

Yitzhak REITER • Nancy KOBRIN

VIOLENCE ON INTER-RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND IN THREE ISRAELI CITIES: SAFED, NAZARETH, AND BEIT SHEMESH

Yitzhak REITER
Ashkelon Academic College
Israel

msreit@mscc.huji.ac.il

Nancy KOBRIN
Independent scholar
Israel

nhkobrin@me.com

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on three case studies representing highlights of tensions concerning the religious background. We examine the deep cultural roots of religious intolerance and some of the triggers for the recent outbreak of the following disputes in Israel: Safed – The call by rabbis to Jews not to rent or sell apartments to Arabs; Beit Shemesh – The intimidation of Ultra-orthodox against non-Haredi and secular Jews, particularly targeting women and children; and Nazareth – The growing control of the Islamic Movement at the Shihab al-Din Tomb in front of the Church of Annunciation. All three case studies manifest an immediate trigger and religious discourse for justifying violence but we found that they cover deeper social processes. Violence emerged from the same roots of cultural exclusivity though refracted through different cultural lenses. The crises discussed reflect on the one hand the growing need of identity-groups to solidify their group-solidarity in times of crisis. While on the other hand they manifest the need of conservative groups to counter modernity.

KEYWORDS

- Israel
- Jews
- Christians
- Muslims
- Haredim
- Islamic movement
- Shihab al-Din
- effacement of women

A. Introduction

Israel has a significant Arab minority (17% not including East Jerusalem) and is an immigration destination for Jews from all over the world. There are some 35 spoken languages in Israel today.¹ The special circumstances of the creation of Israel in 1948 and immigration created six social rifts along the following lines: ethno-national affiliation (Arabs and Jews), ethnic extraction (country of origin, mostly related to Moroccans, Russians and Ethiopians) cultural (Ashkenazi and Sephardi); Inter-religious (Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze) Jewish intra-religious (halakhic, i.e. Jewish religious law's streams and secular); socio-economic (lower, middle and upper class).

¹ <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/IL>.

Our study analyses cases that involved religious background for political violence using religious discourses and ideologies. The purpose of this article is to explore the grounds of urban violence that were characterized on a religious background in Israel by analyzing three cases over the last 15 years. The research question is: did political violence erupt indeed on a religious background or was religious discourse only an easy platform to initiate violence as a reaction to deeper social changes. In so doing we evaluate the relevance of the theories of political violence from Durkheim to Arendt and beyond.

Emile Durkheim attested political violence to the modern development of identity crisis when new identities developed at the expense of primordial ones -- tribal, family and religious ties that provided security and stability -- as a result of industrialization, immigration and urbanization.² Referring to the question of the rational factor and the prediction of circumstances that create political violence Hanna Arendt (*On Violence, 1969*)³ debated Frantz Fanon's (*The Wretched of the Earth, 1961*)⁴ approach to violence as a means necessary to political action, and also as an organic force or energy. She argued that violence is inherently unpredictable, which means that end reasoning is in any case anti-political, and that it is a profound error to naturalize violence.⁵ Fanon envisages a new liberationist form of politics that is free of violence, but this new time for humanity can only be realized, according to him, by violence. For Fanon, violence is an instrument for the achievement of political ends, and it is also a libidinal drive natural to all human beings and capable of being channeled for good or ill. In the case of Arendt, violence in itself is by definition anti-political. This is because violence, in which obedience is secured through coercion, is the opposite of power, which is based on free consent.

In comparing between Fanon and Arendt's theories of violence Frazer and Hutchings argue that both Fanon and Arendt are committed to an ideal of politics without violence, whether in the form of the post-colonial, post-European internationalism or of an older style of republicanism. But, in the end, both argue that violence is sometimes the only way in which justice can be done. However, neither of them takes seriously enough the question of how the link between violence and politics could be dismantled, and the debt finally settled.⁶ In our analysis of the three cases of urban violence in Israel we try to not only explore how social groups attempt to distinguish between politics and violence but also how we can separate between religious and other social backgrounds of group violence.

2 M Gane, 'Durkheim's theory of violence,' *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 58, Issue Supplement s1, August 2006, pp. 41-50.

3 H Arendt, *On Violence*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1969; also published as 'On Violence' in *Crises of the Republic*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973.

4 F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Preface by J-P Sartre (trans.) Constance Farrington), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 2001.

5 Quoted by E Frazer & K Hutchings, 'On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon,' *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 7, 2008, pp. 90-108. Retrived from <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/cpt/journal/v7/n1/full/9300328a.html>.

6 Ibid.

Max Webber contended that violence tends to break out in a society of which the State is too weak to establish public order.⁷ Arendt also believed that the lack of societal power may result in using violence. Berman and Iannaccone dealing with religious violence conclude that:

“Conflict and militancy becomes common...where the state favors one religious group over another (or there is an expectation that the state will do so after it is established), thereby raising the stakes for all sides. People will take great risks to defend or enlarge their political power, and sectarian groups are well positioned to marshal their resources and members in opposition to their religious-political competitors. Unlike purely secular actors, sectarian groups have an advantage at cooperative production that makes use of the credibility of the clergy and commitment of the members – members who have already accepted the sacrifice of religious prohibitions in return for the benefits of cooperation. The returns to cooperative production of basic social services (education, medical care, law and order) become greater still where secular society under-produces them. Since organized violence is an extreme form of cooperative production, sectarian groups can be singularly effective terrorists should they choose that path to political power.”⁸

Mueller proposes the predictability or potential for political violence by teasing out the function of discrepancy between desire, status, values and relative deprivation, what has not been achieved in his hallmark work.⁹

We shall discuss these issues regarding the situation in Israel in our analysis as well.

