sees her culture. This path runs through my conversations with the women, my description of the mass *hafrashat halla* ceremony that the group sponsored, and my description of the monthly meetings, at the beginning of each Hebrew month, when the club hosted an outside speaker.

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First, something on the club's history and on the way it is perceived by those who run it. Leah continues:

If you ask how the group got started, it was three years ago. There was a student who had a year of internship and she worked at the municipality. She decided that there are Haredi woman in the neighborhood and they should start a club, because in the community center there's a club of non-religious women and she thought that we deserved it. They called a meeting in the *avrech* synagogue [*avrechim* are married men who study Torah full time], she handed out questionnaires and asked who wanted to participate and who was willing to do things, to volunteer, to set up a group. Sometimes we join the non-religious club for trips, after all we know

each other. There are also non-religious women who want to be with us and we don't refuse. They at their own volition come in modest dress and if there's a rabbi they also cover their hair. Shlomit, the student, was with us for a year and she gave us guidance. After she finished, we met with a number of workers at the municipality and from Project Renewal [a program to strengthen poor neighborhoods around the country]. We met with city officials. Financially, it's hard to keep the group going. We don't get subsidized by the municipality and the non-religious women do. We don't collect dues, so our account is always in the red. True, the women in the non-religious club pay a small fixed sum, but they also have a counselor and a budget from the city, and we aren't budgeted. Yes, the city helps us a lot, subsidizes the buses for trips, covers part of the telephone bill, but no more than that, and it's irritating. Why do the non-religious women have a budget and a worker and we don't?

The initiative for the group came from a social work student who worked in the Bnei Brak municipality as a group leader. She was the one who noticed that non-religious women had a club, while the Haredi women did not. With the support of the city's community worker, and after enlisting several Haredi women who agreed to promote the idea, the club opened in 2000.

Leah, another woman closely involved with the club, offered a slightly different version of its origins, but she also mentioned that the non-religious women had a club and the Haredi women did not.

I'd like for the municipality to support us like the non-religious women. Then we could draw in women who can't afford it even if something costs ten shekels. We work on the basis of volunteers, we can't allow ourselves activities for the kids. We have to scrape money together if we want to organize something, but we still keep it going and don't want it to fall apart, because it holds the neighborhood together. I have lots and lots of nice plans that we want to carry out, let's hope that with heaven's help we'll have support. Shas can't help us. The woman responsible for welfare in the municipality is the one who makes the decisions, and she promised us, but to this day, nothing's moved for three years. Shas doesn't have money for schools or preschools, so how can they have any for us? It's not Shas's business, it's the city's job, they should support us. It's harder for us, a lot are *avrechim* and they have debts, and a mortgage. In the non-religious group, most of the women are older and the children are grown up, so for us it's more complicated, the families here are more needy. You tell a woman ten shekels, she thinks what she could buy her kid with that, and she's right. Even though a lot of them work and the husbands also work and study in the evening, it's still hard.

Leah's gaze, which moves from the inside to the outside, passes through the non-religious and Haredi communities, crosses economic classes, differences of age and gender, and pauses for a moment (at my request) on Shas. Finally, she ends on the municipality's doorstep. "It's the city's job," she states, speaking as a citizen. She does not take herself out of the secular Israeli context. On the contrary, she argues that on the basis of her group's profile—age, income, husbands' employment, and number of children, it is unfair for the municipality to equate the non-religious and Haredi women's clubs. She asks to receive the same treatment as her neighbors, even though, according to the information she presents, she and her friends may deserve more. Their husbands study or work part time, all have large debts and many small children. For them, ten shekels is a large sum of money, and can make a difference between whether or not they will participate in the club's activities.

The Haredi women's club is located in the civilian field. The women rejected attempts to bring Shas into the picture, partly because of the party's lack of interest and inability to support such activities, and partly because the women themselves maintain that the city is responsible.

The insistence on equating community services for the non-Haredi and Haredi population appears in the interview with Esti as well.

We also pay our dues, but we fall between the cracks. The non-religious families, which don't have lots of children, have the community center...where there is an after school club for children and extracurricular classes and activities 24 hours a day, everything is subsidized. I can't put my girls there because it's not my style, and they don't allow extracurricular activities for Haredi children. They tell you—this is for us, the non-religious people, except for Haredi exercise classes. For example the after school framework. I want to attend classes. They last until three, but my daughters finish school at 1:20. They don't give me the option that someone will take my girls so that I can study. We have a problem on this point. Today I spend a lot of time at the community worker's office in the city building working to get it into their heads that I want an after-school framework because I want to study. The community center has a bus that picks up the welfare kids for after school activities, even though their parents are out on the streets. We, who really want to study, no one is willing to even look at us. I'm ready to show the non-religious a lot of people who want to go out and participate and make a contribution, but they don't have the strength and the ability because they have children, may they be healthy.

The Haredi sector here is on the boards compared to the non-religious community. The non-religious here are on a relatively high level compared to us. That's why Haredi people are leaving. They go to Bnei Brak, Kiryat Herzog, Elad. Every second family here is moving to Elad. There's a big regression, and that's unfortunate. What's come to be here is a lot of Chinese, Russian, Romanians, all the foreign workers. It's just not appropriate for the Haredi sector,

especially given that our daughters can't go out freely. That's another minus.

The municipality appears again in Esti's story, but Esti also appears in the municipality. In the first part of this selection, she notes the fact that "we also pay our property taxes"—the elementary indication of good citizenship. Those who pay their obligations deserve to receive their rights. When she looks around her, she sees the community center (which does not belong to the municipality, although the two cooperate) and its projects. She takes notice of the after-school program for the "welfare children," which liberates women from the gallows of the afternoon hours so that they can study. She grumbles that the parents of the welfare children who are "out on the streets." Those who really want to study don't get help, she claims, adding, perhaps for my ears, that she is prepared to show the non-religious community that, contrary to the prevalent stereotype, her Haredi community wants to enter the work force but cannot do so because of the burden of childcare.

Esti places the Haredi community in the larger Israeli context, in the labor and education market. But because of what she sees as discrimination, they live on the margin of the margins. Pardes Katz's non-religious inhabitants are depicted as strong, "on a relatively high level compared to us." Those in the Mizrahi Haredi community who can, leave the neighborhood for places where they won't be an oppressed minority. Their places are filled by Romanians, Russians and Chinese, the ultimate foreigners, marked as non-Israelis and non-Jews. They turn the street into a place unfit for her daughters.

Now that her participation in the women's club has brought her into the municipal building, Esti seeks to "get it into their heads" that Haredi women also deserve an after-school framework for their children. The municipality, which appears as an external institution that provides or prevents, has become part of the arena of activity of the women who lead the group. Inspired by what non-religious women are doing, they promote their own women's sense of civilian entitlement. The gaze's sweep from inside to outside reaffirms the social map, and brings confusion in its wake. Either way, the Haredi women need one another. Their convergence seeks to collect energy that they can then release outwards. On the face of it, it is a paradoxical process. Esti says:

The Haredi sector has a bit of a problem. The women, may they be healthy, have large families. They have children, sit at home. They become old at a young age. They don't have the thing about going out to work, even though there are some who work, but they aren't interested in that. They care for their children because the Haredi sector brings children one year after another. To get them out of the house would be a big achievement. Why? It's to get some air, it's to pour out your heart, it's to have a little enjoyment—poetry, singing, all sorts of evenings, in all sorts of places, with all sorts of attractions. You take them and get them out and they see that there's someone who will listen, there's someone to pour it all out to. With regard to the group's success, you can't always predict a hundred percent even if you try. It's not always the case that everyone values the others. At the maximum we reach 40, 50, it depends on the lecturer, it depends what you bring. It can happen that you plan

something and then there's a celebration or a death, not on us, there's an obligation to the family, to work, to friends. The minimum that comes is ten. There were evenings, for example with Beri Simon [a belly dancer who became religious] when there were a hundred women. You can never know in advance. Sometimes people bring friends, sometimes non-religious women come who want to hear a Torah lesson.

The feminist literature that grew out of the milieu of the 1950s in the United States marked the home as the woman's prison. Suburban life distanced women from each other and harnessed each to her family. The house, empty in the morning, full in the afternoon and evening, was the space in which they moved. They left the house to go grocery shopping or to drive the children to play dates or activities. Women were separated from adult company and tied to the home sphere, or to the company of children, was marked in feminist theory as the central means of imposing gender identity.

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Leah and Esti add the religious parameter to the gender one. The women that work at home have trouble getting out of the house both because of their gender, which ties them to the home, and because of their religious observance, which cuts them off from their neighbors. They can't enjoy the housewife's simple pleasures, like having a cup of coffee with a neighbor, because Leah doesn't know whether the coffee will meet the standards of the dietary laws incumbent on her. She says she is on good terms with her neighbors, asks how they are, and does not shut herself off from them, and in this she stresses her general, Israeli identity. But her religious observance draws boundaries that cannot be crossed. Friday night, the Sabbath, the house is quiet and clean, the children asleep, there's no need to get up early tomorrow, and there's no one around to drop in on. There's no one she can borrow ingredients from when she's out of something and be sure that the items she received are certifiably kosher. The circle of mutual assistance is restricted to the mother and the daughters. In contrast with this isolation, the women's club is described as a place of liberation, of getting out, of getting away from the home.

Esti makes the dichotomy clearer. She says Haredi women sit at home and get old at a young age. They are not only at home, they sit there, get stuck there. Even if they go out to work, it is not because the work interests them. Esti speaks of "the thing about going out to work," by which she means the intention and desire to work, not a posteriori but a priori.<sup>2</sup> The club stands in contrast to this stagnancy—it is a chance to get some air, to get away from the home.

In religious discourse, the home is one's palace, the domicile of royalty. A well-known Jewish proverb on female domesticity refers to the wife as a princess: "All the honor of the king's daughter lies within." But Esti and Leah have no compunctions about portraying the palace as stultifying, and Esti says straight out that "the Haredi sector brings children one year after another." Clearly, when I invite them to speak about their activity with the other women, I place them both inside and outside the group. They take advantage of the conversation with me to speak about themselves and to talk about "them"—about the Haredi women for whom they run the group. Leah and Sima speak mostly from within the ranks, while Esti generally stands outside. But all three see the group as a balm for the plight of isolated and lonely women. Leah describes the relief the group offers as the knowledge that "there are others like you," a classic goal of every

therapeutic group. The support is first for mothers, and after that for sons and daughters; in the end the husbands also link up. The children presumably go to Haredi schools where they are surrounded by friends, but the schools are outside the neighborhood. Most of the men are connected to the Or David yeshiva, but may not know each other because the yeshiva has grown to huge proportions.

To attain a sense of liberation, two principal things must happen. They are described in different ways by the speakers. First, there is the mutual trust that is a necessary condition for the work of any dynamic group. The women in the club have developed a profound intimacy, accompanied by a sense of commonality. The women can depend on each other, feel “unity,” as Leah puts it. Each one can, according to Esti, “pour out [her] heart” and know that “there’s someone who will listen.”

The second factor is the fun, the activities outside the house designed for enjoyment. “To bring in subjects that everyone likes,” “to have a little enjoyment,” with “all sorts of attractions.” They do not describe the activities as aimed at disciplining, preaching, teaching, or advancing them in any way on their religious path. The speakers are concerned with fortifying the members psychologically. Beri Simon was a hit who drew a hundred participants. Evenings when a rabbi or a *rabbanit* (a rabbi’s wife, or more generally any knowledgeable woman who gives religious talks and lessons) gave a lecture sometimes drew only 10 or 15. Field trips are at the center of the effort. Sing-alongs, parties, and cookouts are popular and frequent. The women asked for their own club, separate from the non-religious women, not because they wanted their club to be ideologically Haredi and to conduct only religious activities. Rather, it was meant to create a space in which the Haredi women could behave “secularly.” The club is meant to distance the women for a time from the place that Orthodoxy has marked as theirs, and to let them have fun. God and his servants visit the group, but the group’s leaders don’t give them first priority. The most important thing, as Esti says, is to be a kind of single little family that can help, advance, warm the heart.

#### **i. They Can See You As Head Of The Group, But Actually There’s No Head**

Who, then, are those who listen to the women? Does the group supply its own needs, with the cycle of organized events being attractions meant to attract themselves? Or does the group have leaders who channel its agenda, who feel responsible for its members? Leah prefers to identify the group as egalitarian. She adheres in some matters to the dynamic group theory she became familiar with through the group’s contact with the city’s community worker,<sup>3</sup> and she is sensitive to her secondary position in the leadership: “We don’t feel like the head. We’re all together, we all do the same work. If one is busy, someone else does it, those who can wield some influence try to arrange things, if someone else can run around, she runs around. They could see you as head of the group, but there is no head.” In contrast, it is clear to Hagit, the community worker, and to the women, that Esti is the head. She describes it as follows:

I came to this activity in a surprising way. It’s thanks to Tzila and Liat, who are the two women who started it. There was a club like this in another housing project, and we didn’t know that Pardes Katz also had the right to it. Then Tzila and Liat went to the city government and said, “listen, we want to open a club in Pardes

Katz.” They aren’t municipal workers, they’re residents of the neighborhood just like us. Little by little they got organized, and then they had elections. There were a few women on the board who said that the person who can lead, get things done, get the club going, is Esti Shemesh. Hagit from the city called me up and said: “I received your telephone number and we really, really need for you to come.” I told her: “It’s not my kind of thing, it’s not the right time for me, it’s not my line. Leave me in peace, my home is my palace, it’s the best and safest place to be.” I was a month after giving birth, I had twins. They said to me: “We’re coming to your house.” They really came, sat with me, did an evening at my place. They brought the idea that I’d be in the club, with four others: Tzila, Liat, Shula, and Leah.

Eventually, I decided that I’d open the club, charge twenty shekels, with direction from Shlomit the student and Hagit from the municipality. Then the issue of money came up, people stopped coming, because the money aspect is something of a problem. They saw that activities started going into high gear, which means a lecture each month, and we wanted all sorts of things, so Tzila and Liat at some point got distressed. “Why are you running to the city, we wanted something little, on our own, just trips.” I told them: “If you’ve already jumped on the horse, let’s go all the way up.” Shlomit said it was possible, so let’s try. “If we don’t give it a try, we’ll be the losers.” They said it didn’t work that way, but I replied: “They gave me the line, and I’m running on it.” Really, with the twins, with their stroller, I’d get on the bus, I didn’t have a car then. I’d say: “Let’s go, girls, we’re going to the city building with Liat and Leah.”

I told Hagit from the municipality: “It won’t work this way, we need our own club room.” Because we can’t do all the activity in my house. I’m a mother of six, it’s impossible. They finally agreed to this room. It was full of garbage. One day I began to clean and organize and I spoke with Arlette from the municipality so that she’d give us a small budget. It’s a club just for Haredi women from the neighborhood. Also for those who are getting a little closer to religion.

The ones who continued to work on it were Ronit and Leah and I. I neutralized Tzila and Liat at some point, because they’d puncture my balloon all the time. They’d say: “We don’t need it, there’s no need for all that, take field trips and that’s all.”

We’ve been active for three years, and in those three years we’ve gotten a lot of results, especially during the last year when I started working intensively. I went to the municipality, to Hagit’s office. I

sit there, make telephone calls from there, send letters, people come to meet me there, they know me in the city building. All sorts of people responsible for relief and welfare from the municipality know me, I'm always the first in anything, get everything from them. Like they say, when your mouth is open you get more. The woman responsible for the welfare budget gives me a little more. Her preference, to her credit, is Pardes Katz. She'll always stand by me.

In relating the group's history, Esti credits Tzila and Liat for being the founders. But she quickly goes on to the lobbying campaign meant to draw her into the group's organizing committee. For the women in the neighborhood, it was clear that she was one person who could lead. Esti was then a month after giving birth to twins, her attention and time were focused on her home, which is her palace. The persuaders made a pilgrimage to her castle and Esti acceded. In its early days, the group met at Esti's apartment. Afterwards, through her public activity, Esti distanced herself from her home. At first she went out with her twins and their stroller, which allowed her (with difficulty, on the bus) to take home with her. Afterwards, slowly, the home separated itself from Esti and she was able to spend long hours in the city building, to use the community workers' office, to establish contacts with welfare officials, to make a name for herself as someone with an "open mouth," and to know that, from her position within the city administration rather than opposing it, she—that is, the women and Pardes Katz—would get more.

In my interview with her, Esti described how she divides her time, with her home getting only a few hours. Her modest initiative has grown, with the encouragement of the city workers. She, unlike the women who wanted something small, decided to do something big. Once they got her to the starting line, she ran with it. Esti confesses that she neutralized the women who sought to restrict her and to make do with field trips. True, she still sees such trips as a central activity. But, gradually, it becomes clear that on the mandate they were given, she and her friends have built a much more ambitious arena of activity.

### It's Nice To Go Places

If for example I used to send out two trips a year, today I send out six. The city pays for the transportation, I take care of the hotel. The subsidy makes it easier for the population here. When I go out on to the street, I meet women who tell me again and again that they had a good time. They call me to say: "Esti, organize another evening, another trip, another pool day, let's go to a park for a cookout or something like that." You see that you're giving the population satisfaction. It gives you something, that they want more, that they are thirsty for more. They ask me: "Do us a trip to the Western Wall tunnel, to the tombs of rabbis." There's a demand. Once the water park at Kibbutz Nahshonim was off limits. Today it's "Take us, organize it and we'll go." So I organized a bus, took them to Nahshonim. On Tuesday, with God's help, we're going to the beach

at Ashdod. The women want to go places but they don't have the money to go themselves with their families, so they want a group because it's cheaper. People call me: "Esti, I want to sign up ten people, eight, six. You see that they're looking for this. They're looking to get away, for vacation. I sent out a bus to Bnei Darom water park with 49 people, little children, husbands. You see people who never in their lives saw such things, they don't know all these water parks, it's a new thing for them. Afterwards you meet them somewhere and they tell you how much they enjoyed themselves, the children don't stop talking about it, you made their day. It's as if they were in a hotel. Now, when you hear something like that, it makes you happy. I have the ambition to do a lot of things. If today I took them for a one-day vacation in Bnei Darom, tomorrow I want to take this same population of large families to a hotel in Tiberias. It gives you satisfaction.