Ehud Sprinzak who studied political violence in Israel argued that political violence erupts when people feel that all other political options have been exhausted and that extremist who use violence have a strong tool for legitimizing violence and rallying people for it: ideology. Among the six parameters that lead to group violence Sprinzak lists three that we shall investigate in our case studies: when a group over time views violence as paying-off in promoting political ends and a previous record of the group in using violence. Charismatic leaders are also an endorsing factor in the decision of a group to opt for violence.¹⁰

In recent years religious diversity in Israel has been polarized in many ways. Disputes between religious groups, involving religious discourse has broken out in different places in Israel and between various religious groups. By analyzing three inter-religious cases, this study aims to examine the deeper cultural roots of what

7 Quoted by E Frazer & K Hutchings, op. cit.

8 E Berman & LR Iannaccone, “Religious extremism: The good, the bad and the deadly”, *Public Choice*, vol. 128, no. 1–2, 2006, pp. 109–129. Available as a working paper from 2005 at: <http://papers.nber.org/tmp/66154-w11663.pdf>.

9 EN Muller, “A test of a partial theory of potential for Political violence,” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 66, no. 3, 1972 (September), pp. 928-959.

10 E Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence And Extremism in Israeli Politics From Altalena To The Rabin Assassination*, The Free Press, New York, 1999.

is perceived as intolerance on religious grounds. Analyzing public discourses and content analysis we are comparing these three cases by exploring the triggers for the outbreak of violence, and the discourses of the major players against the socio-historical background of the tensions as a basis for intolerance and using group violence. Each of our three cases of urban violence reflect a different social split, because we wanted to see if there are common grounds for the use of political violence and its imagined and/or real grounds: Nazareth between Muslims and Christians; Safed between Jews and Arabs (mostly Muslims) and Bet Shemesh between Ultra-Orthodox and other non-Haredi groups.

B. Nazareth

In the late 1990s the Islamist building of a mosque at the Shihab al-Din Tomb in front of the Church of Annunciation – one of the holiest churches of Christianity - instigated an Islamist-Christian conflict. The Shihab al-Din affair, which began in 1997 in Nazareth, three years prior to the visit of Pope John II for the millennium celebrations, erupted as a local political controversy in the municipal sphere of Nazareth, but soon turned into an inter-religious issue, in which regional and national agents were involved. It began with a debate between the Christian mayor, Ramez Geraysi of the Communist Hadash Party, and the leader of the Islamic movement of Nazareth who was a member of the opposition in the council, engineer Salman Abu Ahmad. Both of them were preparing themselves for the municipal election campaign to be held at the end of 1998.

At the time the affair erupted, the municipality of Nazareth had begun the public works of constructing a grand plaza, south of the Church of Annunciation, in order to create an open space and a landscape better able to serve the tourists and Christian pilgrims who frequent the city holy to Christianity. At the beginning of that year (1997) the municipal council decided to demolish an old school which was in the midst of the plaza complex and a few other small structures. The Israeli government had approved this project in 1994, and had also funded it as part of an initiative to encourage tourism in Nazareth around the time of the millennium celebrations. On part of the compound designated for the plaza was a tomb of a Muslim saint carrying the name Shihab al-Din. The municipality, in its plan, had allowed for the preservation of this tomb, which was erected on a land registered officially as belonging to an Islamic endowment – *waqf*. The municipality Plaza project (interpreted as benefiting Christian pilgrims) was a golden opportunity for Abu Ahmad; a leverage of political consolidation which he decided to use. He claimed that the municipality was insensitive to Muslims' sentiments regarding the holy Muslim site, and he therefore opted to undermine this project led by Geraysi and proposed an alternative plan to construct a central mosque on the same spot whose minaret will rise 86 meters, far overshadowing the top of the nearby Church of Annunciation.¹¹

11 For a scheme of the mosque overshadowing the Church of Annunciation see *Sawt al-Haq wal-Huriyya* 23rd January 1998 p. 5 and 13 February 1998 front page.

This was all started in the middle of the night, in mid-December 1997, when heavy machinery owned by the Nazareth municipality began working to evacuate the space determined for the Plaza on the southern side of the Church of Annunciation. In response Salman Abu Ahmad met on that same morning with mayor Geraysi and submitted to him an alternative to the Plaza plan which had obviously been prepared long before to build a large mosque with a high minaret inscribed with an illuminated verse from the Koran; a verse which emphasizes the unity of God (Allah) thus challenging the Holy trinity of Christianity.¹² Mayor Garaysi referred Abu Ahmad to the local planning and housing committee to submit his plan according to regular procedure, in other words, he rejected it on the spot. It is important to understand that according to Middle Eastern culture, when you ask a mayor for something and he refers you to another office, it is interpreted or considered as having been rejected. During the subsequent three weeks Nazareth became a battle field, and the echoes of the strife reached the forums of religious clerics as well as state leaders around the Middle East region. The issue was also the flagship of the Islamic movement in the municipal election campaign which was held in November 1998.

When the Mayor rejected Abu Ahmad's proposal, the latter organized a group led by voluntarily administrator of the waqf in Nazareth, Ahmad Hamuda al-Zu'bi nicknamed Abu Nawaf, who on the 21st of December 1997 took possession of the disputed area. The trespassers put up a tent, placed down carpets and destroyed the wall which separated the tent and the tomb.¹³ For the Muslims who trespassed onto the disputed compound, they broke down the wall which linked the open space and the Shihab al-Din tomb, erected an Islamic prayer-and-protest tent which stood as a temporary Mosque and later began constructing the mosque without a permit.¹⁴ The affair broke out during the Muslim month of Ramadan, when the Muslim community and its members are filled with religious sentiments, and a few days before Christmas.

From this moment on, the Shiab al-Din issue became a conflict that was acted out simultaneously on many fronts. It became an issue which touched a number of spheres of action: between the Arab minority in Israel and the Jewish majority and the State; between the Christian community of Nazareth and its Muslim majority; between different political forces within the Israeli Arab sector; between different elements within the Muslim worlds and between them and the Holy Sea and other Christian organizations; and between states in the region and the international community.

This affair had the potential to inflame the Arab sector on its most sensitive split – religious identity. The leaders of the Arab community hurried to neutralize

12 For a picture of the Minaret see *Sant al-Haq wal-Huriyya* 29th April 1998. The plan was designed by architect Mahmud Tab'uni of Nazareth. However, a different picture was published in *Sant al-Haq wal-Huriyya* 6th March 1998 without Minaret's presumably aimed at calming the Christian outrage and sending a message that the planned mosque will not harm Christian feelings and will not devastate the influx of tourists.

13 *Al-Ittihad*, 23 December 1997.

14 *Ibid.*

the fuse. Heavy pressure was exerted on the parties to the dispute to solve the division “within the family”, within the Arab community without involving state authority. In an emergency gathering headed by Ibrahim Nimer Hussein, the head of the Arab Supreme Follow-up Committee with the participation of figures from all convictions and political it was decided to solve the dispute without seeking the Police or the Court.¹⁵ In that meeting the Islamists argued that they are not trespassers but rather the original owners who only materialized their right to possess the waqf land belonging to the Muslim community since medieval times. The municipality however, claimed that the disputed compound is not an Islamic endowment at all but land estates used until recently for a public school. The dispute was reduced by local and Arab national leaders to one question of shari`a law: *Was the plot of land of the demolished school a waqf (Islamic endowment)?* Islamic legal opinions were solicited from abroad as an attempt by the Islamist to gather support for their position in the dispute. However, the conflict is much broader than this one narrow religious issue.

The leaders’ emergency convention decided to form the three-member Committee of Facts Investigation (*lajnat taqassi al-hqa’iq*) headed by the president of the Shari`a court of appeal with the participation of one member from the municipality and one member of the Islamic movement in Nazareth. In fact, the power to decide was given to the chief Qadi Ahmad Natur who was a civil servant and therefore he needed the consent of the deputy minister of religious affairs to serve in this arbitrator position.¹⁶ In addition the gathering decided that the municipality would refrain from taking action and that the Muslims will convey their blessings to the Christians for their Christmas celebrations. It was also decided to leave the praying tent intact.¹⁷

When the conflict failed to be resolved violence broke out again in 1999. On Easter eve (Early April) a fist fight occurred between members of the Islamic Movement in the protest tent and several Christians who happened to be drunk. Early the next morning, members of the Islamic Movement joined by Muslim villagers from the vicinity of Nazareth, rioted in the town center. Christian women who were driving their cars were dragged off and badly beaten. Interestingly the gender issue was coming to the fore in a religious contention, with the female of the Other, the Christians, being targeted by radical Muslims or the Islamists. Muslims who were considered by the Islamists to be collaborators with the Christians were also attacked. Shops and businesses on the main street, as well as government offices, were vandalized.¹⁸

15 *Sawt al-Haq wal-Hurriyya*, 26 December 1997.

16 The head of the supreme follow up committee wrote to the deputy Minister of Religious Affairs and asked his permission for Natur’s task and he gave his consent.

17 *Sawt al-Haq wal-Hurriyya*, 26 December 1997.

18 D Tsimhoni, “The Shihab al -Din Mosque affair in Nazareth: a case study of Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations in the State of Israel” in M. J. Breger, Y. Reiter, & L. Hammer (eds), *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Confrontation and Co-existence*, Routledge, London, 2010, p. 205.

What was seen as a clash between two religious groups had not only a local political background of contestation between Hadash and Islamic Movement parties but also a strong social and economic background. Following the 1948 war, Nazareth transformed from a small peripheral town into the major Arab political-national as well as cultural urban center and the unofficial capital of the Arab minority in Israel. The communist party in which Christians, first and foremost Greek Orthodox were prominent, dominated the town. Christians were not only the backbone of the Arab middle class; they also filled the vacuum created by the exodus of the Muslim political leadership from the territories of Israel.¹⁹

In the lack of sufficient government investments, they still form today the backbone of the educational and medical services of Nazareth.²⁰ By contrast, the Muslims of Nazareth did not organize themselves as a religious autonomous community with an institutional infrastructure in particular, schools and hospitals. This was due to the traditional position of the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire as part of the ruling elite and the loss of their control over the majority of their endowments (waqfs) within the state of Israel. Furthermore, the British and Israeli governments neglected the general public education system in the Arab sector that the lower classes, largely Muslim, attend. As Daphne Tsimhoni argues, this policy limited the prospects of Nazareth to develop as far as industry, economy and housing are concerned which did not ease attempts to combat poverty and socio-economic tensions combined with ethno-religious ones.²¹

Furthermore, the debate involved broader meanings and motivations which did not fall exactly along religious diversity lines. For example, not all Muslim of Nazareth agreed with the actions taken by the Islamists. They were not strong enough to effectively deal with the Islamists. Then there was the role of politics which was played out on local, national and international levels. In the municipal elections which took place in November 1998, the Shihab al-Din issue was used as a political card by the Islamic Movement, which places Islam above nationalism against the weakened Hadash Party. The Hadash coalition of Nazareth headed by mayor-elect Ramez Jeraysi, of a Christian Orthodox Arab family, won nine seats (held by four Christian and five Muslim members); the United Nazareth Party, in which the Islamic Movement was the major group, won ten seats. This new balance of power prevented the establishment of a municipal council for a while.

Our analysis conveys that the violent dispute over the plaza was merely the immediate trigger reflecting a deeply rooted sectarian split in Nazareth. Nazareth is the third holiest city for Christianity. All residents of the city benefit economically from the influx of tourist and from the Christian educational and medical institutions. But three socio-political processes were inflicted upon the Muslim-Christian relations:

19 D Tsimhoni, 'The Political Configuration of the Christians in the State of Israel,' *Ha-Mizrah He-Hadash*, vol. 32, 1989, pp. 139-164 [Hebrew].

20 Ibid.

21 Tsimhoni, "The Shihab al -Din Mosque affair in Nazareth", p. 198.

Firstly, the demographic change that constitutes a 70% Muslim majority at a time when Christians still dominate important public institutions. Churches rather than mosques dominate the public sphere. Yet, the Christian population continues to shrink in size.

Secondly, the political change that embodies the growing power of the Islamists and the diminished power of both Christians in Palestine and Israel and the Communist-Nationalist party Hadash.