Trips around Israel have been and remain an integral part of Zionist education.<sup>4</sup> Members of youth movements and participants in after school activities run by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel continue the tradition of hiking through the countryside. When the army conducts training and maneuvers in outlying parts of the country, it takes time to familiarize soldiers with their country. It also trains soldiers to serve as guides and educators in this field. The same concept of getting to know a place by hiking through it lies behind the big backpacking trip that so many young Israelis do after completing their military service. Thousands of them wander the world each year, recreating, in far-off places, a part of the Zionist tradition of "knowing the land."<sup>5</sup> But there are other Israelis who live off this beaten track. Some of them take hikes or trips that don't require great physical effort in far-off areas; others travel to one particular place and spend an extended time there. Others, however, do not go on trips at all, because they don't see the trip as part of their agenda, or because they cannot afford it.

Esti is glad that the number of trips has increased. She knows that this is part of the pleasure that she provides for women, their children, and even their husbands. She is pleased when she meets women outside and receives enthusiastic feedback and requests for even more trips. But, beyond that, she also hints that the trips are a cultural-educational project. "Once the water park at Kibbutz Nahshonim was off limits," she says. Israel has different kinds of borders, some of which are cultural. There are places that religious people don't go, but there are other places that religious Jews didn't used to go to but now do.<sup>6</sup> The country's trails are full of Haredi hikers during the intermediate days of Passover in the spring and Sukkot in the fall, and some Haredi hikers even do strenuous treks. With the approach of *bein ha-zemanim*—either of two periods, one in the late summer and the other in the spring, before the Pesach holiday, when Haredi yeshivot and schools are closed—rabbis issue instructions to their communities' young people specifying what is permitted and what forbidden in terms of the variety and quality of their vacation activities.

Esti knows that the people she works with have trouble traveling, whether because of motivation or finances, usually both. Many parts of the country are labeled "secular." Others are distant, and all require an outlay of money just to reach them. The places the women want to go are the Haredi/religious defaults—the tombs of rabbis,

nearby public parks, the tunnels adjacent to the Western Wall prayer site in Jerusalem. There are no cultural problems there. But Esti is proud that she has opened up for these families places that had before been off-limits for them. Her people really enjoyed the water parks at Kibbutz Nahshonim and Bnei Darom and the beach at Ashdod. She doesn't go on every trip, but she is happy to redraw the country's map for them, to show them that what they thought was forbidden is in fact possible, and what they thought unattainable is in fact accessible. She is particularly proud that she has made them thirsty for more. They want to travel, see and experience other places, have a good time. She believes that these seeds will sprout outside the group's activities and will bring forth fruit within families, which will find ways to do more at their own initiative.

The trips, which serve as an invitation into the group and its activities, take place only a few times a year. Beyond them, the women try to create a weekly or monthly schedule with other purposes.

### A Little Work, A Little Study, A Little Housekeeping, A Little Childcare, Let Them Live A Little

Little by little, over time, we got more of a foot in the door and opened exercise classes for the girls and women. There's a very nominal charge, we received equipment worth more than a thousand dollars. What the other housing project didn't get, I managed to get. We received a professional teacher from the Wingate Institute for ourselves and the girls. There was a sculpture and art class for the girls. Now we've opened an organ class for girls once a week. With God's help, a week from now we'll open a course through the Bnei Brak municipality to teach customer service, office work, bookkeeping, and use of a computer. This population doesn't have that. I've reached the conclusion that this population needs to see people, to work with people. When she sees people, her opinions will begin to broaden, her education will grow, and then her status at home will be entirely different from what it is today—housewife and no more. I think that this is the point that they can develop so that they'll have more education, because most of the Haredi population, what they learn is to be teach school and preschool and to work in childcare. They have nothing beyond that. They have a hard time getting accepted to teachers' colleges because that's more for Ashkenazi women. In preschools you can only be a substitute. I think that a customer service or computer job, all those things where you see people, is what will interest them. Thank God, those who I more or less showed them the material were very enthusiastic. A lot of them called Project Renewal to find out more. The course will be conducted in Holon this time, there will be organized transportation at a minimal cost of 300 shekels [about \$70] and there will be a certain amount of financial aid that the women will receive. It won't be in the community center like last time, it's different apparently. The course is only half a year, it comes in stages and they work with

you until you enter the workplace. For example, work in supermarkets. All those jobs are taken by Russian and older women. You don't see young women there. We want to get to the point where young women will go out to work and the older ones who have a pension will stay home, because they have somewhere to get money from. The young women will get out, get a breath of air, get away from the house, the kids, the laundry, let them live a little.

The group's activities turns in expected directions, and that is the surest way to lay unchallengeable foundations on which new activities can be built. Women's exercise classes have received legitimacy in the religious-Haredi world because they promote good health, a religious value. Esti is proud to have obtained what Housing Project Heh didn't get—a professional teacher from the Wingate Institute, Israel's premier training center for athletes and gym teachers, as well as equipment worth more than a thousand dollars and classes for girls and women. I interviewed her in the basement bomb shelter of a housing project, where the group meets. She showed me the equipment, which had been damaged in a flood the previous winter. The exercise mats stank and some of the other equipment looked unusable. Esti said that things had been much worse and that hours of salvage and drying work had been needed to reach the current state.

Another conventional activity for Haredi girls is learning to play the electronic organ. Group lessons are very common in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, and the girls play at school plays, family celebrations and, when they are adults, as part of their work as school or preschool teachers. Esti wanted such a class for the Haredi girls in her neighborhood, and succeeded in getting one. Such classes have already been approved by religious authorities and as such are not an innovation. However, vocational courses for women (and men), given by commercial outfits that are not necessarily Haredi, made their way into the Haredi community only in the 1990s.

The municipality, in partnership with Project Renewal and the Ministry of Labor, organized a secretarial course (described in Chapter 3). The public sponsors, which were the exclusive marketers of the program, linked up with intermediaries in the neighborhoods, such as Esti and her friends.

For her part, Esti thinks that the course in "customer service" is precisely what her women need. She wants an end to running on the futile treadmill of teacher training, which is worthless because of the glut of teachers and obvious preference given to Ashkenazi women who have graduated from the prestigious Beit Ya'akov teacher training programs. The women that Esti knows like to get out and see people and need to see people. Unmediated contact with customers, conversations, personal interaction, all paint the work in pleasant colors, even if the job is one with little prestige, such being a supermarket cashier. Esti speaks of this type of encounter with people but she pushes the sentence "to see people, to work with people" further. Such an encounter is meant, in her view, to make the women grow—to broaden their education, change their status at home, get them out of the box of being a "housewife and no more." Esti returns, one way or another, to movement from the house outside and back, which is meant to strengthen the woman both outside and inside. The enclosure of the home can turn into a place in which a woman's status improves only if she leaves it to go outside. The concept is nothing new, but it is not a matter of little consequence in Esti's context. Many women go out to

work because it is hard to support the family otherwise, but Esti wants them to go out to work for the status it gives them, and not just to feed the family.

## ii. Sitting in the Park as the Children Play and Passing On Stuff

During my interviews with Esti and Leah I returned to my original research program, examining women's religious studies. I wanted to understand why it was difficult to find religious study groups made up of Mizrahi women, as there were in Haredi and other religious sectors.<sup>7</sup> I asked the group's leaders about their attitude towards religious studies for women. Leah said:

As far as what you're saying goes, that today there are women who study Torah and all that, so it's true that there isn't anything of that type here and I don't think it's relevant. I study halacha with my husband, if he's studying and thinks that the halacha is important for me, he calls me over and we study it. There are places where there are regular classes, for example on *lashon ha-ra* [slander and gossip]. They send you tests to do at home, tell you to fill it out, send it in, and win prizes, in order to encourage you. There was once a Psalms club for women, that we did on a regular basis. My husband and I sometimes study together, *lashon ha-ra*, the laws of the Sabbath, family purity. It doesn't bother me that I don't know Talmud, I'm not required to study it, so why should I, thank God, my husband studies, why should I? I have enough responsibilities as a Jewish woman and may God help me to meet them all. There are also general studies, like when I studied secretarial work and computers. Most of the population here doesn't want religious studies, the women don't want those groups.

I'd be interested in studying. There's always something, something to go over, in our times there are changes, not God forbid a change in the halacha, but there are sometimes changes from what once was because of today's times. Most of the women here work, some are housewives, they say if I want halacha I'll go on my own to what I want or I'll study with my husband. Everyone knows that women sit down once or twice a week with their husbands to study, so in the group they want to get away from that. We ask what they want to hear, listen to their expectations. For example, once we brought a cosmetician, we brought the children a magician, we want them to have fun. We also bring a *rabbanit* to give a lecture but not really to sit and study. For example, it's now [the month of] Elul, so we need to do something for *selihot* [special prayers of repentance recited during the month before the High Holidays].

Esti described the ways in which "study" takes place in the group and neighborhood:

In the evenings, once a month on the first day of the Hebrew month, we always bring a rabbi or *rabbanit* who teaches halachot, *lashon ha-ra*, the laws of the Sabbath. Other than that we have Psalm recitations for the children, and then the women go to hear talks by rabbis who lecture, again on the Sabbath, or on modesty. Now, for example, it is the month of Elul. I'll bring them a rabbi who will say what needs to be done with regard to repentance, relations with friends, how to behave with one another, reconciliation, it's actually going over halachot. Besides that, there are also women who sit down with their husbands at home on Shabbat and go over all sorts of halachot.

The women read, one tells the other, they sit together in the park while the children are playing and convey material—those things we have almost every day. You don't see everyone studying together, but there are groups, in an unorganized way, according to where people live. I'm in favor of going to listen to Rabbi Zer, he's a rabbi who reinforces, I encourage my oldest girl to go hear him, even if we are Haredi, we still need to reinforce ourselves [*lehit'hazek*]. The religion is always changing, new things and new halachot are always coming out, and from great people you can always learn and listen and get stronger. It doesn't mean you can't listen together with people who are becoming religious, there are a lot of things they can give us and contribute to us. That's a rabbi you shouldn't miss. There are a lot of rabbis who know how to convey the message of religion in a nice way and not in a scary way. There are rabbis who can say, watch out, if you don't do this you'll get it ... but he speaks from the heart so that his words will enter the heart. Not intense, in a way that people are thirsty to come hear. The people that come to his lectures can see boys with ponytails and body piercing in their mouths and girls with low-cut shirts. It's a real pleasure to see all kinds of Jews coming together at the Or David yeshiva, may God be blessed.

### I Have Enough Responsibilities As a Jewish Woman

Leah's positioning of herself opposite her identity, her roles, and my question about study, is classical. I frequently heard similar things from women in the religious Zionist community from the generation that preceded the Talmud revolution. Many Haredi women spoke to me in the same spirit. It is a complex statement that clutches the speaker in a double pair of tongs. First, it constitutes a declaration that a Jewish woman has many spiritual religious tasks. The woman is obligated by a considerable portion of the commandments, and she has many duties involved in managing her and her family's spiritual lives. This declaration signals that even without studying (as an act of performing Judaism, which ostensibly does not obligate her), women have many ways to take part in the Jewish project, which they are indeed obligated to do. In this way, the claim that women do not have enough ways to serve God is dismissed. Another claim

hides in the statement “may God help me to meet them all.” Here the speaker declares that she does not succeed in performing all the tasks expected of her. Therefore, she should not take on other obligations before she manages to carry out those that are already on her roster. She closes the door to any desire to study by depicting such a desire as having the audacity to meddle in something that she is not obligated to do, before she has carried out her existing duties.

The critical discussion that took place in modern Orthodoxy about women’s obligation to study and/or family obligations and their gender context, gets buried under this statement. The woman again positions herself within a community of active believers/doers (since she indeed has a great deal to do), but her placement within this community does not change. Furthermore, Leah presents the community she seeks to serve as one that is not interested in study groups. “They want to get away from that,” she says, so the group’s organizers try to offer something that will please them, that they can enjoy. Rather than being a study circle, the club is depicted as a framework that supports the women and frees them from the burden of their day-to-day existence.

However, the two speakers mark five other possibilities for study. One faces outward, to general studies in a religious framework (for example, secretarial and computer training classes). Another faces inward, to the home (religious studies with one’s husband). A third comes back to the Haredi women in the neighborhood in informal frameworks (with one another). The fourth is placed in the group (a rabbi or *rabbanit* is invited to speak), and the last faces the neighborhood, and embraces those who are becoming interested in religion or being strengthened in their religious commitment (Rabbi Zer’s classes).

Religious studies thus do not disappear from the agenda, and the Sephardi Haredi women in Esti and Leah’s group have no few encounters with the canonic texts and are exposed to Haredi pedagogy. A woman can, with her husband, discuss halachic matters touching on her role in the home. Both women are aware that there are innovations in the law, deriving from changes in the world around them. The husband is marked as the mediating authority who stands at the forefront of halachic events and who filters what his wife needs to know. Rabbi Zer and other rabbis of stature are conceived in Esti’s words as people one must hear repeatedly in order to carry out the halacha as it appears in our time. Education as religious women takes place from time to time, and in moderation—at the beginning of Hebrew months, before holidays and other important days on the Jewish calendar. The dosage is balanced so that it won’t overwhelm the fun and “getting away from that,” yet won’t allow the women to forget that the framework is a Haredi one.

Esti offers a poetic description of women in the park taking advantage of their time to convey religious material to each other. In my estimation, she does not mean that the women engage in spontaneous study partnerships. More likely, it means that such encounters are an opportunity to pass on word about gatherings and lectures, or allow women to exchange advice about the transition some of them are making from a less to a more Haredi lifestyle. This transitional stage does not come to an end. Esti recommends that women continue to attend Rabbi Zer’s open lessons. She herself doesn’t go, but she recommends them to her daughter. *Hit’hazkut*, strengthening one’s religious commitment, is an ongoing process, and the newly-religious are an unfailing resource for learning. Getting together with people who have not yet made this transformation in their

lives is proof of love for the Jewish people and of Rabbi Zer's ability to bring people towards worship of God in joy and not in fear.

This is an anti-elitist conception of study. It contains not a shred of a desire to appropriate hegemonic, "male" study. There are no seeds of discontent with women's lack of access to canonic texts. The conception of "study" expressed here embraces a larger public space, one that incorporates those who are inside, those who are halfway in, and those who have yet to join into a single holy community. The very fact that this heterogeneous group comes under a single rubric is itself a great spiritual lesson.

It is reasonable to assume that Sephardi Haredi women from more established circles and of higher status have other frameworks for study. But the social system in which the Pardes Katz group operates requires its own pedagogic strategy. It creates a need that Esti, Leah, and their friends respond to. The center points of the strategy are reaching out to new women and survival. Two events illustrate this. The first took place on the first day (*Rosh Hodesh*) of the month of Tammuz, in the summer of 2003. The group invited a *rabbanit* who lives outside the neighborhood to give a lecture in their club room. The second event was a mass observance of the precept of *hafrashat halla*, in which one sets aside a piece of dough when baking *halla* (often spelled "challah" in English), the special bread of the Sabbath. It also took place in the summer, on the first day of the month of Av, 2002, in the neighborhood's large synagogue.

These events aid in comprehending the conduct of Haredi life by the women, and how they convey this conduct to other women.

## FENCES AND GATES

### iii. *Rosh Hodesh Tammuz*

Shortly before the first day—*Rosh Hodesh*—of the Jewish month of Tammuz, in the summer of 2003, I make a note to myself to call Esti. I don't want to miss the day's activity for the women. "Monday at nine," she says, "with God's help we'll hear the *rabbanit* Yona Simha." I hold myself back and leave home only at five to nine, knowing that nothing ever starts on time. I wear a long, olive-green skirt, a button-up striped blouse, and a hat. Up to this point I had not worn a hat to cover my hair (even at the open lectures at the Or David yeshiva), but I now added it because my first meeting with the women's club had taken place in a synagogue. That's how Esti and her friends saw me then, so that's the way I'll dress this time as well. It's not easy to find a parking space on the street in the evening, but in the end I find one not far from the club room. The building looks like a normal apartment building, and a peek into the basement reveals nothing. A woman with her hair covered by a kerchief leans against a car parked at the entrance to the building. She gives me an inquiring look and I help her out: "I spoke with Esti."

"Go to the right and around back," she says, a small smile playing on her face.

Next to the stairs leading down to the back yard I find a sign: "Community Activity Room." The steps are wet from the dripping of air conditioners above. At the bottom of the stairs, next to the building's fence, stands a slapdash dovecote made from an old cabinet and pieces of plywood. To my left, I see a door with a light and I look inside. Three women sit there. One tells me that Esti hasn't arrived, and the *rabbanit* hasn't, either. They don't know me from previous meetings and don't invite me in. I wait

outside, and a few minutes later I take a plastic chair and sit down, still outside. I listen to the woman closest to the door, who is dressed in Haredi style, speaking to the two other women, who are hidden from my view. I'll learn later on in the evening that the speaker's name is Yael.

A woman inside the room: "It's hard, this stuff about modest dress, to change everything you are used to, it doesn't work like that."

Yael: "You're right, it's hard, but that's what's kept us going. Think of how we look now, look at the way things are, once it wasn't like that. For example, in Egypt. Pharaoh wore a miniskirt, yes, yes, he wore a miniskirt, you see from the pictures that that was the fashion there, and he wanted the Children of Israel to walk around like that too, but the Jewish women didn't listen to him and dressed this way [she points to herself, at the length of her sleeves and skirt, at the white kerchief on her head—white, perhaps, in honor of *Rosh Hodesh*]. That's why it is written that 'because of righteous women Israel was redeemed from Egypt.' For three things: they kept their own way of dressing, their own language, and also ... I don't remember the third thing."

A woman inside the room: "So why today do a lot of women wear wigs? It's not modest at all, all those wigs."