Thirdly, the socioeconomic change. In the past Christians maintained their predominance in white-collar professions and in management positions. They continued to dominate public life and civic society. The majority of the schools and hospitals in Nazareth belong to the churches, caring for all the population regardless of religion and community. In many of these institutions Muslims constitute the majority of students, patients and sometimes also employees, yet they still feel alienated. The expansion of education among the Muslims and their entrance into academic professions has enhanced competition between Muslims and Christians over limited white collar management positions for Arabs in Israel. Hence, Christians complain about being pushed out of these positions while Muslims complain about Christian over-representation. Furthermore, a large proportion of Muslim refugees and villagers settled in the poorer eastern neighborhoods of the town where environmental development lags behind with sewage infrastructure being incomplete. The Muslims complain about the lack of proper municipal services as compared with the western quarters where most of the Christians lived.²² As Daphne Tsimhoni puts it: “This situation of a marginalized Muslim majority versus an outstanding Christian minority created a feeling of alienation among Muslims of the poor eastern neighborhoods.”²³ At the same time, it creates among Christians a sense of cultural superiority combined with the growing insecurity of a minority within an antagonized, frustrated majority Muslim environment.²⁴

Summing up, religious intolerance in Nazareth emanates from a combination of issues, of which the crisis of identity is the major one. Muslims want to see an Islamic presence in the character of their city while Christians fear that their holy city will be Islamicized, losing its very nature as the city of Jesus. The growing cosmopolitan modern culture of the city disturbs the Islamists who wish to see it more conservative. In addition, grievances between the two communities were exacerbated by the change of socio-economic status and growing competition over jobs, public positions and institutions. The local and national political competition between the Islamic Movement and the Hadash party also reflected the tension between secular and religious cultures in the city.

22 CF Emmett, *Beyond the Basilica: Christians and Muslims in Nazareth*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 265.

23 Tsimhoni, “The Shihab al -Din Mosque affair in Nazareth”, p. 201.

24 Ibid.

C. Safed

On Friday the 22nd of October 2010 a group of 30 Haredi youth attacked a group of Arab students of the Zefat Academic College renting an apartment there. A mob gathered outside a building housing Arab students, shouted “Death to Arabs!” and “Stinking Muslims!” and hurled stones and bottles, smashing a window. The Arab students threw stones back, and a shot was fired by one of the Jewish youth.²⁵ On the following day somebody hoisted a PLO flag on an abandoned mosque in the city. The mosque is located in a central part of the city, near the municipal marketplace. A local resident told an Israeli media outlet: “It made me angry but also somewhat satisfied that the true face of the perpetrator with the academic veneer was exposed.”²⁶ Residents said that the flying of the flag “shows the true intentions of the Arab students, who claim that all they want is to be treated fairly.”²⁷ It is unknown if this was carried out by Arabs or a provocation by a Jewish group. In a city park next to a college building on a recent afternoon, “Death to Arabs” was scrawled on a gatepost. The park is a hangout for the Arab students, who were scattered on benches during a break between classes.²⁸

Three Jewish youths, including an off-duty policeman, have been charged with participating in the violence. The policeman is accused of firing his gun.²⁹ A young Chabad boy was convicted for leading the Haredi gang while the court named the incident and its background as “racism”.

The violent event occurred after the Rabbi of Zefat – Shmuel Eliyahu – the city’s chief rabbi and son of the late Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, had initiated a publicized legal opinion of Halacha signed by 18 Rabbis ordering residents not to sell or rent homes to “non-Jews” - a reference to the country’s Palestinian Arab citizens, who comprise a fifth of Israel’s population. In the statement, they urged Jewish residents to shun a “neighbor or acquaintance” who rents to Arabs. “Refrain from doing business with him, deny him the right to read from the Torah, and similarly ostracize him until he renounces this harmful deed,” it said.³⁰ The 18 rabbis issued their statement after learning of the college’s plan to build a medical school, which is expected to draw Arab students from across the Galilee.³¹ The Chabad-Lubavitch movement, whose rabbis were among the signatories of the ruling, noted that the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson – known as the “Rebbe” – opposed the sale of houses in the religious Crown Heights neighborhood in New York to non-Jews to avoid the area becoming a

25 J Greenberg, “Allegations of racism and questions about a town’s character”, *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.loonwatch.com/2010/11/safed-racism-and-violence-against-palestinians-what-if-they-were-muslim/>.

26 <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3973770,00.html>

27 <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/Flash.aspx/196447#.UVcGmDIBTpU>

28 J Greenberg, op. cit.

29 J Cook, ‘Safed ‘the most racist city’ *Israel*, Nov 8, 2010 Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/safed-the-most-racist-city-in-israel>.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

Jewish “outpost” instead of a vibrant center of Jewish life.³² This explains why a Chabad activist was leading the violent attack against the Arab students in Safed. Interestingly as we will see below, in Beit Shemesh – Chabad community was also attacked by the Haredi group when the conflict was intra-Jewish.

A few days before the attack on Arab students Eliyahu organized what was termed by him as an emergency convention titled “The Silent War: Fighting Assimilation in the Holy City Zfat” discussing the dangers of assimilation caused by Arab men dating Jewish women, the 18 rabbis warned that Safed and its 40,000 Jewish residents were facing an “Arab takeover”. The number of Arabs in the city, though low, has been steadily rising as the student body at Safed Academic College has expanded. There are now some 1,300 Arab students enrolled at the school.³³ Eliyahu, has warned that the Jewish character of Safed, long revered as sacred, is at risk and that intermarriages could follow if the students mingle with the locals.³⁴ Another Rabbi from Safed, David Lahiani, told the BBC News: “The Bible tells us that Jews should not give a place to Gentiles. Israel is the land given to the Jews by God, anyone else is here as a guest”.³⁵

Leaflets distributed throughout the city against the opening of a medical school in Safed termed the college as “a refugee camps serve as a den of Arab sadistic thieves and mentally ill” and warned not to “give them apartments, rent, labor, or any footing”. A human rights NGO who demanded that the Attorney General will take discipline steps against Rabbi Eliyahu quoted him saying in interviews (not proven accurate) “Arab culture is very cruel,” “among Arabs is other codes, norms of violence have become an ideology”. “For Arabs stealing agricultural products is an ideology as is blackmailing protection money from [Jewish] farms in the Negev [by Arabs]”. and “Once you give them a place among us, it takes them only five minutes to start doing what all they want”.³⁶

Posters were plastered across the city threatening to burn down the home of an elderly Jew if he did not stop renting to Arab students. The owner, 89-year-old Eli Zvieli, who rented a room to three Arab students, said he had received numerous phone calls and visits, including from Rabbi Eliyahu, urging him to remove his tenants. One caller threatened to burn down Zvieli’s house, he said. A sign was posted on the gate calling the Arabs’ presence “a shameful disgrace.”³⁷ Jamil Khalaili, 20, an Arab physiotherapy student at the college who rents an apartment with a friend in a Jewish neighborhood, said the atmosphere in Safed was rapidly deteriorating. “We’re being treated like criminals, like we’re trying to steal their homes,”

32 TB Gedalyahu, ‘Arab Violence Spreads to Tzfat,’ 24 October 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/140232#.UVcFLDIBTpU>

33 Cook, op. cit.

34 Greenberg, op. cit.

35 R Wingfield-Hayes, ‘Orthodox rabbi stirs up racism debate,’ *BBC News*, 30 November 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11865711?print=true>.

36 Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/1.1750957>

37 Greenberg, op. cit.

he said. "It's got to the point where many of my friends are wondering whether to leave. I want to study here but not if it costs me my life."³⁸

When Zefat Rabbi and leaders were strongly criticized by the press and by Israeli liberal politicians, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu explained that the intention of the ruling was to prevent a threat to public safety. "It creates a lot of tension in the city," he said. "When a non-Jew moves in, residents begin to worry about their children, about their daughters." Many Arab students have been known to date Jewish girls.³⁹

A defensive position was used by Safed's mayor, Ilan Shohat, who said that the students were "behaving like they were back in their villages." He said the municipality had received complaints from religious residents after Sabbath weekends of disruptive behavior by students, ranging from playing loud music to smoking a hookah opposite a synagogue and badgering young women.⁴⁰ But people in Safed dismiss the accusations of racism, saying that the issue is a culture clash between rowdy Arab students and the city's strictly religious Jews who feel that their way of life is being threatened.⁴¹

The immediate trigger for the 2010 violent events was the decision to establish a faculty of medicine in Zafed College, an initiative that would attract more Arab students to the College. On the face of it, the issue that triggered the violent attack was based on religious grounds. However when we analyze the discourse used by the party that opened this "silent war" we discover five drivers both in the text and subtext. The religious legal opinion itself reveals three justifications for not permitting Arabs to reside in Jewish towns: two of them are religious commandments (prohibition to let foreigners "park" in the land and to have them as neighbors who have different life style as it may also risk the life of their Jewish neighbors) and the third issue which is not at all religious is -- the fear of a possible drop in the real estate market.⁴²

Our analysis shows that the religious Jews of Safed were acting out of five fears:

One, the fear of interreligious marriage and even loss of control of the Jewish female through such a marriage. The Haredi and other Jewish religious people fear that Jewish girls will go out with and perhaps marry Arabs converting to Islam. In 2004 Eliyahu launched a campaign against inter-marriage, accusing Arab men of waging "another form of war" against Jewish women by "seducing" them. He narrowly avoided prosecution for incitement in 2006 after he agreed to retract his

38 Ibid.

39 Gedalyahu, op. cit.

40 Retrieved from <http://www.loonwatch.com/2010/11/safed-racism-and-violence-against-palestinians-what-if-they-were-muslim/>.

41 Greenberg, op. cit.

42 Retrieved from <http://www.bhol.co.il/Article.aspx?id=22296&cat=1&scat=1>

earlier statements⁴³ and in a deal with the Attorney General he had to apologize publicly for his words.⁴⁴

Two, the fear of losing the Jewish character and hegemony of the city which is also termed “Ir Kodesh” (Jewish holy city). Zefat was predominantly Arab before 1948, three mosques and few other Muslim sites of the Ottoman city still remain. However, it has an ancient Jewish history. In the past 10 years, Zefat has seen a large influx of ultra-orthodox Jews many of whom believe that Jews and Arabs cannot, indeed must not, live together. The presence of Arabs in the city center, where they reside and work is perceived as undermining the Jewish character of the city. Tal Gonen, a Baal-Teshuva, a born again Jew who is the engine behind the Rabbis’ campaign said to a Chabad website journalist that his major fear is that Zefat will not remain Jewish, that Arabs are funded by hostile elements and they are buying houses in order to take over the city. Another, Jewish religious resident of Zefat also expressed a similar attitude: “suddenly you see Arabs in the [Jewish] neighborhoods.”

Three, the fear that Arabs undermine the safety and security of the city and that their buying houses is being funded by hostile elements. This is ironically, in spite of the fact that many of them work in hotels and other facilities most especially, in the capacity of “Goy Shel Shabbat”⁴⁵ in Haredi neighborhoods. This fear derives from both the history as well as the current Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East. In 1948, when Jewish forces captured the town, Safed was a mixed city of 10,000 Palestinians and 2,000 Jews. All the Palestinian inhabitants were expelled, including a 13-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, now the president of the Palestinian Authority. An Arab student named Khaliali said the city’s history appeared still to haunt many of its Jewish residents, who expressed fears that Arab students were there to reclaim refugee property as the vanguard of a movement for the Palestinian right of return.⁴⁶ This fear is based on the historical memory of Jews since Jewish neighborhoods were attacked by Arabs during the 1929 and the 1936 riots. In 2002 the terrorist bombing of a bus carrying college students exacerbated tensions in the city causing the Arab students to be viewed as a security risk. Rabbi Eliyahu was investigated by the Police for voicing racial incitement after he publicly called for the ousting of Arab students from the College.

Four, the fear that Arab residents will disturb their Jewish neighbors by their different cultural customs and traditions, such as playing loud music particularly in Shabbat.

Five, the fear of the drop in housing prices due to Arabs living in Jewish neighborhoods.

43 Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/safed-the-most-racist-city-in-israel>.

44 Retrieved from <http://www.acri.org.il/he/?p=2636>

45 Goy Shel Shabbat is a non-Jew who performs certain types of work for a Jew on the Biblical day of rest, work which Jewish Law enjoins the Jew from doing on the Sabbath.

46 Cook, op cit.

In conclusion, it seems thus that the dispute in Safed is reflecting a modern day socio-psychological identity crisis with utilitarian drivers and that the impetus for the religious Jewish-Haredi campaign against the Arabs in this city is driven by a combination of these above interlocking factors.