Yael: "Yes, that's right, I don't know if you listen to the religious radio stations, but last week the whole week was devoted to modesty and they actually spoke a lot about wigs, because with us Sephardi women it's not even relevant for us to wear wigs. It's the Ashkenazi women who brought that. They used to work there and they went out of the house, so the gentiles harassed them, and so in order not to stand out they put on wigs. But they weren't fancy wigs, not at all, it was like straw. Now there are long ones, and half-pony tails, and pony tails, blonde and striped, and it's not at all modest. We Sephardi women shouldn't walk around like that at all. They, I don't want to say. If they have someone who rules that it's ok, let them do it, but we, that's what they said on the radio and it's what Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef says, should wear a kerchief or a hat. Now, a man who lets his wife wear a wig, every look another man gives her she'll pay for and he'll pay for. So what for? It's right that we first need to correct our own behavior before we correct the non-religious. We've tried so hard to correct them that a lot of them voted Shinui.<sup>8</sup> Now they see they made a mistake, they thought that the situation in the country would improve."

A woman from inside the room: "But we didn't vote Shinui, we voted Shas."

Yael: "I didn't mean you, God forbid, may God preserve us, I said a lot of people."

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The conversation dies down and I hear voices from inside. A few minutes later a woman strides energetically out of the room. Dressed in a long denim skirt and a teeshirt, her head his covered with a kerchief that looks singularly out of place. She is worked up, someone inside has angered her, she says she has to go, and she'll continue to say so the whole evening. She'll exit and enter, speak half to herself and half to the others. She'll quote verses from the Bible, tie on and take off her kerchief, and stay until everyone disperses.

When she sees me, she asks me if I'm connected to Esti and invites me to come inside. In the center of the room is a large table, with chairs arranged around it. Other women arrive, as does the *rabbanit*. Ronit, who helps Esti run the group, brings drinks

and cookies. I find myself a place at a corner of the table, far from the *rabbanit*. At the height of the evening, twelve women sat around the table. Esti, it turned out, had not anticipated so many. She herself arrived only after the *rabbanit* had gone, because some unexpected visitors had arrived at her home.

The *rabbanit* acted her role. She entered the room accompanied by Ronit, greeted the women, complimented them on how the room looked. Some of the women rose out of respect as she took a place at the head of the long table. She was dressed in a dark blue suit, and wore a wig topped by a small round, black straw hat. Even though her name and her accent labeled her as Mizrahi, she dressed precisely according to Lithuanian standards, signaling both modesty and eminence.<sup>9</sup> The fact that she wore a wig amused me, in the wake of the speech that Yael, with her kerchief, had made against Ashkenazi wigs. But that was not the only sign that showed the place of Ashkenazi Haredi life in the shaping of Sephardi-Haredi discourse. Another sign came when the *rabbanit* opened her talk with a “story,” to fill the time until other women arrived. She asked the women’s forgiveness for arriving late and regretted that she would have to leave early as well. She had come to the club from a lesson she gave in Ramat HaSharon, and she had to go to the wedding of a girl to whom she had given pre-wedding instruction.

Throughout the evening, a number of mobile phones rang. The women did not turn them off and did not apologize. Some answered the phones with a whisper while sitting around the table, others stepped outside. The *rabbanit*’s talk went something like this:

They say that the Admor [leader of a Hasidic sect] of Klozenberg, of course you’ve heard of him, haven’t you? The one from Netanya. They relate, actually he himself told what happened to him there in the camps. You know that the conditions there were substandard, really substandard, you can say. And it was very difficult, and every day people fell away, fell away and fell away, and every day there were fewer people. In the end he found himself with one Jew, who was known to be a very great man in the Hungarian economy, and he was, you could say, if you were to use today’s language, like the governor of the Bank of Israel. He was the governor of the Hungarian bank, he held together their entire economy, really raised up their economy. He, at the very beginning of his career, decided to marry a gentile, because he wanted to get into gentile society more easily. They lived together in great wealth for thirty years. So the Admor asked him, where is your wife? Why isn’t she here with you? The Jew looked at the Admor and said: Isn’t it enough that I’m here? After all, she doesn’t have to be here. But the Admor pressed him and said, with us, the wife goes with the husband to the grave, to the end. When things were good she was with you and when things are bad she’s not with you?

The next day they continued their conversation. The Admor asked him about his children. He had three sons. One was an important, very famous doctor, the second was a lawyer, and the third was a really successful businessman, very rich. The Jew gave the Admor

another look and said: What do you want? To sprinkle salt on my wounds? Isn't this enough? They don't need to be here. But the Admor said to him, you don't have the honor and status you had, you've lost your wife and you've also lost your sons, so where has your path taken you?

The next day the Jew came to the Admor and said: I was very angry at you for saying those harsh things in this place, but I thought all night and now I understand you, and I accept what you said and understand the mistake I made. I shouldn't have married a gentile woman, I should have remained with my people.

The next day the Admor searched for the Jew, but was told that he had died. The Admor was sorry but was happy that at least he had gone above after repenting, because what he had said the day before was real repentance.

So that's it, girls, let's go on to our lesson.

The *rabbanit* takes a pair of reading glasses out of her purse, as well as a thin notebook that she places before her but rarely consults. I paraphrase her talk from memory.

### Mommy For Your Husband And Mommy For Your Children

Our subject today is honoring your husband. Let's begin from Genesis. It is written that God brought the woman before the man and he looked at her and said: "She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." How did he know that? After all, he was in slumber, and also, he felt no pain and had no stitches, so how does he know that? He was the wisest man there could be, the most perfect, after all he was created directly by the Holy One, Blessed Be He, the work of his hands. Even God proposed to call him "soul" and not "man," but he didn't want that, he wanted to remember that he came from the earth, so that he would not be proud. King David also slept with his shepherd's slingshot under his head so that he would remember that he was not born a king. But the fact is that he knew that the woman was taken from him. That's the way it is, souls descend to the world in pairs, and when the time of love comes, couples are made. People match themselves to each other and have a wedding. Today you choose your husband, not like it once was that your mother or father told you whom to marry. Today you see, you talk, you form an impression, and you choose, he's the man who chose you and you chose him, if he's right for you, fine, if he's not right, you go on. But the minute you chose him, you show him respect as for a king. If he's a king, you are a queen. The honor that you give him you yourself receive, that's why the word for giving,

*natan*, reads the same way forwards and backwards, what you give you receive in return.

I tell the women that I instruct that, during the first year of marriage, you learn him. Like one said to me, "I'm learning the way he thinks." You see what he likes, what upsets him, what he wants. You need to pamper him, to make him feel good, easy. To be his mommy. We have all the characteristics to do that, we know how to do that. You know that he likes to eat salad in the morning, get up and make him salad. Don't think, "oof, I've got to cut him up a cucumber and tomato again," no. The opposite, take it easy, do it gladly. The very fact that you are my husband is why I look after you, is why I'm happy to do it. I tell him nice things, I praise him for the things he does, I talk with him. He says some idea, I say, what a wonderful idea, you're really a genius.

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"But I don't feel right talking to him that way," one of the women says.

"What's there to be shy about? Are you shy in front of your husband? Why? You don't need to be. The opposite. Give, talk, don't keep it to yourself, it will come back to you. Build him up and you will be built."

"But won't it put his nose in the air?" says a young woman with a bashful smile who sits next to me.

"Let him put his nose in heaven, if it's up there than you and the whole house will be there, go up there together."

"But your husband doesn't always return the compliments. There are women who do everything and they don't receive it in return," a third participant says.

So teach him to give you. Ask him, draw it out of him, ask, how was the cake? Good? Tell him that it's important for you to know, that you want to know if it's good for him, teach him from the beginning. Here, for example, I received a telephone call from a bride, three months after the wedding. She tells me, your advice is excellent. What compliments I received from my husband, he told me that now he studies better in the *kolel* than he did when he was single; All those hours he had when he was single, he studied less well than the hours he has now. He has fewer hours but he studies better, because he receives support from home, because he knows that there's someone who is impressed with him, who wants him to study. I immediately sent it back to her and said, my advice is one thing, but you seem to have succeeded in implementing it well, so I congratulate you. It's always easier to see the bad things. It's easier to say: you're like your mother, like your family, you don't pay attention to me, you don't listen. No! Don't say that. Always be positive, always say good things. The very fact that you are my husband means you're great. Use your mouths. We women have that tool. Work it wisely, for the good. Take care to chat, to ask for

advice, to tell him what happened at home, what happened with the children, ask his advice, even if you don't feel like you need it. Tell him how you carried out his advice, tell him that it was good, share with him, so that he feels he has a say in the house, with the children, that you are together, that you always talk. Don't be silent.

It's also important to make sure you eat together, at least one meal a day. Set the table nicely. I saw a woman who puts the napkins in the glasses, like in a wedding hall, so that it will be pretty, so it will be special and pleasant. You sit together and talk while you eat, just you and him. It brings you together. Take notice of what he likes. If you see that he's impressed by some dish somewhere, call up and ask for the recipe. Surprise him. He'll see that you look after him, that it matters to you, that you do your best, and he'll do his best also. Do you understand? When he's happy, I'm happy, when it's good for your children, it's good for you. Right?

“But it doesn't always work, he doesn't always give in return, sometimes he stays the way he is and you the way you are,” says the young woman who spoke first.

You can teach a man to change. For example, my husband is incredibly messy [she smiles and the women do as well]. I remember that, just after we were married, he had studied with someone. I went into the room, and all his books were in a mess on the table. I straightened them up quietly, I put them all back in their places. Afterwards I said to him: It's such a joy for me to come into the room and see that you studied, to see all the books lying open, it gives me strength, it's an honor for me that there's study going on in my house. I'm happy to tidy up the room afterwards, but if it's not too hard for you, maybe you could just arrange the books a little so that it will be easier for me. That way he slowly learned to straighten up his things. I never left them out even once, I didn't try to get back at him, so he doesn't do that with me, either. I said what I had to say, I didn't remain silent, but delicately and wisely.

There are men, for example, who don't keep their Shabbat and everyday clothes separate, who mix everything up. Then a holiday comes or a Shabbat—and they don't have what they need. So don't be shy, delicately and wisely teach your man. Do it on the easy side, without a lot of noise.

Yesterday, for example, my daughter had her last final exam. Her fourth year at the seminar, and it's hard, exams all the time. She said to me: Mom, I'm totally exhausted, I'm fed up, I can't go on. I told her: one more exam, you've worked so hard, go on, pull yourself together, tomorrow we'll have a party, take it easy. And she actually told me that she went to sleep late and prayed to God to help her and

the exam went well. When she came home I made a special meal for her and we opened a bottle of wine, a kind of party.

So in a fun way, mellow, you set an example for the children that it's possible to overcome difficulties and that you don't need to make a big deal out of things. We do our duty to God, and the man who honors his wife does his duty to God. They say of the great rabbi, Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, that he went up to heaven and they did his accounts and it showed that he had never treated his wife disrespectfully. They made note of it because it is the virtue of a great man, of one of the greatest of all generations. So your husband isn't doing you a favor, it's his duty to the Creator.

Another thing [she glances at her notebook] that's worth doing together is to study. To study together. During our first days together, my husband and I, before the children were born, we studied together a great deal. It was sweeter than honey. A spiritual, emotional joy, I wish we could study together like that today. Try to set aside a time for you and your husband to study together.

"But not all our husbands study, they don't have time to study themselves," says another participant.

True, there are men who work and only study a little, we respect them just the same. Just as a mother cares for each of her children. Right? Because he belongs to you, she doesn't trade him in. For example, one Shabbat at our synagogue a mother came with a paralyzed girl in a wheelchair, not on us, a poor thing. But the mother came with her. She wasn't ashamed. Of course it's a big difference, but he's your husband, like your child. Be a mommy to your husband, a mommy to your children. I apologize, girls, I have to go, it's the wedding of a student of mine.

Esti and her ten-year old daughter arrived just when the *rabbanit* concluded her talk. The girls were happy to see her. She asked them to wait a few more minutes so that she could drive the *rabbanit* to a place close by, and they began to show signs of restlessness.

"Hey, Ronit, make the announcements yourself, you know what Esti wanted to say, it's already 10:30. I need to get home."

Ronit holds back, but in the end gives in: "I need to talk about a few subjects. About our end-of-year party, about a fun day for women, and about a family vacation. We have an offer for an overnight fun day, leaving Wednesday, sleep over, returning Thursday. It costs 280 shekels [about \$60], and they can take it in three installments."

"What do we do there? Are there organized activities? What kind of place is it?"

"I can't go overnight, why can't we do one long day, I work on Thursday."

"We all work."

"I don't know what everyone does. I can't."

“It’s a lot of money.”

“But what will we do there? What’s it about?”

Ronit: “It’s at, and there’s a pool and a sauna and a Jacuzzi.”

“So why can’t we go to Hamei Yoav, I asked you lots of times for Hamei Yoav.”

Ronit: “Hamei Yoav isn’t right for the summer, it’s hell. Besides, we wanted to know what you want to do for the end of the year, we thought maybe we’d go to the park and have a cookout, something fun with the kids. I don’t know, give me ideas.”

Esti returns. Her authority is manifest.

Limor: “It’s good you came. Come on, Esti, give the announcements, I’m falling asleep, I was drowsing during the *rabbinit’s* talk, too.”

Esti: “Really? You mean it wasn’t interesting?”

Many women together: “Why? It was very interesting. A very good lecture.”

“Ten on a scale of ten,” Yael says. “Excellent, she’s a great woman.”

Esti turns to me and whispers: “How was it?”

“It was interesting,” I say. “It was ok.”

She turns from me and gives an methodical explanation of the different possibilities for going a way for a fun day for women alone. She asks if all the women’s daughters are in camp, because if not it might be worth organizing something for them in the mornings. She’s thinking about a course in making jewelry. She tells them about the option of taking a family vacation in Tiberias for four days during the *bein ha-zemanim* period, when the men’s yeshivot close for a summer break. It’s for four days, 500 shekels per couple, another hundred shekels for each child, half-board. Esti also asks for ideas for an end-of-year party.

“I want to hear from you now what you think, not to stay afterwards with Ronit and then start making phone calls. Tell me what you want. That’s why we’re here together.”

Yael: “A pajama party.” She laughs and looks around her. “What’s wrong? Just because I’m a mother and grandmother doesn’t mean that I can’t be silly and let myself go.”

Ronit: “Very good, that’s absolutely right, we can certainly be silly.”

Yael continues: “If we’re in someone’s home and not in the park then there’s no problem of modesty. For example, I just thought of it now, we could do an ethnic evening, each one bring a dish of her own, and a costume, we can eat and have a good time, sing, put on a skit. What’s wrong with that, have we forgotten that we were schoolgirls once?”

Esti: “No problem. It can be at my apartment, it’s nicer than the club room. It’s a way for you to get acquainted with my new place. There’s no problem of space, the more people there are, the larger it gets. Have we decided on an ethnic evening?”

Silence. There is no opposition. Suddenly a young woman who is not dressed in the religious style says quietly to Esti, who sits next to her: “It’s not a good idea. Better to collect money and buy food, they’ll make scenes about whether the food is kosher, each one has different practices than the other, and not everyone knows how to make ethnic food.”

Esti: “Food really is a problem. Maybe we should put aside the ethnic idea, but I don’t want to deal with money, some pay, some don’t, I don’t have patience for that.”

Ronit: “There was a proposal to go to Mini-Israel, I don’t know what that is, but ‘*Rabbanit*’ Nechama and ‘*Rabbanit*’ Yaffa suggested it. So maybe tell me what it is?”

Nechama: “It’s sort of all of Israel in miniature, they say it’s amazing, with lights and everything, it’s by Latrun.”

Ronit: “But what do you do there? What is it?”

Yaffa: “You walk around, it’s really nice. People say it’s really worthwhile.

Ronit turns to me quietly: “Do you know anything about it? Is it nice?”

I tell her: “I haven’t seen it, but it’s supposed to be a tour of the whole country in miniature.”

Ronit doesn’t look enthusiastic, especially since it’s clear to her what visitors do there. “Amazement” is obviously central. She goes back to the starting point when one of the women says again: “The best thing is in the park, we’ll have a cookout, we’ll bring the kids.”

Esti: “What do you mean? It’s just for us, why children, it will be a ruckus, it’s our end of year party. We’ll have a separate party for the girls.”

Limor: “I heard about a Haredi woman clown, she does organized activities with girls and is really something.”

Ronit: “So find out how much she wants, it sounds good. Is anyone opposed?”

Silence.

Esti: “Ok, go with that and get back to us. It can be at my house, no problem, a party for the women, a party for the girls.”

The women begin to chat with each other and Esti has to pound on the table with her keychain. I’ve had enough, I whisper to her that I will call, and get up to go. At the bottom of the stairs I hear Esti’s daughter calling my name. “Mom wants you,” she says. Esti appears at her side and asks if I have a way to get home. “Thanks,” I tell her, “I’m all set.”

### Reading the *Rosh Hodesh Tammuz* Event: Fences and Gates

The group of women who gathered in the club room was heterogeneous, so each individual behaved differently. The encounter with the *rabbanit* was an example of the battle against this heterogeneity, and especially against the cultural and religious diversity it involves. The small-scale event I have just recounted is a chapter in a large enterprise that seeks to mold the religious Sephardi population into a Haredi community, to create for it a more uniform *habitus*.<sup>10</sup> An interpretive reading of the event therefore invites an acquaintance with some of the praxes used by those active in the industry of cultural modeling. In addition to the methods used, one may also identify some of the contents, preferences, or choices, which Pierre Bourdieu calls “tastes.” Such a reading of the event can thus help identify social processes that mark boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and especially movement around fences and gates.

At the event described above, the women were the principal actors. They organized the evening, invited a guest to give a talk, convened, chatted, listened, debated, made decisions, and went on. A successful event was recorded in the group’s activity log. What imprint did it leave? The general structure of the event is reminiscent of similar events I documented among the Gur Hasidic women, who also invited an outside guest speaker.<sup>11</sup> Here, as there, the frame story included the women gathering and free conversation among them, a central portion constituting the talk by the guest speaker, and

a framing event that occurs after she leaves. Here, as there, there was a certain disconnect between the main lecture and what surrounded it, before and after. Nevertheless, the central part must be deciphered in the context in which it took place.