D. Beit Shemesh

Beit Shemesh is a Jewish city located 30 kilometers west of Jerusalem that offers important insights into the cultural and social dynamics of intra-Jewish religious intolerance in Israel. It raises the question of identity politics concerning “Jewish” without having to negotiate Arab and other minorities in Israel directly and it embodies a unique microcosmic heterogeneity under a label and guise of Jewish religious homogeneity. The Jewish actors in this conflict represent nearly a full spectrum of the label “Jewish”: Ultra-Orthodox Haredim, National Religious of the Modern Orthodox or Conservative Orthodox stream, Secular Jews, many from the Anglo diaspora, along with some Oriental or Ashkenazi Jews.

Beit Shemesh dates back to pre-biblical times and is mentioned in the Book of Joshua. Before the '90s there were no Haredim living there. Beit Shemesh was established in the 1950s and two decades ago Beit Shemesh still was classified as a “depressed development town” with a population of 20,000 most came from Bulgaria, Romania, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan and Morocco North Africa with a significant rate of illiteracy where the IDF established a program to educate its adult citizens.⁴⁷ Beit Shemesh architect, Gerald Heumann, sheds further light on the tensions between urban planning and the reality of its current populations. In the summer of 1990 work began on a master plan for the city’s expansion, which called for the absorption of 130,000 additional residents. The expansion block was called Ramat Beit Shemesh, and was divided into three neighborhoods: A (Aleph) B (Bet) C (Gimel). The city which once was considered a backwater is today a boomtown.⁴⁸

Today (2013) the Haredim comprise 50% out of the 90,000 residents of Beit Shemesh and 70% of schoolchildren. This means that the non-Haredi citizens of Beit Shemesh are concerned with the changing nature of its citizenry. Their high birth rate and great number of subgroups, as well as the fact that boys and girls attend separate schools, results in an inflated number of educational institutions, which are an immense burden to finance, build and maintain. The current dispute further includes the impending fate of the recently planned neighborhoods such as Beit Shemesh Gimel (see map). The non-Haredis are concerned that it will further enlarge the prominent Haredi population. In addition, contractors continue to sell housing projects to Haredis in Ramat Beit Shemesh Alef – a non-Haredi neighborhood. Ultra-orthodox groups with their insular way of life are predicated on absolute territorial control.⁴⁹

47 Personal communication N. Schori, whose wife served in a Nahal unit in Beit Shemesh in the early 1950s, 27 July 2012.

48 G Heumann, ‘Where Beit Shemesh went wrong’, Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/where-beit-shemesh-went-wrong-1.422950?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.223%2C>, (accessed 2 August 2012).

49 Personal communication Brenda Ganot, 17 February 2013.

Haredi violent attacks against non-Haredis accelerated in the late 2000s with the growth of the Haredi community including the move of dozens of extreme Haredi families from Jerusalem to Beit Shemesh. From our discourse analysis and interviews we learn that what happened in Beit Shemesh is not markedly different from what has been happening in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ Yet today's media tends to focus more on Beit Shemesh because this is a young city which was established as predominantly secular. Our interviewees marked the first violent attack in 2008 when a group of Benei Akiva (National Religious Youth Movement) boys and girls walked together on Shabbat eve crossing Haredi neighborhood of Ramat Beit Shemesh. The girls in particular were harassed and attacked by a Haredi mob who wanted to dictate gender separation in the public sphere.

The most salient aspect which irrupted in the Beit Shemesh case of religious intolerance is the socio-psychological issue of gender with attacks by groups of Haredi activists on non-Haredi females ranging in age from prepubescent to adult. The non-Haredi term used broadly in Hebrew is *badarat nashim*, the effacement of women, which has a preceding history in Jerusalem where fashion advertisement posters have been destroyed, segregated seating on buses occurs, protest against women singing and dancing and long standing demands for modest dress especially in the Most conservative Haredi neighborhood Me'a She'arim. It spilled over into Beit Shemesh with the Haredi influx.

What galvanize public attention was a Haredi attack on an eight year old modestly dressed young girl of a Modern Orthodox family, Naama Margolese, who attends the Orot Girl's School which is situated on the main border street and Beit Shemesh thoroughfare, Herzog Street, dividing Haredi from non-Haredi communities (see map). This incident seemed to be the tipping point, mobilizing the non-Haredi community. Naama's mother, Hadassa narrates that "On the second day of school, the extremists appeared on the sidewalk in front of the school and began screaming at and spitting on the girls as they walked home...and every other day was like that: with the yelling, spitting, throwing bricks into the boys' school [located nearby], throwing human feces, throwing vegetables, eggs."⁵¹

The extremist Ultra-Orthodox group claimed that the girls of this school are immodestly dressed and it offends them. Our interviewees informed us that this school was in dispute and that the attack was against this deeper background. The nearby Haredi-populated neighborhood demanded that this school would be given over for their girls and not to the neighboring Modern Orthodox girls, but the Education Ministry overruled the Haredi mayor of the Shas party and the school opened its doors for Modern Orthodox girls over Haredi objections. Hence, The Haredi attacks reflect their rage emanated from their failure to take over the school and its surrounding public space for its burgeoning population.

50 Our interviewees were non-Haredi women activists Alise Coleman (immigrant from England) and Brenda Ganot (immigrant from America) and one National Religious Rabi (immigrant from Australia).

51 A Kaplan Sommer, 'Watch: A visit to Beit Shemesh, 6 months after the harassment of 8 year-old girls', Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/watch-a-visit-to-beit-shemesh-6-months-after-the-harassment-of-eight-year-old-girls-1.450895>.

Other cases of Haredi attacks against non-conservative dressed women who happen to enter the Haredi residential areas of Ramat Beit Shemesh occurred in 2012. On January 24th 2012 Natali Mashiah who had come to post an ad for a lottery company Mifal HaPayis was attacked by a group of ultra-Orthodox men who stole her keys, smashed the windows of her car with rocks, threw bleach at her, and continued to hail stones on her as she attempted to take shelter behind one of the car doors, dialing police for help twice before aid came. The Haredi crowd which had gathered to watch did not intervene on her behalf during the attack. Mashiah told Israeli news outlets that she had feared for her life during the attack, thinking that she would die.⁵²

On April 24, 2012 a female supervisor of the municipality went to inspect shops in a Haredi neighborhood and was attacked by Haredim shouting at her for her immodest dress. Two months later, a mother, Vered Daniel, and her seven month old infant daughter got out of their car to go into a children's store when attacked. Two Haredi women intervened to rescue the mother and infant from the barrage and hail of stones and whisked them to safety inside a store.⁵³

At times Ultra-Orthodox attacks have spilled over into secular areas where non-kosher food at some of the MacDonaldis restaurants and shops catering to Russians, Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans where they buy pork and other non-Kosher meat. Stores which sell items associated with female sexuality such as perfume, lingerie and high heel shoes have also come under attack. On occasion the extremists within the Haredi community have engaged in destruction of private and commercial property by smashing such store windows, car windows, by throwing rocks.⁵⁴

Another dispute has centered on a sign demanding that women not walk on a sidewalk in front of a synagogue on Chazon Ish Street whose public space was being disputed. There have been other signs posted on stores demanding modest dress as cited above. A non-Haredi woman, Nili Phillip, was a victim of a similar attack: "Women ask me why I care about the sign as it's a Haredi district. My reply is that this is a main road leading to a shopping center. I once rode my bicycle near there and got a stone to the head by a Haredi man," she recounted. "On other occasions I was spat on and name called."⁵⁵

The ongoing incidents of violence during 2011 and the non-Haredi outcry drove Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to publicly warn on December 2011 that if these cases will last he would opt to divide Beit Shemesh into two towns, with the entire south, an enormous area half the size of Tel Aviv, allotted to the Haredim.

52 *News.Walla.co.il*, 24 January 2012.

53 N Cohen, 'Beit Shemesh: Woman attacked for dressing 'immodestly'', Retrieved from <http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-4245127,00.html>, (accessed 21 June 2012).

54 A Kaplan Sommer, *ibid*.

55 Retrieved from <http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-4251544,00.html>, (accessed 5 July 12).

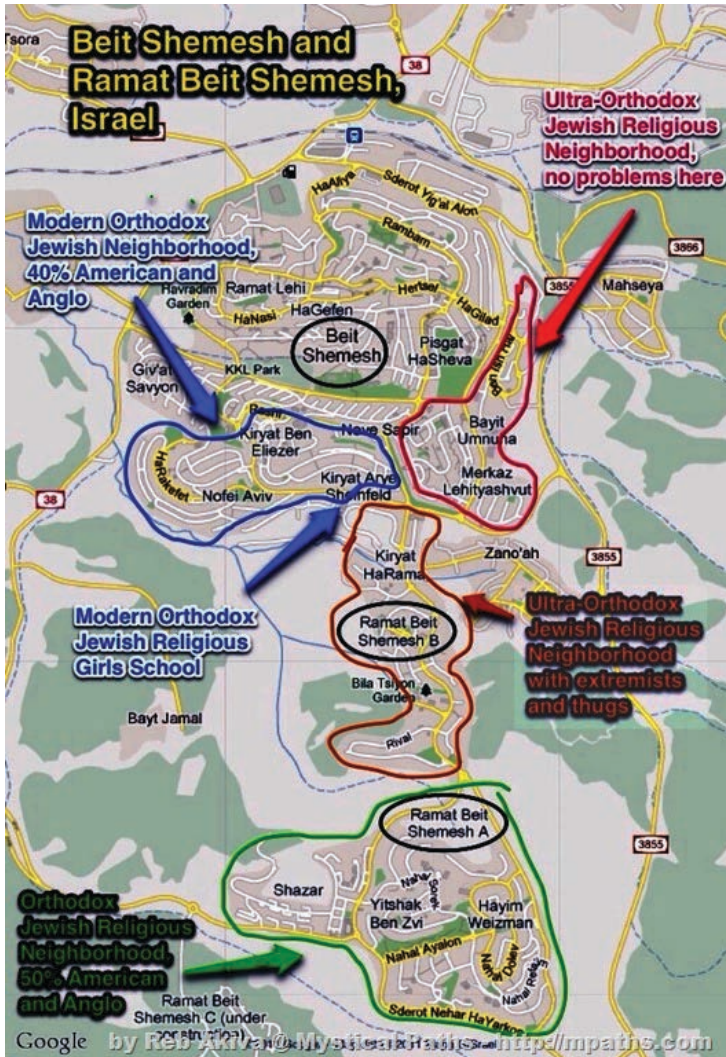


Figure 1. Map of Beit Shemesh

Netanyahu, evidently was assuming that the Haredi leadership of the city would not permit outsiders equal access to major resources such as affordable housing or allocation of government funds. But separate Haredi cities are unsustainable. Operating and maintaining their own services independently while having minimal revenues from municipal property taxes (arnona), they are bound to be poverty traps.⁵⁶ That is why Minister of Interior Elie Shai of the Shas Party, a Sephardic Ultra-orthodox party balked at this idea, noting that in no way could the Haredi relatively poor community provide a viable tax base for the municipality because

⁵⁶ G Heumann, op. cit.

most Haredim do not earn an income and he rightly foresaw the need of the non-Haredi populations as tax paying.⁵⁷

It should be indicated that only a tiny group of Haredis popularly estimated to be about one per cent of the Haredi population and named Sicarii⁵⁸ (also called by their opponents “Mazruhniks” meaning: not completely Jewish) is involved in violence. The two spiritual leaders of this group are Rabi Nathan Kopfshitz and Rabi Meir Heler. So conservative this group is, that its members have even violently attacked Chabad activity in the neighborhood even though Chabad is considered an Ultraorthodox sect of Judaism which works to return non-religious Jews to “the fold.”⁵⁹ But the problem is that there is almost no objection heard from the entire Haredi community.⁶⁰ Therefor the non-Haredi resistance was addressed to two directions: on the one hand they stood to physically defend themselves versus the extreme Haredi violence and verbal dictations, while on the other hand they tried to open channels to the more moderate Haredi community.