Esti, who arrived after the *rabbanit* left, was welcomed happily. The women knew that she would put their open conversation on track towards future events. One of them even confessed that she drowsed off during the lecture and that she expected Esti to wake her up. Esti asked whether the lecturer was boring. In return, she received positive feedback that reassured her: “It was interesting,” “a good lecture.” “Ten on a scale of ten,” Yael said. “Excellent, she’s a great woman.”

Yael’s remarks were central in the conversation that preceded the guest’s arrival. They will open the interpretation of the evening as a whole.

### Pharaoh’s Miniskirt and Ashkenazi Wigs

Yael, who arrived early, found herself in the same room with two women who had not yet completed their transition into the Haredi world. They chose to come to the evening organized by the Haredi women’s group even though they did not, for the moment, accept the entire set of the Haredi code’s normative behaviors. This turned Yael into a “little *rabbanit*,” into a figure whose very mode of dress marked her as standard and them as still on the periphery. They spoke about modest dress, and one of the women confessed that “It’s hard, this stuff about modest dress, to change everything you are used to.”

Exchanging one habitus for another is not a simple matter. Yael knows this, and she adduces a historical example that makes frequent appearances in the Haredi-religious discourse on women. This time the midrash on the women of the generation of Egyptian slavery<sup>12</sup> receives a fresh turn. The interpretation is “fashionable” in two senses of the word. Yael transfers the issue of modesty to Egypt. Non-religious Israeli women are labeled as dressing in Pharaoh’s style. The ancient Egyptians wore miniskirts, just as the neighborhood’s secular women do—pictures prove it. But the Israelite women refused to accept Egyptian fashion. They wore exactly what Yael wears. They “dressed this way,” she says, and points at her own body. Because they made this choice, they received “merit,” and that merit redeemed Israel. Yael broadens the midrash in unfamiliar directions (it’s reasonable to assume that she heard this interpretation from someone), and adds the preservation of the Hebrew language, and some other thing that she can’t remember. She thus creates a personal blend of the righteousness of Jewish women.

Yael’s campaign of distinctions begins by marking the boundary between gentiles and Jews (and, in terms of the neighborhood, between non-religious and religious women). But it does not stop there. Her interlocutor challenges her with the matter of wigs—and it almost sounds as if Yael had planted the question. It allows Yael to continue her boundary-marking campaign by drawing a line between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

The month Tammuz and the summer is at its height. Yael asks her friend if she listens to religious radio stations, since one of them recently devoted an entire week to the subject of modesty. It’s a hot subject in the summer because women’s bodies get progressively more exposed in public, because of trips to the beach, and because of the huge temptation to be less scrupulous in the matter of socks or full-length sleeves. This time they speak about wigs, in particular fancy wigs.<sup>13</sup> Yael marks out the difference between Sephardi and Ashkenazi women. As an experienced, cautious member of her

community, she does not explicitly malign Ashkenazi women. She accounts for their choice to wear wigs as a matter of custom in their native country. Because they were compelled to work in the Diaspora, rabbis there permitted the women to use wigs as a head covering so that they would not stand out. But the rabbis certainly did not mean for them to use expensive wigs. They wore straw wigs. By citing this rabbinic sanction, Yael places wig-wearing Haredi women under the canopy of the halacha (they have a rabbinic opinion they can cite in their favor), but places Ashkenazi Haredim outside the circle of the fortunate.

In the Sephardi diaspora, women did not have to leave their homes to work, so they did not have to give up the preferred head covering (a kerchief or hat) for a less desirable one. The Sephardim thus come out better than the Ashkenazim, and the hegemonic (Ashkenazi) Haredi head marker is lowered or constricted. Yael notes that Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, the premier Sephardi religious authority, has waged a long campaign to remove wigs from the heads of Sephardi women. She adds that the sin of wearing a wig redounds on both the woman and on her husband, who permits her to attract the stares of other men. Both wife and husband will pay for this on the day of judgment. It is clear to Yael that wigs are an unresolved issue in the Haredi world. Men who allow their wives to dress immodestly are her principal adversaries, even before non-religious Jews. She then returns her discourse of distinction to the religious/non-religious category, arguing that the religious community must first set its own house in order. Their attempts to educate the non-religious impelled the latter to vote for Shinui.

One of the women was quick to make links to the chain that Yael laid out. She sought to clear her name. True, she does not cover her head, but Yael should not deduce from that that she votes Shinui. In fact, she voted for Shas, the party sponsored by Rabbi Yosef.

It would be interesting to know what Yael and the women she spoke to thought when the other women arrived and Ronit appeared with the guest speaker, who wore a wig crowned with a hat, as is the custom of some Ashkenazi women.

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After the opening pleasantries, the guest *rabbanit* chose to open with a story, before beginning her lesson. This is accepted practice in Haredi discourse, and especially among the Hasidim—in particular if the story is of an incident in the life of a famous Admor, or Hasidic spiritual leader. Her choice to use this opening genre, taken together with her style of dressing, are markers of status taken from the Ashkenazi Haredi world. They help her establish her status as a Sephardi *rabbanit* and as a teacher of brides in her sector. As an “important woman,” she wears a dark suit, and her head covering points in the direction of her Lithuanian Ashkenazi teachers at Or Hayyim, the seminar where she studied and where she works. Her bearing and behavior are formal, and she speaks in the manner of “important people” (Ashkenazi males). The hero of her story is the Admor of Klozenberg, and the setting is a Nazi death camp.

The language the *rabbanit* uses to describe daily life in the camp is a bit odd. She refers to the conditions in the camps as “substandard.” “[R]eally substandard, you can say. And it was very difficult, and every day people dropped away, dropped away and dropped away.” The women in the room must have been exposed to information about the Holocaust and pictures of the camps, although it is possible that in Haredi schools and Sephardi homes, the Holocaust is less of a presence than it is in non-Haredi, Ashkenazi

schools and homes. The description of conditions in the camp as “substandard” is hardly standard, and the term “dropped away” just magnifies the strangeness. Ostensibly, responsibility is pinned on those who were not able to “remain.” The Admor managed to survive, while the other protagonist, the rich Jew who married a gentile, renounced his roots, and whose sons were lost to the Jewish people, did not survive. The encounter between the Admor and the governor is described as a duel, head to head. The Admor is not lenient with the governor. In the face of death, he confronts him with the choices he made during his life. They have left him alone at the moment of truth, and his fate is that of the Jews, from which his wife and sons are exempt.

The *rabbanit* constructs a classic popular Hasidic narrative. She assumes that her audience has heard of the Ashkenazi Admor from Netanya, and of the historical background to the story. The story attributes great success to the lapsed Jew, as well as to his three sons, each with a prestigious profession: doctor, lawyer, and businessman. His status is exaggerated so that his fall will be all the greater, and his anger at the Admor’s questions turns into a purging process, a kind of repentance in anticipation of his coming death. In returning people to religion, all examples are acceptable. In heterogeneous Israel, in the mixed neighborhood, and in the room where Haredi and not-yet Haredi women sit together, it is possible to talk about gentiles and Jews, those who leave and those who adhere to their religion, Nazis and Jews, life and death. The choice to begin with a story “from there,” about a Jew who renounces his heritage, is detached from the context of Rosh Hodesh Tammuz, but is always acceptable. In the meeting room in Pardes Katz, the story is meant to affect women who are Haredi, religious, and those who have not yet decided where they belong.

### Scenes From Married Life

Once the room filled up, the *rabbanit* took up the subject she had been invited to address: honoring one’s husband. In order to give her talk a professional cast, she began with a quote from the Bible: “She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23). To the verse she added a midrashic gloss. Taken together, they were meant to show that couples are paired even before birth and that human beings must actualize them. Alongside this divine determinism, today, unlike in previous generations, people may make choices. “Today you choose your husband,” she emphasizes. She reasserts this autonomy several times, establishing a clearly non-coercive atmosphere. Most likely, the *rabbanit* is accustomed to speaking before young, unmarried Haredi women, the evidence being that some of her material is inappropriate for her present audience. At the table were married women, most of whom had become Haredi at a mature stage in their lives.

In the central portion of her talk, she sought to place herself between the women and their husbands, and to place something there that would raise both of them up to the status of “king” and “queen.” As a woman speaking to other women, she linked the objects of their care—home, children, and husband—to one another. All require her skilled hand, all await her wise judgment, and she can, with wisdom and sensitivity, form them all into a worthy kingdom. What you give, you will receive, what you raise will raise you up, if you take it easy, it will be easy and fun for you. She depicted nurturing one’s husband as a central activity that is not dependent on his actions. Even if his advice is irrelevant, even if he pays little attention to what goes on at home, the wife should

amplify his part in it and make him see it as an essential contribution. Doing so will boost his ego and improve his actual contribution. The *rabbanit* recommended that the women pamper their husbands, be attentive to their desires and tastes. She encouraged them to be romantic, to make sure they share a meal at least once a day, a meal that can be upgraded with pretty napkins and fine table settings. Such advice appears in general women's magazines, and can also be heard (if in less explicit formulations) in the clinics of marriage counselors. The *rabbanit* repeated standard advice, suggesting that women take advantage of what they are supposed to have—a flexible tongue, a contained ego, the strength to offer care, and patience. Generations of mothers have taught such things to their daughters, and some of these instructions have been internalized to the point that they might as well be encrypted women's DNA. Yet they still need to be rehearsed, it seems. In the special context of the Haredi women's club, the speaker said that the reward for following this advice will be a good life and one's husband's success in his studies. She offered examples from the lives of couples in which the husband studies at a yeshiva or with a partner at home. She buttressed these with stories about her own husband and how she countered his bad habits, and about how she calmed her daughter on the eve of her exam.

The women listened to the *rabbanit* but did not take what she said for granted. They sought to direct her to the power relationships that are no less characteristic of home life. One woman confessed that she was embarrassed to build up her husband's ego, while her friend feared that such a built-up ego could soar too high. A third woman related that her husband never gives her compliments, and another summed up by saying that there are men that will stay the way they are no matter how hard you try. The *rabbanit* was not apprehensive about these responses and did not change the tenor of her talk. With each example, she found a way of underscoring her arguments. In her answers, she sought to liberate the women from aggressive ways of thinking and to extricate them from the vicious circle of the zero-sum game. In her stories, everyone benefits.

The *rabbanit* and Esti may have agreed on the topic of the talk in advance. But in the room, which contained women who had already tasted marriage, the advice encountered an established fabric of life. Some of the women bounced the advice back at the speaker, others preferred to consider it and remain silent. The choice to live as a Haredi woman, which brings with it economic hardship and cultural marginality, also holds out promise of enhanced self-esteem and empowerment. A part of this process will be examined in Chapter 2, at Rabbi Daniel Zer's lectures. In his talks, the rabbi focuses on the image of the woman who moves between being a *frecha* (slut) and a saintly righteous woman, and the image of a man moving from being a punk to being a Torah scholar. The *rabbanit* does not reproduce the common stereotypes of Israeli discourse, which link ethnic origin to status. She moves in ostensibly universal areas of marital relations, but with small refinements for a family in which the husband studies Torah. Her advice cuts across class and ethnic origin, and their Haredi aspect is not manifest. Assuming that they will connect with her appearance of authority, she seeks to equip her listeners with tools for a good life. In this way they will connect happy family life with religious life, and the picture of a couple sitting at a well-appointed table will be linked in their memory to the figure of Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the great rabbi, who was praised in heaven for never having treated his wife with disrespect.

The *rabbanit* adds that the next installment in the promised romance can come in the form of the couple studying together. She recalls as “sweeter than honey” the time that she and her husband, in their younger days, spent studying sacred texts together. Set fixed times for religious study with your husbands, she urges the women. Her linkage of mutual respect and romance with the Torah produces uneasiness among those women whose husbands are not scholars. The *rabbanit* offers an interesting response to a comment one of the women makes in this regard. She immediately expresses her esteem and respect for husbands who do not study, and makes an analogy between them and the women’s children. In doing so, she bolsters the principle of unconditional love. But the example she offers is that of a woman coming to synagogue with her wheelchair-bound daughter. Just as this mother was not ashamed by her daughter’s condition, so the women should accept their working, non-scholar husbands. It may be paralysis, or a handicap, but it is not an embarrassment.

### Pajama Party Or Ethnic Evening

At the summer’s inception, at the end of a year’s activity, the women had three matters to discuss: an end-of-year event, a fun day for the women, and a family vacation. After the lecture with “content,” and without any reference to the *rabbanit*’s talk when she departed, the group went on to discuss routine matters.

As Esti testified, the group’s principal function is to hold fun events. Ronit laid out the subjects for discussion before Esti’s arrival. The group’s dynamic working procedures—the organizers propose, the group discusses, and the majority decides—derive from the fact that the group began under the guidance of a social worker. This praxis makes for a lengthy process, however, and at this late hour the women were impatient. It is hardly surprising, then, that Esti’s arrival was greeted by the women with the hope that she would expedite a decision. But, no less committed to the procedure than Ronit, she urged the others to express their opinions: “That’s why we’re here together,” she reminded them. The women were not afraid to ask, say what they think, inquire, offer proposals, to dismiss the ideas of others, to warn, and to support. The atmosphere was entirely open, and the key word in the process seemed to be “organized activities.” Relaxation itself, just “fun,” or simply a vacation is no longer enough for the Haredi community. A recent study of the Ashkenazi-Haredi community’s leisure culture<sup>14</sup> has shown that changes in Haredi leisure consumption is a result of the Sephardi public’s entry into, and broadening of, the Haredi fabric. The new view, that leisure time ought to include some sort of organized activity, is apparent in the responses. The women want to know “What do we do there?” “What do you mean?” “Are there organized activities?” Agents of leisure have taught potential consumers that they must seek out attractions. Ronit therefore suggests to bring the girls a “Haredi woman clown.” Nechama and Yaffa suggest going to Mini-Israel, and another women says it’s not necessary to spend money on the water park at Nir Etzion, because at Hamei Yoav you can get a bath and Jacuzzi for less. Yael (“the little *rabbanit*”) tries to bring the women back to a type of activity typical of school or youth groups, in which the participants entertain themselves. “Just because I’m a mother and grandmother doesn’t mean that I can’t be silly and let myself go,” she says. Esti likes the idea of bringing the party home, and she puts it together with another idea, an “ethnic evening,” adding that her home can hold everybody because “it enlarges in accordance with the number of people.”

The possibility of self-creation comes into play between the desire to go somewhere, to get out, participate in organized activities, even just to have a cookout in the park. Esti seeks to separate the women's celebration from the family's, and the discussion becomes more and more convoluted. One of the women anticipates that problems can arise from uncertainty about whether the food at an ethnic evening will be kosher, adding to that that some of the women no longer know how to prepare ethnic dishes.

The members of the Sephardi Haredi women's club are unclear about both their religious and their ethnic status.

### On the Inside of the *Teshuva* Industry: Making Distinctions and Blurring Them

The cultural area in which the women I met moved is both exposed to and blocked from many components culture. My theoretical interpretation seeks to track modes of distinction<sup>15</sup> and modes of blurring and inclusion that the women themselves (with the help of a guest) use for the range of the praxis, values, ideologies, and ways of life that flood their living space.

The more that economic means are limited, Bourdieu argues (Bourdieu 1984), the more delicate, wide-ranging, and rich is the praxis of cultural choice. In this situation, social actors receive "more culture for less money." His claims are universal, but are nevertheless very French and very class-oriented. He illustrates the complexity of distinctions and diagnoses, inclusions and exclusions, via art, food, and high culture. Therefore, some flexibility must be introduced for local use. Haredi society as a whole, along with each of its sub-communities, is an excellent place for examining these praxes, because they are all based on cultural actions on a foundation of very limited money and material assets. This comes along with a fixed pretense to "make culture."

Each morning, a religious or Haredi woman is required to carry out a precise process of declaring her identity. With each item of clothing, she (just like non-religious women, but more so) signifies acceptance, rejection, objection, or dalliance with the familiar dress code that belongs culturally to a specific group. From the top of her covered head to her toenails, her body serves as an organic substrate for the presentation of her preferences and repudiations. Each item she takes from the supermarket shelf, the way she places the money on the counter to pay for it, the way she turns the item into food and serves it, is laden (again like, but more so than in non-religious practice) with meanings about her social preference. The certain freedom she has allows her to position herself precisely in the Haredi-cultural space and to negotiate with its gatekeepers. Her actions can change or affirm her position in that space, or to signal her desire to belong to one or another segment in its hierarchy. The flexibility of Sephardi Haredi space is based on the history of the history of Sephardi Haredi culture. It has been further reinforced in recent years by new participants, due to the wave of return to and strengthening of religious observance. This has created fluidity that broadens the range of activity for individuals and challenges them with endless decisions to be made with regard to their bodies, their relationships, and their speech—their habitus. These, by the very nature of the habitus, will in the end become natural and self-evident.

The Little *Rabbanit* and the Big *Rabbanit*: Episodes in the Construction of a New Habitus

When Bourdieu had to adduce an example of a French social stratum that sought to do “a lot of culture with little money,” he chose teachers. France’s teachers constitute an educated middle stratum with limited economic room for maneuver. The enterprise of constructing the identity of teachers is based largely on the creation of fine distinctions, on careful observance of cultural tastes, on series of fastidious choices that provide a sense of cultural creation. This meticulous system, which constructs the group’s identity spaces, does not challenge the general order. Bourdieu takes as a given that the fundamental binary distinction between the influential and influenced groups is more or less stable. Some of the sources of this stability derive from the awareness of the large range of groups in this situation. In a way one’s class determines one’s tastes. The course of the game reveals the world in which tastes, judgments, choices, repudiations, distinctions, and obfuscations are created. Sometimes it is also possible to locate the ways in which this creation is assimilated and contained in the social body. As the game’s results become part of the social actor, the cultural labor involved is rendered invisible and gives the appearance of being self-evident. It may become visible at unraveled moments, when the self-evident (the “doxa,” in Bourdieu’s terminology) is challenged. In these dramatic moments, social actors move to create an orthodoxy that will reestablish unproblematic situations.

The cultural space in which the protagonists of the event narrated here is characterized by disquiet. Many pages of the “Israeli Doxa Book” have been torn out, and in many arenas different forces struggle over the composition of alternative texts. This situation creates openings for many agents and agents of agents, and offers social research that observes their actions new insights into Israeli culture, and perhaps also into Bourdieu’s theory.

The binary segmentation that envelops the acts of distinction in the event described mark those who are Haredi and those who have not yet become Haredi as the significant poles. The social lens closes in on the limited circle that is aware of the existence of a “secular” world, but which considers that world culturally distant and negligible. The reason for this attitude is not that the power of that world is dismissed, but that it is considered transitory. Within the illuminated circle, the women make distinctions between those who were born Haredi and those who became Haredi, between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Haredim, between men who study and men who work, between women and men, and between children and adults.

The event’s cultural activity took place in three stages. In the first, the voice was that of the “little *rabbanit*,” Yael, who spoke with two non-Haredi women. In the middle stage, the “big *rabbanit*” appeared, and the last stage the women themselves conducted a collective conversation on future activities through the end of the year. These three movements will be described below as labors of change (repair), confirmation (acceptance), and expansion (construction).

Let’s begin with the extending and central action, the act of confirmation carried out by the “big *rabbanit*.” The guest of honor did not try to match her talk to the specific audience that sat around the table. On the contrary, she addressed the women as if they were identical to her “standard audience” (young brides, Haredi wives and mothers). She did not speak to them as women from Pardes Katz, or as Sephardi women. She did not treat them like members of the lower middle class, and ignored the obvious fact that some

of them were not, or not yet, Haredi. Neither did the *rabbanit* speak directly about returning to religion. The distinctions she made were within the religious world. She offered dialogic strategies that would allow each woman to construct a king at her side, and so become a queen herself.

But the background to the events she spoke of, the description of daily life that she offered, her husband's clothes and study habits, girls' schools, boys' study partners, presented the Haredi habitus as self-evident. Ostensibly, her listeners need simply join the self-evident and become part of it. In declining to read her audience precisely, the *rabbanit* upgraded the women to the status of "standard." The gambit may well have dampened their interest in undermining that status. The questions directed at her (the few that were asked do not, of course, testify to what the women thought, or what they might have said elsewhere) demonstrated the gap between her recommendations and the women's ability to implement them. The basis of the gap was the listeners' insecurity about their ability to adopt the genre of discourse the *rabbanit* offered. Some of the women could not discern in the *rabbanit*'s language a syntax that they could replicate. Something was dissonant in the language that gave positive feedback to the husband, that inquired into what he liked, that built up his ego. Her speech was culturally alien, representing an unfamiliar habitus, something acquired and distant.

Two acts of differentiation were thus accomplished simultaneously. First, the women were included, by being treated as wives and mothers of the ideal type. Second, the presentation of the habitus of such families re-established, for some of the women, the knowledge that their families were not, in fact, ideal. *The offer of similarity, alongside the knowledge of difference, is a central component of the back-to-religion industry.* The offer has a huge social force, but it also bears a risk. Some see the gap between the real and the ideal as a huge, insurmountable barrier. As a result, they will continue to roam the borderland of religion as "eternal approachers." Others, in contrast, will experience the gap as something they can leap over, and will seek to reach complete standardization.

Yael, the "little *rabbanit*," is one of the latter. Unlike the "big *rabbanit*," she represents to her listeners not the doxa but rather the Orthodox, which needs *change* and repair. Her words actuate all that has not been achieved, and portray consensual modes of behavior for achieving it. Yael speaks about what the radio said and what rabbis have ruled, and how our forebears dressed in Egypt, and how they achieved redemption. She bares the areas of cultural struggle between Haredim and non-religious Jews, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, between husbands and wives. She thus approaches her listeners entirely differently than does the "big *rabbanit*." She sees them as they are. Her correct body and disciplined speech replicate the distance between them. This distance is liable to create opposition (as expressed by one of the women she spoke to, who reacted restlessly and critically throughout the evening), yet she is an available example of the possibility that each one can change and become standard.

To complete Bourdieu's triangle, it would be most convenient to describe the segment that ended the event as one which approached the heterodox pole. It could be from the cultural noise, a momentary release from the social regime, a multiplication of voices and proposals, women on their own, without children, without husbands, a pajama party. In fact, what takes place here is an act of *expansion and construction*. The map of social distinction is opened and stretched from Tiberias to Nir Etzion, from Mini-Israel to the Yarkon Park, from a Haredi clown to ethnic dishes. The trajectory of liberation from

the self-evident (the *doxa*) and from Orthodoxy located the women as consumers. They concerned themselves with the questions “what do we want?” and “How do we feel like celebrating?” In other words, they acted as all consumers do. At first, everything is possible. The first step into the mall, when the wallet is buried deep in one’s purse, creates an illusion, in the mind of the consumer (and that of the storekeeper), that the sky is the limit. But it doesn’t take long for both sides to surrender to the consumer ethic. The women want to know what they will pay and what they will get. Many possibilities were proposed and discarded. They moved between the home, the park, a restaurant, between home-cooked food and purchased food, between ethnic dishes and plain refreshments, between a trip to a tourist spot and staying at home. Laying out this range of possibilities was an experience of expansion. In their room they can do many things. Some are familiar and acceptable, others more innovative. They can do them with children or without them, with husbands or without them, on their own or for a fee.

The *Rosh Hodesh* Tammuz event is thus a good example of the open spaces of the Sephardi Haredi world. This ostensibly insignificant encounter displayed integrated praxes of confirmation of social circumstances, calls for its repair, and its expansion and reorganization. This integration opens and closes the arena. It upgrades those within it and on its margins and makes them a sacred community, without regard to their actual location. It traces convenient working boundaries for acts of conversion and their large range of forces.

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A year previously, I attended a large event held on the first day of the month of Av. It was there that I first met Esti and her friends. The event presents another facet of the conduct of the new Sephardi Haredi way of life, and of the industry of conversion. It was managed professionally by an external entrepreneur, supported by a charitable organization, and was directed at a large and varied audience of women.

#### **iv. *Hafrashat Halla*—The Once and Future *Mitzva***

Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, “When you come into the land where I bring you, then it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a wave offering to God. Of the first of your dough you shall offer up a cake for a wave offering: as the wave offering of the threshing floor, so you shall heave it” (Num. 15:18-20).

“For three sins women die of childbirth: for negligence (of the laws) during their menstruation, neglect of separating the first dough, and for neglecting to light the (Sabbath) lamp” (Mishna, Tractate Shabbat 2:7).

The ritual of *hafrashat halla* derives from a commandment in the Torah that has, over the generations, become accepted as an observance incumbent upon women—one of the three principal observances required of them. It requires a woman, when she bakes bread, to separate out, sanctify, and discard a portion of dough as an offering to God. Nevertheless, until recently it was not a public ceremony, and many religious women never saw, experienced or carried it out, because it applies only when baking bread (or, in

some cases, cake or other baked goods) from a large quantity of dough—a quantity containing at least 3-2/3 pounds of flour. A woman who prepared a sufficient quantity of dough at home, and was thus required to perform the ritual, did so alone; women who made a lesser quantity of dough or bought bread and *halla* (the special bread of the Sabbath) from the store, never had the opportunity to observe the ritual.

The other two women's principal observances are far more familiar. The lighting of the Sabbath candles is a popular ritual widely performed even by women who are not observant. Adherence to the laws of *nidda*—the separation of a woman from her husband during and after her menstrual period and her subsequent purification in a ritual bath—is also familiar beyond the bounds of the Orthodox community.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, *hafrashat halla* has become marginal to the life of most religious Jewish women.

The recent return to religion movement includes private and organizational initiatives that offer “spiritual experiences” to the public at large. These include organized pilgrimages to the graves of famous rabbis and miracle workers or participation in special festivals commemorating these figures, weekends of Torah studies, and talks by men and women who have become religious. Another among this plethora of experiences is aimed specifically at women and girls—public celebrations of *hafrashat halla*. Such events have become accepted as a kind of “spiritual leisure activity,” even among Haredi (ultra-orthodox) and orthodox women who are not newly-observant.

The section that follows offers a detailed description of such a ceremony in Pardes Katz. My reading and analysis of the ethnographic material I gathered moves between traditional interpretations of the precept of *hafrashat halla* and its significance, and sociological and anthropological interpretations of the ceremony. Together these produce a blueprint of a space for public spiritual activity for women and its cultural and political context. The neoteric ceremony offers a unique window on women's religious activity. It links halacha (Jewish religious law) with the kitchen, a religious precept with creation, consumerism with kabala (Jewish mysticism), and the Holy Temple with the corner grocery store. In order to place this phenomenon in a broader context, I will turn my gaze to another place, another religion, and another ceremony. It is described in an article by Deniz Kandiyoti and Nadira Azimova (Kandiyoti & Azimova 2004), which examines the role of women in post-Soviet Uzbekistan in the religious space in general and, specifically, in the observance of ritual.<sup>17</sup>

### Ceremonies, Women, and Food

Several women in the Farghana region of Uzbekistan, among them elderly widows, gather in the open yard between their homes to conduct the *Bibi Seshanbe* (Tuesday's Woman) ceremony. The hostess (the *otin*) places bread, grapes, almonds, and nuts on a tablecloth. After soup is served and eaten, she removes the food. She lays a rectangular kneading board on the table, and in its four corners she places: seven pieces of fried bread, a bowl of flour, a bowl of milk pudding, and seven small bowls. The hostess, who leads the ceremony lights seven candles and recites verses from the Qur'an. The widows drink the pudding first, followed by the rest of the women, and the hostess licks the remains. The ceremony moves between handling the food, reciting verses, and eating, and ends with casting a piece of cloth containing grape vine tendrils into a channel of water. The water is meant to bear away the participants' troubles and difficulties. The

women conclude by eating rice, and put their trust in the mythological woman to whom the ceremony is dedicated.

Kandiyoti had written previously about women in the Muslim-Arab-Turkish world. She decided to study women in the Asiatic republics of the former Soviet Union, on the assumption that the political changes the region underwent after the collapse of the Soviet Union would lead to a turning point religious life. The Soviet era, as a modernist project, sought to secularize society. Secularization was carried out in complex ways that differed from region to region and from period to period. In general, the two authors claim that popular religion suffered less damage than official religion did. It was often portrayed as pre-Muslim, pagan, and thus “authentic.” For example, the spring festival, Navruz, was under Soviet rule presented as a harmless agricultural holiday. When Uzbekistan became independent in 1991, Navruz became a national holiday. Ethnographers who worked under the Soviet regime created a kind of compact between the modernist project they served and the “authentic” folk custom they wrote of. The position of women in these areas was easier; they were not part of the public Muslim establishment.

Their role as preservers of folk traditions was confined to their homes and extended families, and the significance of their ceremonial religious activity could be interpreted as pre-Islamic.

It is tempting to draw parallels—if only rough ones—between the women studied by Kandiyoti and Azimova and those I observed in Israel. Zionism, as a modernist enterprise that also included a secularizing tendency, was a nationalism offered as an alternative to religion. State ceremonies were intended to fill the ritual space with new content and form. The state educational system instilled these principles in the public at large. With the establishment of an official rabbinate, traditional religion became part of the state apparatus. Popular ceremonies (such as the Moroccan Mimouna holiday) gained state recognition of their “authenticity,” redrawing the boundaries of status and ethnicity in Israeli society. All these phenomena are comparable to some extent with those delineated by the two authors regarding the relations between the Soviet state and the Muslim religion.

Of all these possible parallels, one important trend that characterizes the post-Soviet period stands out. This involves the movement between supervised, legal, male religion and religion that flows in a popular manner and draws a wider range of participants. This tendency towards supervision of folk rituals and attempts to subordinate them to Muslim religious law was observed by Kandiyoti and Azimova during the post-Soviet period.<sup>18</sup> Another researcher, whom they quote in their article, reports that women complained that they were now censured for using charms to exorcise evil spirits, for lighting candles in cemeteries, and for other rituals they practiced while feeling themselves good Muslims.<sup>19</sup> New religious leaders in post-Soviet Uzbekistan portray these folk rituals as heresy and single out women as being their chief vectors. Women (and on occasion men as well) conduct a cultural system, with its ritual manifestations, in yards, kitchens, cemeteries, but never inside a mosque. They are not conducted by religious scholars or others knowledgeable in Muslim law. According to the two writers, this system is subject to repeated attacks from the new religious leaders, who seek to control alternative arenas of religious expression and to subjugate the public to a uniform religious code that also has political significance. Religion, once an element

in the game of Soviet politics, is now an element in the game of pan-Islamic politics. Soviet politics was friendly to folk religion, where as the new Islamic politics fears and despises it.

Studies of the cultural and religious enterprise of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef portray him as running a similar system. He, too, seeks to cleanse the religious space of folk rituals, and he too attributes them by and large to women (or “grandmothers”).<sup>20</sup> He is not pleased with the common wisdom that Sephardic Judaism is more tolerant and flexible than its European Ashkenazi counterpart. On the contrary, he declares that the Haredi model of precise observance of Jewish law is the only possible way to live a Jewish life. Rabbi Yosef knows that a large portion of his supporters create and participate in cultural religious practices that are not acceptable to him, and as a political leader he and his close associates conduct their struggle against these custom in a gradual way and in complex forms.

The *Bibi Seshanbe* ceremony described above is not one of the practices incumbent on Muslims, nor is it authorized by any canonical text. Yet it is widespread and popular in the Islamic space. It integrates verses from the Qur’an, and its participants experience it as a spiritual ritual. This ceremony, like others conducted by women, have in the post-Soviet age become larger, more ostentatious, and more open.

The *hafrashat halla* ceremony that is at the center of this chapter is based on a commandment in the Torah, the central Jewish text. Furthermore, the halacha assigns women a special role in observing it. Nevertheless, in its current cultural context it is an example of the revival/invention of an old-new ritual. It is a show for spiritual consumers that invites initiative and participation, and it takes place on the seam between the religious world that Rabbi Yosef seeks and the religious world he seeks to expunge.

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Four days before the fast of the Ninth of Av in the year 5763 (2003), at the height of the July heat, a *hafrashat halla* ceremony was conducted in Pardes Katz at the initiative of the women’s club. Esti contacted the Haredi charity Hasdei Na’omi, which produces the event, and announced it to the club. I asked her on the phone whether the club did not suspend its activities during the impending “three weeks.” The three-week period between the fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the fast of the Ninth of Av, and in particular the period from the first day of the month of Av until the fast, is a period of mourning during which public celebrations, such as weddings, are not held. Esti replied: “With Haredi women, if you leave them alone they vanish, I push all year, even now when I’m about to give birth. Its on the fifth of Av, we don’t have parties, but *hafrashat halla*, why not?”

#### The *Hafrashat Halla* Ceremony: The Anat Show

On July 15, 2002, the day Arie Der’i was released from prison, I drove to the neighborhood’s Beit El synagogue.

I wore sandals without socks. But I covered my hair with a hat out of respect to the synagogue. It was the first time I’d covered my head since I completed my work with the women of the Gur Hasidic community. Nearly ten years had gone by in the meantime, but it didn’t feel peculiar to me. This time I left a ponytail showing in back—walking close to the wild side. At the entrance to the synagogue sat a woman who took a 10-shekel fee, in exchange for which she let me in and gave me a bottle containing a clear

red liquid. Other women received blue or green. They were soft drinks of an unfamiliar brand; mine seemed to be strawberry. The synagogue was a comfortable temperature, thanks to its central air conditioning, and a small number of women sat on the benches. I searched out and found a woman in advanced pregnancy. She was tall, thin except for her belly, and she was pushing benches around, organizing the synagogue into a makeshift classroom. None of the other women was helping her.

“Esti?” I hazarded.

“Yes.”

“I’m the Tamar who spoke to you on the phone.”

“Ah, hi.” She shook my hand. “As you see, they’re coming in dribs and drabs, turns out that in the Gold wedding hall there’s some sort of exhibition of food or something, a lot of them went there, and they’ll come here afterwards. You know, yesterday in the middle of the night I couldn’t sleep, I said to my husband let’s take a walk, we walked to downtown Bnei Brak, to Rabbi Akiva Street, three in the morning maybe, what a scene, people pasting up posters one on top of the other, what competition, lectures, events, the city is humming, everyone’s got something to advertise, covering up each other’s posters, a real scene.”

I sat down next to a heavy woman, dressed in cheap clothes, dirty, wearing black socks and worn white sandals. Like most of the women in the hall, she wore a net-knit kerchief on her head, as long as the hair underneath. She asked to see the book I’d picked up from the table, and glanced at it.

“Ah, yes, I know it, I know it. It’s by Rabbi Daniel [Zer]. When is it from?”

“1986,” I said.

“When was that? You know, how long ago?”

I made a quick calculation and suggested 16 years.

“Ah, right, a long time ago, he became religious a long time ago.”

At a quarter to nine, two women and a man lugged large cases and amplification equipment into the synagogue and set up a sound system. At nine one of the women, Anat, took the microphone, introduced herself, and began to speak fluently. Her voice was, however, monotonic, almost mechanical. It did not rise or fall, nor change with the nature of the story she told. It remained level whether she spoke of a quantity of flour, *tikkun ’olam*, or a story about a profusely bleeding woman in labor who observed the precept of *hafrashat halla* on her hospital bed when her fetus was in danger. I took a flyer offering a trip to the Ashkeluna water park and began to write on its back. Sarit, who had attended the secretarial course I sat in on during a previous stage of my research, was there with her mother and sister. She was pregnant. She turned to me and smiled.

“It’s you, isn’t it, I wasn’t sure, I’m not used to seeing you with a hat. Don’t take notes, she says she’s got everything in writing and she’ll pass it out afterwards.” I’d later discover that the notes cost six shekels. “Are you doing your research? Good for you. I’m still a cashier in the end, I didn’t find work as a secretary.”

What follows is taken from my on-site notes, which couldn’t keep up with the pace of Anat’s speech. I fleshed them out from memory. She stood on the dais in the front of the sanctuary, and as she spoke she held up large, plastic-covered posters in phosphorescent yellow, pink, and green. The posters contained keywords and served the role of overhead projections.

Anat was very nice looking. On her head was a Bukharian straight-sided cloth cap of the type that religious-Zionist women often wear. The bun that peaked out from behind was covered in black fabric. Over her long, loose dress she wore a long gray vest. She was tastefully made up and a silver Star of David hung from a long black leather lace around her neck. Her socks and platform clogs were of the same color, black. She expressed herself well and was clearly intelligent and experienced. She did not have the accent typical of many Mizrahi men and women. With the help of Orly, who came with her, she had prepared the dough before the lecture, not describing what she was doing, saying once again that everything was written on the sheet. When she finished the dough she said:

I knead with my hands, not with a mixer, so that my limbs will take part in the *mitzva* [the performance of this precept]. It is written that limbs that are occupied in a *mitzva* do not get hurt, for example, they told Queen Jezebel that her body would be mutilated, and indeed after her death dogs ate her body, but they left her two hands and feet and her head, because she used to rejoice with brides at their weddings, singing to them and dancing and clapping her hands. So let your hands take part in the *mitzva*. After the dough is ready, cover it with plastic and put a box of matches on it, because the sulfur in the matches accelerates the rising of the dough.

Anat took the dough out of the air-conditioned synagogue and put it in the hot courtyard. She apparently knew that the lecture would last long enough for the dough to rise. At the height of the evening there were about 50 women in the hall.

Women! [This is how she addressed them throughout the evening, not as “righteous women,” not as “souls,” but as “women.”] Women are commanded to observe three mitzvot. [She raised a poster.] They have the initials H N H, like the name Hannah—*halla*, *nidda* [ritual sexual purity], and *hadlakat nerot* [lighting the Sabbath candles]. *Nidda*, those who observe it, who observe it scrupulously, observe it. *Hadlakat nerot*—women who are very far [from religious observance] also observe it, even those who don’t keep the Sabbath or keep kosher, light candles [before the Sabbath]. So why do we leave *hafrashat halla* to a few righteous women? Why do most of us not perform this excellent *mitzva*? Today, with God’s help [she used the euphemistic form *Kel* instead of the word for God, *El*, to avoid pronouncing one of God’s names] we will learn the *mitzva* of *hafrashat halla*. This is a very spiritual *mitzva*, it is a *mitzva* in which every woman makes her home into a Holy Temple in miniature. From the day that the Temple was destroyed there were no more sacrifices, the priests ceased to serve, and here, we are commanded to observe such a great *mitzva* that contains a commemoration of the sacrifices. This *mitzva* has great potency, huge powers, it is a *mitzva* that you do by yourself, no one sees you, no one hears you, there’s no performance, I cry about what is going badly with me, on what I

am bitter about, I ask and plead and, as always in prayer, I ask first for the entire public, for the collective and then for me, and I don't cry over my husband, because a woman's tear over her husband burns him up. First I'll read you a few letters from women who have heard my lecture and who wrote me letters, I have them here with personal details and telephone numbers and you can call them and everything.

Since they were all in the same style, Anat apparently edited these texts. She referred to a computer printout:

The first is Meital from Elad, she was about to give birth and felt a discharge coming out of her and she thought that her water had broken. Suddenly she looks and sees that it's blood, a really strong stream of blood, like a river. Her husband was paralyzed and couldn't manage to call an ambulance, Meital herself, with her very last bit of strength, slipped a coin into the charity box at home and began to pray. In the end they somehow got to the hospital, where she asked her husband to call Rabbi Kneibsky, so that he'd go to *kolelim* [seminaries for advanced religious studies for married men] and give her name for the students to pray for her, because the doctors said that the situation was very bad. The placenta had become detached from the uterus and without that the baby can't receive oxygen. She had a hemoglobin count of eight which means she had really lost a lot of blood. Suddenly her mother came to the hospital with a bowl and dough, and the doctor asked if they were going to make donuts, because it was Hanukah. But her mother gave her the opportunity to do the *mitzva* of *hafrashat halla*. From that moment the bleeding stopped and she gave birth in good fortune to a healthy, whole son.

I've got a letter here from a girl named Osnat, who was at my lecture in Lod, she came in jeans and a tank top and short hair and lots of piercings, she said to herself that if I made any comment on the way she looked she'd get up and leave. I God forbid never make any comments, I'm a newly-religious woman myself. When she went home she saw on television that they were looking for a home for a lonely old woman and she decided to try and help. She made maybe 15 phone calls, and really prayed in her heart that she would have the luck to do a *mitzva* and meet someone who would lift her up because she didn't have the strength to go the distance alone. In the end she reached someone and talked with him from eleven at night until three in the morning. Half an hour about the old woman, and the rest on Torah and mitzvot and *teshuva*. In the end she met the boy, a Haredi boy with a pure soul. Osnat is, God be blessed, married today to that boy. Do you know Rabbi Ofer from Holon? Do you listen to him on the holy radio stations? The mitzvot and the mending [of

souls] that he does? His assistant, Rabbi Haim Gad, that's her husband. Their wedding was the holiest and most moving thing I ever saw in my life.

The third and last story I'll read you is about a girl from Afula, a newly-religious woman whose husband didn't become religious with her and he's a second generation to Holocaust survivors. His parents taught him not to throw out a single crumb. So he wouldn't let her do *hafrashat halla*, and there were literally shouts and arguments and he'd tell her about all the horrors of the Holocaust. The *hallot* she made came out like concrete. Five years she was married and she didn't have children. He didn't let her throw out [the dough taken out as an offering] and forbade her to bake *hallot*. She was at one of my lectures and I gave her instructions on the phone how to do it, and her *hallot* came out excellent. Her husband didn't believe that she baked them and asked to stand by her next time she made them. You know what it's like when your husband stands next to you and you have to succeed? He saw her *hallot* and walked out of the house in anger. Afterwards he came back with *tefillin* in his hand. Your *hallot* are too holy to eat. I have to put on *tefillin* first. Today, God be blessed, he is studying and the good news she adds in the letters is that she's in her fourth month of pregnancy.

Anat then presented her audience with letter and word games, which appeared on the posters that she held up one after another. The woman sitting next to me drew a small notebook out of her purse and did her best to copy the posters. Anat said that the letters of the word *halla*—h-l-h—stand for *helek le-olam ha-ba*, a portion for the world to come. *Hafrashat halla*, in an anagram, became *tafra shahala*, “to stitch an ovary,” (meaning “enduring issue,” she explained). Still holding up posters, she continued:

“Beauty is deceitful, and the grace [*ha-hen*] is vain.” [The penultimate verse of the Book of Proverbs, from the “Woman of Valor” passage. Anat jumbled the phrases. In Hebrew, the word “grace” is preceded by “the,” although English syntax necessarily omits it.] The Hebrew letters for “the grace” are the initials of the three commandments incumbent on women, lighting the Sabbath candles, *halla*, and *nidda*, which in turn symbolize the Sabbath, modesty and purity, and kashrut [the dietary laws]. *Hafrashat halla* is expiation for Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, and it is therefore a kind of *tikkun 'olam* [mending of the world]. Eve's sin brought ten punishments.

Anat listed them, and noted that the letters of the name Eve [Havah in Hebrew], stand for *halla*, menstruation [*veset*], and lighting the Sabbath candles [*hadlakat nerot*]. The women were extremely impressed with this wordplay, and Anat continued with a profusion of further examples, some of them clever and some of them forced. In the end she said:

Someone showed me something clever and new recently, after what happened on September 11. How many aircraft took part in the attack? Four, that's the four matriarchs. How many in the end succeeded? Three, because one went down on the way, that's the three patriarchs. What are the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center? The two tablets. And one is the Pentagon—God. Those who forget the four matriarchs and the three patriarchs, and the Torah and God, becomes the target of terrorist attacks. That is how God teaches us, via the gentiles, and reminds us where we ought to go.

While waiting for the dough to rise, there was time for other matters. The first was to commend the group that organizes the *hafrashat halla* evenings, and to see to it that it received support. Anat looked into the distance, beyond the door, and when she saw that the rabbi from Hasdei Na'omi had arrived, she invited him to say a few words.

A man in “Lithuanian” dress—a dark suit, white shirt, and black homburg—entered. He was fairly young, spoke without an accent, and—notably—addressed the women as a “public.”

We at Hasdei Na'omi, and I'm sure you all know of the organization, are involved in charity. The Talmud in the Sanhedrin tractate speaks of charity and asks, “Women, how do they gain [a place in the next world]?”<sup>21</sup> What merit can they gain, after all, they are perfect, they were created perfect. The man is created wild and needs to be educated. You'll never hear them say of a woman that she's a wild person, only of a man. Look at it even statistically, how many prisons there are for men and how many for women. The woman is perfect. So why does she gain a place in the next world? [In other words, being perfect, women are not required to observe all the commandments men are, and so ostensibly they have fewer opportunities to do the good deeds that provide entry into heaven] It's because she enables her husband go study and waits for him at home.

But that is not enough, a woman must also engage in charity. What is charity? [The rabbi uses the term *gemilut hasadim*, literally “the recompense of benevolence,” but he then proceeds to make a play on words, understanding *gemilut* and *hasadim* in a different senses of each word] *Gemilut* is to wean a baby, to stop something, and *hasadim* is a state of disgrace,<sup>22</sup> so *gemilut hasadim* is to bring an end to a state of disgrace. We live in a period in which there is much to do. Each month, 200 widows receive a stipend from Hasdei Na'omi and 80 widows are waiting in line, we give food baskets and we don't have enough for all of the needy. You have here, reputable public, an opportunity to be on the givers' side, God bestows to those who bestow. The budget for medical expenses and charity is the same budget, either you give it to charity or you will need *asya*, *asya* means doctor [in Aramaic], you can decide, either give 50

shekels a month to charity with a bank order, or give it to the doctors, it comes from the same pot. People signed a bank order and within two months two daughters who were over thirty got engaged, daughters who hadn't managed to get married up until then. A person who brings up girls wants a little joy from them, they get older and don't manage to get married, and here he gave and was blessed, within two months the girls got engaged. After all, a girl like that, over thirty, is a ticking biological bomb. Instead of one lemon popsicle a day, and I think each one now costs more than three shekels, a person collects hundreds of merits [with God].

At Hasdei Na'omi we have one woman who had everything, her husband was commander of an elite army unit, no excuse me deputy commander, they had the best of everything, he drove a Mercedes, she a Fiat Punto, no, no, he had a BMW, excuse me, and then he got the disease, every treatment 15,000 shekels, the family became impoverished, until all their money was gone and they wanted to throw her out of their home, that was the situation when we came into the picture, a woman with a baby girl, one year eight months, who almost didn't know her father. The girl asks her mother where's father? And she says, in heaven, and the girl asks if it's good for him there and the mother says yes, and then the girl says I want to go there, too, why didn't he take me with him? Do you understand? For a little girl to be in such a state? Those are the kinds of people that Hasdei Na'omi helps.

In the meantime the man who arrived with Anat and Orly walked among the women and checks whether they are filling out the bank order forms that he passed out. He has pens for those who need them. Only one of the fifty women (Esti's unmarried sister, who was not in Haredi dress) filled out the form. On the spot, she received a framed copy of the "blessing for the home" with a talisman from Rabbi Kadouri, a Sephardi kabalist believed to have great powers, as well as some virgin olive oil blessed by another mystic. Some of the women told the rabbi's assistant that they already had bank orders; he thanked them and did not badger them further. Then there were those who said they had to consult their husbands, an excuse he accepted with sympathy. He asked, however, that they fill out their personal information anyway so that he could call to follow up. Others evaded his glance and he smiled shyly and passed them by.

All during this, in parallel, the rabbi on the dais continued to describe how the virgin olive oil saved a woman in the middle of an operation, and how it cured children.

The rabbi departed, the risen dough returned, and things began to buzz. Anat had prepared a large table covered with a plastic tablecloth, for demonstrating how to braid beautiful *hallot*. But first she addressed herself to the ceremony that is the main part of the evening—the study and practice of *hafrashat halla*.

Anat asked: "Who will do the *hafrasha*, Esti?"

"Leah, Leah," Esti replied.

"Come on Leah, come over here. Now Esti, you bought the flour, right? So tell Leah that you are giving her the flour as a gift."

“I give you, Leah, the flour as a gift,” Esti recited.

“Great.” Anat proceeded:

At home, at this point it’s a good idea to light a candle to a righteous man that you are connected to, and when you light it you can say: I hereby light this candle in honor of the righteous man . . . . may it be His will that by the merit of lighting this candle my prayer will be accepted and his merit will protect us and all the Jewish people.

Now, Leah, go wash hands, without a blessing, with the washing cup, alternating hands. After washing knead one more time and say “I hereby come to observe the precept of *hafrashat halla* to correct its root in the high place, to give satisfaction to our maker, the will of our creator.”

Leah read from a sheet that Anat held in front of her.

“Now we will say the blessing twice together.”

She held up a huge poster with the blessing so that we could all read it.

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; O prosper it, the work of our hands” [Psalms 90:17].

“Now you, Leah, read the prayer from this.”

Leah recited the prayer. From the way she read, I presume that she was not familiar with the prayer, even though she grew up in a Haredi home.

May it be before you the Lord our God and God of our fathers that by merit of this *mitzva* and by the merit of this taking of the priestly tithe that the transgression of Eve be corrected, she who is the mother of all living, who brought death on Adam, who is the dough of the world, and by the merit of this *mitzva* that death be removed from the world and a tear wiped from every face and a blessing sent upon our homes [Anat added: “and heal the sick and the wounded and protect the soldiers”] amen may it be his will, and may it be before you that you bless our dough as you sent a blessing on the dough of our mothers Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, and may the verse be realized with us: “You shall also give to the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause a blessing to rest on thy house” [Ezekiel 44:30] amen may it be His will.

Anat then resumed her presentation.

Now we take the four corners of the dough and create a small lump the size of an olive (and less than the size of an olive for the Sephardim) and we will tear off this quantity and wrap it in one piece of aluminum foil, and then in another piece, because holy things are wrapped twice, and now lift it up in your right hand and say: “Behold, this is *halla*.”

Leah lifted up the wrapped dough and declared: “Behold, this is *halla*.” Anat continued:

Now, women, we will turn to the tabernacle, and open our hands to heaven, and pray from deep in the heart, first for the entire Jewish people and then each one of you her own prayer.

The women prayed. I closed my eyes and murmured to myself a few supplications for the public and then for myself. When I opened my eyes, some of the women were still swaying from side to side, their eyes closed and their lips moving, while others had already completed their prayer. Anat turned back to us and proceeded to the part of the evening elicited the most interest—the braiding of the dough. First, however, she instructed the women about the disposal of the portion that had been taken out:

The best thing is to put it on the gas on an open flame, not one that has a pot on it, until it is well-burned. You can also put it in the oven when you bake the *hallot*, but the aluminum gives off poisons into the food and it’s not good. After it has burned you put it in a plastic bag and then that bag in another plastic bag and you throw it in the garbage can.

I have a few kitchen items you can buy afterwards. A wonderful bowl with a lid, don’t even ask how useful it is. It’s also great for couscous. I’ve got a Tupperware rolling pin, I’ve got only six more like it and it costs 50 shekels [about \$11] but it’s worth every shekel. This is Paka dry yeast that stays good for an entire year in the refrigerator and doesn’t smell at all. Okay, I take small balls from the dough, they shouldn’t be too heavy, and roll them out, first so they will be airy, afterwards I make them into strands, Orly come help me.

Orly deftly took the balls from Anat, kneaded and rolled out strands. Anat, as in a magic act, showed the women different ways to braid the *hallot*. She was quick, and every so often the women asked her to repeat a shape (“It’s all on the sheets that you can buy,” she said). The *hallot* indeed came out beautifully, rounded and long, in the shape of a flower, or a braid. She taught how to make a pretzel shape and a small *halla* like those served at weddings, and the women were excited and pleased. Anat arranged the *hallot* on a disposable aluminum pan and said:

Here I am using aluminum, but don’t bring it into your homes even, it’s literally poison, aluminum emits poison in heat. I put waxed paper between the *hallot* so that they won’t stick to each other, because then when I separate them they won’t be whole and you won’t be able to say the Sabbath blessing over them.

One of the women who seems very Haredi and who has already made several comments told her: “I actually heard from *Rabbanit* Kneibsky that it’s best to take two

*hallot* that are stuck to one another and break them on the head of child who has speech problems, who stutters.”

Anat replied: “I haven’t heard about that, but I’m always learning, that’s what’s good about these lectures, I hear new things all the time.”

At the end the women thronged around Anat, who asked them to be patient so that she wouldn’t get confused making change. Most of the women bought the two laminated sheets with the *hafrashat halla* blessings, the recipes, and the braiding patterns, at 12 shekels each. A minority also bought the bowl with the lid. No one bought the Tupperware rolling pin, even though Anat had only six of them left, and even though they were worth every one of the 50 shekels that they cost.

As I waited among the women who have closed in around Anat for my turn to buy the plastic-covered sheets of paper, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Mazal. She was in the secretarial course, too. She smiled at me, her eyes sparkling under her black hat.

“Do you remember me?”

“Of course I remember, I didn’t see you come in, I only saw Sarit, she’s here, too, did you run into her?”

“Yes, ah, you’re right, I didn’t remember that she was in the course with us, because I know her from before, from Or Hayyim, I was her counselor. Hey, have you gotten religious?”

“Ah, no, not really.”

“So what’s the hat about?”

“This is a synagogue, isn’t it?”

“Are you still doing your research?”

“Yes, I go a lot to hear Rabbi Daniel.”

“Wow, I gave you the merit of going.”

“Yes, you’re the one who told me to go to hear him, how is your son Yair doing?”

“How did you remember?”

“It’s because my husband’s name is Yair, I also remember that he was born on Purim, right?”

“Wow, you’ve got such a memory!” She laughs out loud.

“And how is the little one who was born just when we did the interview?”

“Ah, Yishai, may he be healthy, he’s already one and a half, we had a *halaka* [a first haircut ceremony, often done at Mt. Meiron in the Galilee] for him not long ago.”

“Did you go anywhere?”

“No, with the whole situation and all that, Rabbi Daniel sheared a little and the Admor of Kalib a little.”

After paying Anat twelve shekels and receiving the *halla* recipe from her, along with the blessings for *hafrashat halla*, I went out. I said goodbye to Mazal on the synagogue steps.

“Bye!” She smiled. “I’m so happy you’ve become religious. Come again.”

## **v. The Holy Temple Versus the Gold Hall: The Ceremony’s Exegetic Space**

If we could center Jewish cosmology on a single symbol, as the anthropologist Sherry Ortner did with Hindu-Tibetan cosmology, the exegetic project would be relatively simple. In her masters thesis, Ortner ordered the symbolic world of the Tibetan group she studied around the “circle.” Later, in her PhD. dissertation, she arranged the

symbolic world of the Sherpa of Nepal around “food.”<sup>23</sup> Western investigators studying “other” societies have the power to posit such foci, but that power dissipates in studies done at home. In fact, even studies done elsewhere have, more recently, eschewed such reductionism and have rather preferred a cautious complexity. Nevertheless, reduction—that is, the organization of the phenomenal world around a primal, fundamental component—is still seductive. As a method, it undoubtedly can be powerful, and can often provide achieving valuable insights.

It is hardly risky to designate the Holy Temple that once stood in Jerusalem as a central symbolic site for Judaism. This is especially true if the designation is based on social and cultural rather than religious discourse. In trying to explain the cultural and social significance of this space, the German-Jewish sociologist Georg Simmel designated the Temple as a “pivotal point” for Jews.<sup>24</sup> He was, of course, interested in the special situation in which the culture’s pivotal point is absent, and the members of the culture are dispersed geographically among many nations. The fact that the sacrificial service ended with the destruction of the Temple meant that Jerusalem had no replacement: “Sacrifices could only be made in Jerusalem; God had no other sacrificial altar in any other place. . . . a rigid choice: here or nowhere.”<sup>25</sup>

Living the choice between “here [there] or nowhere” created spaces for longing. The loss and absence became constitutive experiences in Jewish culture, producing different chains of acts of mourning and comfort, as well as lesser substitutes. “From the day that the Temple was destroyed,” Anat told the women in her audience, “there were no more sacrifices, the priests ceased to serve, and here, we are commanded to observe such a great *mitzva* that contains a commemoration of the sacrifices.” The positioning of the ceremony in this context will serve as a principle exegetical linchpin in my reading of the ethnography. I will add to this the traditional exegesis that views the ceremony as a type of *tikkun ‘olam*, or repair of the world. The fact that the destroyed Temple constitutes itself for a few moments in the kitchen of each woman who performs the ceremony of *hafrashat halla* makes the home, the kitchen, and the food produced there critical components in the observance of rituals in general, and in particular those relevant to women.<sup>26</sup>

Foodstuff, that sustenance that is processed by culture into food (organic and/or spiritual) is a subject beloved of anthropologists. Ortner is not the only one to address its theoretical aspects. She based herself on a solid tradition, the most prominent of whose founders were the structuralists Claude Levi-Strauss and Mary Douglas.<sup>27</sup> Like them, she studies “simple societies,” but the interest in “food” was not left to the students of such cultures. The transition to work on Western capitalist societies placed food within the broader context of consumerism. This space, in which food is, on the one hand, a principal component in the living expenses of poor individuals and families, and on the other hand a part of the culture of plenty, of fashion, and of over-consumption, stretches the boundaries of the ceremony’s exegesis. The diverse public that takes part in it, including its directors and impresarios, is also an important element. It can shed light on this phenomenon, in which a commandment contained in the Torah, later directed at women, became a rare observance that was then revived. I will survey this complex exegetical space via three stations: 1. cultural economy; 2. the organizers and attendees as a learning group; 3. the Temple and the kitchen.

“What Competition, Lectures, Events, the City is Humming”: Cultural Economy

Esti was in the advanced stages of pregnancy and, in the heavy summer heat of the Israeli coastal plain, she was unable to sleep. “Let’s take a walk,” she suggested to her husband, and the two of them went out for a midnight stroll down the main street of Bnei Brak. The Israeli press has more than once portrayed the scene of Bnei Brak on Thursday night. In Tel Aviv, Thursday night is the night to gout on the town. In Bnei Brak, in contrast, the same night is devoted to advance work for the coming Sabbath. Men, women, and young people patronize the bakeries and the delicatessens offering ready-cooked food, all of them open all night. Couriers sent out by printers plaster the notice boards, and every other possible space, with broadsides that inform the public who has died, who will speak, what is forbidden and what is permitted. Yeshiva students ramble down the main street and its tributaries during this transitional time between the outgoing day of study and the coming day of rest. Under the holy canopy of the city, consumerism, leisure, work, or just walking around become part of the Haredi habitus.

As she was setting up the synagogue for her talk, Esti glanced at the entrance and noticed the small trickle of women coming in. When she spoke to me she felt it necessary to apologize, and attributed the fact to another event taking place in town at the same time. She placed the food exhibition in the Gold wedding hall alongside the *hafrashat halla* ceremony as two competing ways of passing the evening. The most acceptable outing in the religious-Haredi world is to a celebration—a wedding, engagement, a *sheva berahot* (post-wedding party), or sometimes a bar-mitzvah or circumcision. In recent years, with supermarkets staying open until late at night, and with the cautious entry of Haredim into the general consumer spaces, such as malls and department stores, another acceptable evening activity has been added—shopping.<sup>28</sup>

For Haredim, as for the non-Haredi society surrounding them, shopping has become a type of leisure activity, and leisure has become a type of shopping. Food has gained the status of a fair exhibition, and a religious ceremony involving the preparation of food has become an evening of entertainment costing ten shekels. The bottle of soft drink handed out at the entrance was the evening’s light refreshment. The opportunity to purchase, at the end of the evening, laminated recipes, mixing bowls, a rolling pin, and yeast made the ceremony a form of shopping. The practical, utilitarian aspect concluded the evening. The final scene was of a group of women encircling the ceremony’s organizer and her assistant, and its sound was of Anat asking them to be patient so that she avoid mistakes making change.

The women wanted to buy the pages detailing the order of the *hafrashat halla* ceremony, which included detailed drawings of different methods of braiding special *hallot*, and recipes for regular and sweet *halla*. Most of the women went home with something. Taking into account the entry fee, the cost of their night out was between 10 and 100 shekels. In my estimate, most spent about 30 shekels (about \$7).

The linkage between spending for spiritual and spending for physical needs (food and kitchen) is a classic one. It is difficult to think of any form of leisure, at home or outside it, bought or self-made, that does not link the two in one way or another. The linkage here between a religious ceremony, its object (the *halla*), and its process of production (recipes, braiding patterns, and utensils) produced a “complete” event or product. It included: content, study, prayer, excitement, joy, fear, refreshment, shopping, getting out of the house, gathering, social event, and social and cultural marking. As

such, it must compete in the lively market of cultural consumer “events” that inundate the Haredi urban space.

In the previous section, I portrayed the women’s group discussing how to celebrate the end of their season of activity. One subject that came up there was that of organized activities, the dynamic side of the consumer of enjoyment. They wanted to know “what you do” at Mini-Israel, or what kind of activities the Haredi clown does with the girls. The *hafrashat halla* ceremony also included, beyond its religious aspects, this additional component. The practical aspects of the ceremony—the preparation of the dough, the involvement of the audience, the braiding of the loaves, and the sale of the utensils—removed the event from the category of religious ritual in its narrow sense and placed it in the complex spaces of current cultural markets. The *hafrashat halla* evening could be experienced as a cultural event, an evening in which a mother connects with her daughter, her sister and other women for a “night out” together.

On top of this cultural economy is the economy of charity. Anat’s *hafrashat halla* evening has to compete for its audience with other events, which also combine enjoyment, morality, and the opportunity to give to a good cause. The rabbi of Hasdei Na’omi entered the synagogue when the dough was placed outside to rise in the warm air. He made use of his time to collect donations, offering his audience of women “an opportunity to be on the side of the givers.” This was a generous offer to a public that most likely included some who themselves receive assistance. When the rabbi addressed the women as a “public” and ignored the specific circumstances of that public, he raised the women to the status of potential donors. The fact that not even one of the local women signed a bank order, and only one non-Haredi guest from outside the neighborhood bought the “blessing kit” that was offered for sale, produced a few moments of almost embarrassed silence, but they passed quickly. The awkward moment was preceded by a mini-lecture from the rabbi, which was part of a package deal with the ceremony. Being a man, his appearance during the waiting period of the dough’s rising positioned his section of the show in a secondary slot. His talk deconstructed the public in gender terms, in order to arrive at the women’s duty. He briefly noted the dictum from the Sanhedrin tractate of the Talmud about how women merit the world to come, and rehashed the worn claim that a man is made of a substance that requires cultural processing. Therefore, culture (in this case, religion) is the man’s playing field. The rabbi added that even though women were created perfect, they need not just to maintain their husbands but also to engage in charity.

Charity and benevolence have always been areas open to activity by women, but they are also those that mark the front of neediness. Hasdei Na’omi does indeed support widows and orphans. Ostensibly, the organization’s economy of charity does not distinguish between Haredim and non-religious Jews, because poverty and illness do not distinguish between them. So the story that the rabbi chose to tell his audience was about a wealthy military man who fell ill, and whose treatment impoverished his family.<sup>29</sup> His orphaned daughter, who asked her mother to let her join her father in heaven, became the rabbi’s marketing tool. “Those are the kinds of people that Hasdei Na’omi helps,” he says, reversing the convention of who gives and who receives. To ensure that his public of potential donors would indeed contribute to the organization, the rabbi explained the concept of charity (*gemilut hasadim*), and why it pays. This economics is based on a simple exchange equation: charity or medical expenses, benevolence or doctors. The

budget is the same budget, the rabbi said, and troubles spare no one. Instead of buying a lemon popsicle every day, a person can marry off two girls who, at over thirty, are “ticking biological bombs.”

With this pronouncement, the rabbi pulled a pin out of a grenade and threw it into the synagogue audience, but it does not particularly scare the women. It is difficult to know what impression his words made on them. It could be that he succeeded in impressing on their consciousnesses the importance and usefulness of giving charity. The canopy of benevolence that his organization unfurled over their “night out” certainly did no harm to Hasdei Na’omi’s image. Non-religious benefit concerts for hospitals or art museums also integrate values and leisure activity. The rabbi’s blunt pedagogy, and Anat’s more complex one, were a necessary component of the product the women bought. It served as a kind of cultural label of quality, a road sign in their expanding consumer space.

### “All Rights Reserved to Anat”—The Ceremony’s Organizers and Audiences as a Learning Group

The colors on the plastic-covered sheet of paper that I bought from Anat range from phosphorescent green to turquoise, blue, and purple. At the bottom, in large letters, were the words “There is no other but He.” But alongside, in letters of the same size, was Anat’s name, and her cell phone number. It was followed, in smaller letters, by “If you want to request a lesson, you may call the cell phone number,” and after that “All rights reserved to Anat.” I called. Anat answered politely when I introduced myself, but each time I called she said she had no time to meet and that I should try again some other time. I offered to pay her for her time but was rejected again. So I must describe the texts she read without the benefit of her further clarifications.

### The Heroines of the Letters

The three letters that Anat chose to read to her audience presented three heroines, each situated in a different position in the field of religious observance and return to religion. Meital was Haredi, Osnat a seeking non-religious woman, and the girl from Afula found her way to religious Judaism but her husband had not yet joined her. Fragments of details pointed to the Sephardi or Ashkenazi ethnicity of each of them, and the names of all three were entirely modern Israeli ones. All three women lived at varying degrees of removal from the densely-populated Tel Aviv metropolitan area. Meital lived in Elad, a new Haredi town in central Israel; Osnat in Lod, a Jewish-Arab city between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that suffers from poverty and neglect; and the unnamed girl lived in Afula, a city in the Jezreel Valley in the country’s north. Anat apparently assumed that this range of individuals and locations would invite most of her listeners to find a character they could identify with. Each letter centered on a dramatic narrative. Even though she read only a few lines to the women, it was easy to imagine the event, the protagonist, the secondary characters and, especially, the role the *hafrashat halla* ceremony played in the chain of events.

Meital’s labor went badly and she was taken to the hospital, bleeding. Anat depicted her as a pious and collected woman. She called an ambulance when her husband was paralyzed, she gave charity and prayed, she asked her husband to see to it that Torah

scholars recite psalms for her. Yet this battery of religious actions, and the efforts of the doctors, had no effect. Meital's mother, not the famous Rabbi Kneibsky, the dough and not prayer and charity, were what produced the miracle. The minute the mother gave her daughter the merit of doing *hafrashat halla*, the bleeding ceased.

The choice of a drama leading to the safe birth of a son hardly needs explication, nor does the finding of a worthy husband. Osnat, the next heroine, blended two critical and connected processes—returning to religion and finding a good match. In her case, the *hafrashat halla* ceremony was not the successful end of the drama, but rather its beginning. After attending a ceremony led by Anat, something sparked in Osnat's heart. The same “something” that sent to the ceremony a girl with “short hair and lots of earrings”<sup>30</sup> who was not prepared to let anyone comment on her appearance, was the “something” that would not let her sleep afterwards. The letter described a turbulent night that ended with the holiest and most moving wedding that Anat ever witnessed. The joining of the punk girl and “Haredi boy with a pure soul” is a variation on a classic template in the genre of back-to-religion tales. Chance and romance were interwoven, and led to the recognition of a guiding hand that mends torn souls and leads them to a happy ending. Osnat's story was the one for the girls in the audience who were unsure of what way to choose in life, and who had not yet found love.

For those who were already on the path of religious observance but were having difficulty bringing their husbands along, and who were also having trouble getting pregnant, Anat presented “the girl from Afula.” Her letter depicted vicious scenes of fighting and shouting. He was a “second generation to Holocaust survivors” and she was an unsuccessful baker. After attending a *hafrashat halla* ceremony and receiving telephone guidance from Anat, all her problems were solved. Her husband came to believe in God, her *hallot* came out perfectly, and she of course became pregnant.

Anat knew that she was not alone in the back-to-religion and spirituality marketplace. She knew that some of the women had heard such stories before, had attended spiritual events, had listened to rabbis of various sorts preach on religious radio stations or at live events. Despite their fundamental willingness to be open to her messages, she knew that they were also somewhat skeptical. So she told them that she had the full names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the heroines of her stories, and a binder full of additional stories of women “you can call and everything.” Anat's rhetorical and ritual work sought to create an open space that many women could enter. It promised them a chance to cope with the most basic of female problems—finding a husband, giving birth to healthy children, and running a successful household.

Anat offered this package deal explicitly, almost crudely. But alongside it were secondary benefits made possible by the fact that the person conducting the ceremony was a woman and that the letters were written by women and were read before women. The process of empowerment ran from Meital's mother to Meital herself, skipping over the doctors who disparaged them, and even over the Torah scholars who read psalms for them. It extended between Osnat, who demanded that no one comment on her appearance, to Anat, who would “God forbid never make any comments.” The process migrated from Lod to Afula. It portrayed an inept housewife as an invitation for mendings and the woman as a person who has the power to point her family along the right road. Anat's mention of her return to religion invited other women into the changing community. It indicated to them that they could succeed there, and that those who have

succeeded do not forget where they came from. The destination remained clear, but many women in the synagogue and at other ceremonies run by Anat know that they are still far from reaching that point. Yet their very presence in the hall made them potential heroines in future letters. The *hafrashat halla* ceremony they attended is not only a way of fulfilling a commandment, but also an opening for repair of the world.

### Kneading Flour and Water to Mend the World—The Temple and the Kitchen

The sin of the Tree of Knowledge caused a general imperfection, and accomplished a separation of corporeality from divinity, and therefore its repair is in the commandment of *halla*. . . . It is written in the Midrash that the commandment of *halla* is a repair of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, and therefore the commandment was given to women, because she spoiled the *halla* of the world [Adam], she must repair this through the commandment of *halla* (From a talk by the Admor of Lubavitch).<sup>31</sup>

In his book *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, the anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt recounted the creation story of this East African tribe. Instead of Adam and Eve, the Dinka told him about Abuk and Garang. Instead of the Garden of Eden, Abuk and Garang had a field and the single seed of millet that their god gave them each day. One day, the woman, “because she was greedy,” tried to cultivate more than one seed. She raised her hoe and dealt a blow to the god. He retreated to his place in the sky, leaving behind parched land, hunger, death, and disease. He cuts the rope that linked sky and earth.<sup>32</sup>

There are many parallels between the two stories,<sup>33</sup> but the most important one for this study is the subject of ruin and repair. With her greed, the African woman caused the god to retreat and to decouple heaven and earth. Eve “ruined” Adam, whom the midrash describes as “the *halla* of the world.” In the view of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the last spiritual leader of Habad Hasidism (as in the view of other traditional commentators), this “ruin” is the separation between the material and the spiritual, between the mundane and the divine. He viewed Eve’s choice as setting off a change of binary separations that deepened the breach between the sacred and the profane, between the creator and His created beings, and among the created beings themselves. Before the “ruin,” the world was more hybrid. God and his created beings functioned in the same ecology, which was good and benevolent. Man’s divine image needed no additional reinforcement (such as “knowledge”), and there were no differences between different kinds of human beings. After the sin, the biblical story is one of differentiations. Humans are differentiated from the animals, man from woman, brother from brother, one language from another, righteous man from evil man, and so on. The *hafrashat halla* ceremony is one of mixing, of kneading, of unifying two distinct materials into a single dough. Flour is mixed with water, and the *halla* is eaten by men and women. “So that food is unified with man and becomes blood and flesh of his flesh, and by this man lives,” the Admor wrote.

While Anat does not represent Habad or refer to Rabbi Schneersohn’s interpretation of *hafrashat hallah*, the ceremony she conducts can be viewed as reversing

the ruin of the creation story. The latter opened the door to distinctions and differentiations. The ceremony repairs this damage. It brings the long-separated together, blurs differences. The goal of the commandment's observance is, according to Rabbi Schneersohn, "to act on it in the words of the authority so that they be unified with the divine, and this matter is indicated by the dough in which flour and water are mixed . . ." In Habad's theology, it is another. Therefore, Anat did not just seek to perform the ceremony among the members of her family, but to go out and seek "separated points" and the "knead" them into the "water"—the Torah. The uniqueness of the ceremony lies in the fact that the sanctification or rising is done on the raw material before it becomes food.

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The fact that all human beings treat raw material in one form or another before turning it into food has made this work a common subject of anthropological research. This processing separates us from animals and marks "treatment" as a cultural process laden with meaning. It is hardly surprising, then, that structuralist anthropologists, and especially Levi-Straus and Mary Douglas, spent some time at this intersection between the distinctions between foods (pure and impure) and their preparation. They, and Ortner after them, presumed that cracking open these actions would reveal the value foundations that construct their subjects' worlds.<sup>34</sup> The ingestion of food into the human body makes humans like animals, who must also consume material food in order to survive. The fact that humans often eat animals makes this similarity especially problematic. Human beings view the human body as having been created in the image of God, yet it turns out to be a material body with physical needs. The preparation of food is thus an act of paradoxically distancing oneself from the material, an attempt to approach the spiritual. In Rabbi Schneersohn's explanation of the reasons for the *hafrashat halla* ritual, he explicates the Hebrew word *teruma*, which appears in the Torah verses on this precept. The usual translation of the word is "gift," but the rabbi takes instead the meaning of the root on which the verb is built, which connotes "rising" or "raising up." Jews are commanded to raise up the dough from which he will bake bread by giving a part of it as a gift. So the bread will be elevated, and all food will be elevated with it, as Rabbi Schneersohn said: "So when the dough is baked and becomes bread, man can choose to raise up the bread, and in this manner the bread can raise up the man." The mending act is thus a double one, and like all acts of mending it is meant to act on and be acted on by the material and the spiritual, to exert its influence both below and above. Human actions in this world are meant to shape the cultural reality in which humans live. This reality is meant to affect heaven and to repair what has been broken by the acts of other human beings. The first human act of breakage or damage is attributed to the first woman, and the precept of *hafrashat halla*, which was not assigned to women in the biblical text (and which apparently became associated with women because of their kitchen work) is interpreted as offering her the possibility of repairing that damage, of engaging in *tikkun 'olam*.

Anat sought to resuscitate this opportunity that has, for whatever reason, been allowed to gather dust. She sought to walk the sure path that directs women into the kitchen, and to create there a Temple in miniature. For one night, the path left the house and led to the synagogue, where Anat and the participants occupy the building's sanctuary. Anat stood on the *bima*, the raised platform at the front of the room where

from which the prayers are led and the Torah scrolls read, and the women sat in the pews.<sup>35</sup> The folding table, placed before the *bima* and covered with an oilcloth on which are flour, water, rolling pins, bowls, and yeast, brings something of the kitchen into the synagogue. From the very first step, when Anat prepared the dough, she addressed the linkage of body and spirit. “I knead with my hands, not with a mixer, so that my limbs will be partners in the *mitzva*.” She presented unmediated, sensuous touch as a link between the road and the destination, between the material and the spiritual. When the dough was taken outside to rise, Anat took up the reasons behind the precept. She reiterated its centrality in the life of women, alongside the commandments of lighting the Sabbath candles and observing the laws of ritual purity. She regretted that the observance was not as popular as the two others, and presented it as “a very spiritual *mitzva*.” It “contains a commemoration of the sacrifices,” Anat said, and located the women who observe it as continuing, in their way, the devotions of the High Priest who in the past oversaw the rituals of the Temple.

The audience had already heard about the practical efficacy of the observance from the letters that Anat read them. So, after the reading of the human letters, which told of this world’s tribulations and its wonders, Anat spoke of other worlds. Anat made the existence of these worlds real by playing with letters and numbers. She used anagrams, letter replacements, and number symbols to play with the significance of coincidence, subjecting it to a transcendental order. The women in the audience were amazed by the way that the letters h-l-h became the first letters of “portion for the world to come,” and how rearranging the letters of *hafrashat halla* produced a phrase promising pregnancy. They were impressed by the interpretation of the events of September 11, in the form of an updated version of the Passover song “Who Knows One.” This numerology can inhabit their own kitchens. It is another form of empowerment that linked their bodies, their private fears, and the fears of their nation into something that they could grasp. The Temple as a “key symbol” in Jewish culture, and the kitchen as an existential locus of women, come together and create a point on the map of symbols and signs where women can stand erect.

Ortner’s theory about “key symbols” divides them into binary clusters. One side of this division collects individual components and connects them into a coherent picture. This side ratifies and sanctifies the culture and the social order that derives from it, and is meant to strengthen commitment to them. The other side of the division opens and broadens the exegetical horizon. It offers broad metaphors that can develop new thoughts and fresh strategies of action. In modern American society, for example, Ortner placed the national flag on the summarizing, uniting side and the “machine” or the “computer” on the elaborating metaphorical side. She realized that the two sides are connected by a spectrum of intermediate states, but she preferred to work with their ideal models. The *hafrashat halla* ceremony now renewing itself in Haredi society indicates an even more complex situation. The symbols, and the scenarios of action derived from their meanings, can move from one side to the other. This movement can be a challenge to the social structure, or create an alternative. The actual kitchen and the absent Temple are an interesting example of this situation.

The kitchen as a real or symbolic area of women’s living is without a doubt a summarizing symbol. The call “women to the kitchen,” which came in reaction to Western feminism of the second half of the twentieth century, sought to send women

back to their “natural place.” The kitchen is that internal region of the home that sends out food for the sustenance of the home’s inhabitants, and which gathers in the leavings and the dirt. In this small, warm enclosure women’s work is conducted routinely and cyclically.

The symbolic distance between the Temple and the home kitchen is obvious. This distance derives from the divergence between the sacred and the mundane, the public and the private, the ceremonial and the routine, the male and the female. The destroyed Temple can be seen as an elaborating symbol from which are derived a multitude of metaphors that sustain Jewish culture in a variety of ways. But the similarity between the two sites is no less interesting. The sacrifices in the Temple turned it into a type of large slaughterhouse, the altar into the largest work surface in the region, and the priests into butchers of a type. The Temple and its personnel occupied themselves with food—first fruit offerings, priestly gifts, and tithes. They mixed, kneaded, sprinkled, and fed. The placement of the Temple and the kitchen side by side in the public *hafrashat halla* ceremony challenges the division between the public and the private, between the male and the female, between summarizing and elaborating symbols. The biblical commandment, which is meant to be carried out in the public space of the Temple, moves into the home. The hands of male priests are replaced by the arms of women. The culturing of the dough into food, the elevation of the bread into a *tikkun ‘olam*, a way of mending the world, is made a duty of the daughters of Eve.

The social, economic, and political reality in which the ceremony takes place reverses it once again. Instead of a private act accomplished by each woman inside her house, the ceremony offers a public spiritual event. The synagogue becomes, for a time, a Temple and a kitchen, a place of leisure enjoyment and shopping, a site of induction of new participants into the life of *halacha* and religion, offering a real and symbolic elaboration for women within their lives.

### Ceremonies and Changes

Women’s ritual life is not insulated from the broader environments of which it forms a part, but . . . is implicated in processes of redefinition, renegotiation, and contestation over the meaning of community and piety.<sup>36</sup>

Women’s range of action and participation in the religious world are constrained by their gender. Most rituals are reserved for the patriarchy that manages the religious world, and it devises secondary roles for other participants. Women play limited roles at the margins of the central sites (synagogues and study halls), set aside for them principally as the wives, mothers, or daughters of men. More distant from these sites, where they are somewhat freer from religious formality, women have created their own traditions of ceremonies and spiritual work. These two circles of activity—that integrated into the patriarchy and that which is distant from it, are undergoing significant changes in the wake of the gender revolution that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. A summary of these changes in different religious communities in Israel will be presented in the final chapter of this book. The *hafrashat halla* ceremony is a characteristic example of these changes.

The women who gathered in the synagogue came at the initiative of a local club. The club was established by women and for women, without any official male oversight. The ceremony took place under the aegis of *Hasdei Na'omi*, an organization that is neither female nor Sephardi. It functions within a variety of Haredi spaces, and by its own testimony supports members of the general population. At the forefront of the ceremony was a newly-religious woman, and the rights on the form, conduct, and content of the ceremony are under her “copyright.” The ceremony is based on a Torah commandment considered one of the three most important observances for women. It thus touches the kernel of the halacha, but directs itself to halachot that are traditionally lined to women.

The progress of the ceremony, the emotions it elicits, and its praxis mix canonical prayer, personal prayer, women’s prayer, supplication, and new prayers relating to the time and place of its occurrence (for example the prayer for safety of the soldiers and terrorist victims). The flour, water, dough, the women’s kneading hands, the baking and braiding skills, are conducted and viewed within a synagogue, bringing the kitchen into the house of prayer and the women at the ceremony into the Holy Temple. The designation of the women as a public obligated to observe commandments, the public instruction of women aimed at teaching them to observe commandments carefully, the resuscitation and innovation of praxes meant for and permitted to women as areas of activity abounding in spiritual power all join together to make a new force. It is a force that makes a place for women, a force that reorganizes the living compounds of religion and its ceremonies, a force that negotiates patriarchal definitions of high and popular religion, not from the margins of the synagogue, but at its very heart. By the time Rabbi Yosef succeeds in eradicating “women’s customs,” the customs will change and turn into ones that will, in all ways, be very difficult to ignore.

The enterprise of creating a more religious, observant Mizrahi community seeks, as already noted, to apply Haredi standards. In this section, the lens has been trained on the ways women operate towards, within, and alongside this enterprise. The next section offers a close acquaintance with a central agent in the creation of a more religious and observant Pardes Katz.

**Notes**

On the severance of the home from the public plane and its implications for the lives of women<sup>1</sup>  
.and children, see Holt 1986

Haredi women tend to describe working outside the home as an unfortunate necessity, something<sup>2</sup>  
their economic situation forced on them, a posteriori, rather than as something they chose to do, a  
priori. The ideal Haredi wife remains the woman married to an *avrech*, and who brings up her many  
children at home. The fact that this is not simple to do economically does not detract from the  
image. But it leads most Haredi women to present their work as a matter of necessity. In the lower  
middle class, work is indeed not much of a source of happiness. The woman must run from home to  
.work for minimal compensation

Below I will recount a discussion that illustrates the attempt to run the club in a feminist<sup>3</sup>  
.democratic way

.See Ben-David 1988<sup>4</sup>

.See Noy 2001<sup>5</sup>

.See El-Or and Neria 2004<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, there are many Sephardi/Mizrahi women who take part in religious classes of various<sup>7</sup>  
kinds. Some of them attend mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi groups and some attend lessons for men and  
women together, like those given by Rabbi Zer. It may be that in middle class neighborhoods and in  
established Mizrahi Haredi neighborhoods there are groups of women who study together, like  
.those of Ashkenazi Haredi women. In Pardes Katz, however, there are no such groups

Shinui was a stridently secular political party that presented itself as a counterweight to religious<sup>8</sup>  
parties, and especially to Shas, which had won 17 of the Knesset's 120 seats in the elections of 1999  
—an unprecedented achievement for a religious party. In the subsequent elections, in January 2003,  
Shas lost support, receiving 11 seats, while Shinui received 15. Shinui joined Prime Minister Ariel  
Sharon's government on condition that Shas remain outside the coalition. In opposition, Shas lost  
access to influence and budgets, leading to a crisis for its school system and other projects. Shinui  
.disappeared from the political map in the 2006 elections

Modest because of the simple wig she used to cover her hair, with a hat on top of the wig, and<sup>9</sup>  
eminent because the hat on top of the wig was a marker of her status as *rabbanit* or important  
teacher. Later, she inserted into her talk the fact that she had been one of the first counselors at Or

Chaim, and was personally acquainted with that school's founder, Rabbi Moshe Pardo. This  
association precisely marks her Ashkenazi-Haredi reference group (Lithuanian), a fact that is also  
expressed on other levels, such as her story about the Holocaust, below, the fact that she cites only  
Ashkenazi rabbis, and her use of correct Ashkenazi Haredi jargon, free of the language used by the  
.new Sephardi Haredi women

*Habitus* is one of the central terms in the lexicon of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. It<sup>10</sup>  
signifies the entire set of conceptions, ways of thinking, and actions of a given social collective. He  
also calls this same entity "tastes." The interpretation of the event under discussion will use  
.additional terms from Bourdieu's social theory

.El-Or 1994, pp. 92-99<sup>11</sup>

The midrash that "Because of the merits of righteous women, Israel was redeemed from Egypt,"<sup>12</sup>  
is one of the few that glorify the women of Israel as having been decisive in the fate of the Jewish  
nation. As such, it is cited frequently at gatherings of religious and Haredi women (El-Or 1994).

The midrash relates that the Israelite women in Egypt refused to accept the sexual abstinence that  
their men had imposed upon themselves, out of fear that the male babies they would sire would be  
killed by Pharaoh. The women went out into the fields with food for their husbands and seduced  
them. This subversive act was reinforced by a series of divine miracles that supplied food and  
hiding places for the babies that were born. These babies ensured that the Israelite people would not  
.die out

A year after this event, in May 2004, a huge scandal about wigs broke out in the Haredi<sup>13</sup>  
community. It turned out that some natural-hair wigs were produced from hair purchased from  
pagan Indian temples. Local women bring their hair to the temples as a ritual offering. This makes  
the wig industry and its clientele accomplices in the worship of idols. A halachic ruling ordered the

women to desist from wearing their wigs and to check their source. The incident, which affected the entire Orthodox world, rekindled, in a profound way, the debate over the use of wigs. The debate hinged on whether using wigs as a way of covering one's own hair is forbidden a priori, but had nevertheless become such a common practice that it could not easily be outlawed, or whether they were permissible a priori, and thus an option that might or might not be desirable. The Indian hair affair marked out already existing distinctions between different parts of the Haredi and religious community. The vast majority in these communities accepts that married women must cover their own hair out of modesty, but differ significantly about what ways of covering the hair are acceptable and proper.

El-Or and Neria 2004 <sup>14</sup>

This term stands at the center of the work of that name by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu <sup>15</sup> (Bourdieu 1984). In the current context, I make use for the most part of his fifth chapter, which discusses culturally-coded tastes and ways of life.

On *nidda* and ritual immersion as a custom observed outside the Orthodox world, see Sikoral <sup>16</sup> 1998.

Kandiyoti & Azimova 2004 <sup>17</sup>

The attitude towards religion in post-Soviet Uzbekistan has not been uniform. During the early <sup>18</sup> years of independence, religion was more gregarious, and the government permitted religious education for boys and girls. Later, new limitations were placed on religion. These should be interpreted within the new political contexts that Islam received in the world as a whole and in particular in Asia and the area around Iran.

Petric 2002, p. 229, quoted in Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004, p. 341 <sup>19</sup>

Lau 2002, Zohar 2001 <sup>20</sup>

On this question, and its place in the lives of religious women, see El-Or 2002, pp. 175-206 <sup>21</sup>

The rabbi referred to a source that I did not catch in adducing this non-standard definition of the <sup>22</sup> word *hesed* as "disgrace." With the help of Dr. Rami Reiner and through examination of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's *Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, I found the source for this understanding in Leviticus 20:17: "And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, . . . [and see her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness; it is a disgraceful deed [*hesed*

Ortner 1996, 1970 <sup>23</sup>

D. Frisby & M. Featherstone (eds.) 1997 <sup>24</sup>

[is this quote originally in English?](#) The work is not listed in your bibliography." D. Frisby & <sup>25</sup> M. Featherstone (eds.) 1997, p. 151

See the work of Susan Sered (1986), who studied the participation of elderly women in Jerusalem <sup>26</sup> in religious and spiritual life. Sered gave prominent place to women's occupation with food.

Levi-Strauss 1996; Douglass 1966 <sup>27</sup>

On the Haredi street *flâneur*, and changes in time consumption in the Haredi space, see: El-Or and <sup>28</sup> Neria 2004.

It is worth noting the Haredi genre's inclination towards exaggeration and imprecision. This <sup>29</sup> subject is also addressed in my study of women in the Gur Hasidic community (El-Or, 1994, Chapter 2). Here the protagonist of the story is "commander of an elite army unit, no excuse me deputy commander . . . he drove a Mercedes . . . no, no, he had a BMW. . . ." The Haredi genre does not aspire to understatement. A non-religious ear identifies in the story the very elements that discredit it, but this is not the point. The rabbi connotes that the non-religious community's scale of prestige is based on military rank and money, which are not linked attributes in English, and to show that no one is safe from catastrophe.

The hair and earrings are a "*teshuvah* hammer." At many *teshuvah* gatherings, the organizers <sup>30</sup> shear ponytails off young men who decide to become religious, as well as remove earrings and piercing jewelry from the bodies of young men and women. Some organizers hang the sheared hair and the jewelry on the walls, where they remain like the crutches hanging at Lourdes in France or at Czestochowa in Poland.

*Me-sichat Ha-Rabi Me-Lyubavitch, Torat-Menachem—hitva 'aduyot*, 1958, Vol. 23, pp. 83-91. <sup>31</sup>

.Published also at [www.chabad.org.il](http://www.chabad.org.il)

.Liendhardt 1961 <sup>32</sup>

For a precise translation of the Dinka creation story, and a feminist anthropological analysis of the <sup>33</sup>

.Bible's Garden of Eden story, see El-Or 1999

Douglas, for example, attempted to decipher the special place of pork as a signifier of impurity. <sup>34</sup>

She began her exegetical work from the book of Leviticus, which lays out the criteria for classifying

foods, and tried to remain within the Jewish value world in order to answer the question she set

herself (in other words, she did not, for example, accept the external claim that pork tends to spoil

in heat). Douglas (1996) finally claims that pork threatens the categories for classifying meat

because the pig has a cloven hoof and "almost" chews its cud. As a result, it is marked as especially

impure. The value foundation she reveals derives from the perfection of God's works, which should

not be fragmented, halted, or blurred. The criteria for what meat is kosher symbolize divine

perfection and blessing. The pig's characteristics, in this case, or a kind of threat to this perfection

.These ceremonies need not be held in a synagogue. Anat conducts them in any available hall <sup>35</sup>

.Kandiyoti & Azimova 2004, p. 333 <sup>36</sup>