Rabbi Dov Lipman who considers himself a Modern Haredi (relatively new immigrant from the United States) had his initiation into conflict when he was hit in the leg by a rock near an ultra-Orthodox demonstration. He had been standing next to a policeman, the target of the attack. Lipman tried to mediate between the two sides but when he felt that the Ultra-Orthodox refused to any compromise, he became one of the leaders in the battle against religious extremism.⁶¹ He found that most people in the city refrain from confronting the extreme Haredi people and even the police are believed to be afraid to enter Haredi domains in the city. Their political power is strong and the mayor is also Shas Haredi. The inability to take a stand against one’s own is considered psychologically to be a form of passive terrorism, an identification with the aggressor. Similarly we saw this in the Nazareth conflict where moderate Muslims feel inhibited to confront those who are extremists.

This was not the case for the Jewish women who found themselves the object of hatred and attacking. These non-Haredi women and some man found an interesting way of resistance through setting boundaries by using public space nonviolently. On January 6, 2012 women from the secular and national religious groups organized a Flash Mob Dance in a central place aiming to send the message to the extreme Haredim that they are united against dictating dress and behavior codes of women in the public space. The dance YouTube video clip received 186,952 hits by mid-2012.⁶² Even though the dance was a non-violent protest, the extreme Haredim responded in a classic shame-honor manner by retaliating with another attack on a woman.

57 G Hoffman, ‘Yishai: Don’t separate haredim in Beit Shemesh’ 30 December 11, Retrieved from <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Yishai-Dont-separate-haredim-in-Beit-Shemesh>.

58 Sicarii means dagger in Hebrew and it is the name used by ancient Jewish terrorist group assassinate Roman governmental officials with the sicari (dagger in the market place).

59 BeHadrei Haredim website bhol.co.il of 18.4.12.

60 Interview with Brenda Ganot and Alise Coleman, 9 May 2012, Cafe Aroma, Big Mall, Beit Shemesh.

61 Retrieved from <http://forward.com/articles/159346/for-now-american-enclave-feels-no-fear/?p=all#ixzz20wgZCBI>.

62 Official Bet Shemesh Women Flashmob on [youtube](http://youtube.com).

The protest activists are religious women of Anglo-American origin who live in close proximity to the Haredi communities and mostly suffer from Haredi attacks. They organize public demonstrations. In early 2013 they effectively protested against a supermarket in a non-Haredi neighborhood that put up a written sign demanding women to dress modestly as well as providing clothing wraps to females who dared to enter the store wearing pants, short skirt and short-sleeve blouses. The women banded together in protest on the encroachment of their civil rights and forced the stores to take down the sign and halt the practice of handing out such cloth wrappings.⁶³ The municipality subsequently has had to install surveillance cameras in public spaces in order to monitor and secure public safety.⁶⁴

A powerful mode of action initiated by the Anglo Women of Beit Shemesh was setting up a women's council meeting monthly to dialogue with Haredi women in an attempt to break down barriers of ignorance concerning the stereotypes of the Other. Brenda Ganot tells that they made sure to bring into the dialogue group women of all intra-religious denominations as well as ethnic extraction including an Ethiopian and a Russian activist in addition to a Hassidic woman.⁶⁵ With grant assistance from the Jewish Agency these women were able to launch four projects under Partnership2Gether. One initiative of the Women's Council was to produce a film concerning "What being a Jewish woman means to me". The women leaders felt that through women breaking down stereotypes and educating the impact would move into the family unit and promote change.⁶⁶ The second was tackling monthly important topics by the Women's Council. The third project entailed the Male Youth Project - Learning together between Haredi teens and Bnei Akiva teens and the fourth was the establishment of a round table of leadership Rabbis and some women who met six times over the past year and were effective in diffusing problems before hit public space but Haredi rabbis did not want their names to be published as they themselves feared retaliation.

Beit Shemesh planner, Gerald Hauman thinks that this city is the ultimate test case for settling disputes between Haredi and non-Haredi populations by bringing the Haredi leadership, through legal and democratic political means, to finally understand that if they wish to govern and have responsibility for planning, managing and maintaining a modern city, they must act fairly. There is no third option. Beit Shemesh is the ultimate test case.⁶⁷

In conclusion, the conflict in Beit Shemesh is greater than the sum of its socio-psychological-economic-demographic parts, i.e. the label "religion" masks the synergy of these other factors. In a significant way the religious intolerance in

63 Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/beit-shemesh-women-fight-to-buy-milk-wearing-jeans.premium-1.434495>. See also <http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-4245127,00.html>, (accessed 21 June 2012).

64 Y Lappin & M Lidman, 'Beit Shemesh to install 400 security cameras', Retrieved from <http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=250944>, accessed 29 July 2012.

65 Email communication, Brenda Ganot, 30 July 2012.

66 Ibid.

67 Heumann, *op. cit.*

Beit Shemesh frames a crisis in urban identity under the impact of modernity in an evolving democracy. The basic immediate reason for the acceleration of violence in recent years is the growing Haredi demographic boom in the city that functions as a driver seeking more space and more political control over the city at a time when Haredi needs in terms of educational facilities has escalated dramatically. On the other hand, the secular and moderate orthodox populace is afraid of the takeover of the city by Haredis not only because of the fear of violence but also the drop in property values. The non-Haredi resent the fact that the ultra-Orthodox society is largely indifferent to environmental concerns. Similar complaints are also heard concerning Arab neighborhoods, lacking a kind of aesthetic. Its public spaces are often dirty, and greenery is almost entirely absent in its neighborhoods. Often, land that has been designated for cultural or recreational purposes ends up being converted for other uses.

A second ground for violence has a gender background. It is the threat of modernity to the insular Haredi Culture--Lost of Control of their own Other, i.e. the Haredi female.

From our fieldwork and studies we wish to offer a concluding explanation as to why Haredi groups opt for violence when they feel that they cannot impose their way of life in their own neighborhoods and in their close environs. For the Haredim it seems to involve the stressors and crisis of modernity precipitating an erosion of empathy for the Other, particularly the secular and modern Orthodox female who are outside of the Haredi “ingroup.” The extremist Haredi men are at a loss as to how to compete in modern culture where there are many freedoms. Thus, they shift to a fallback position frequently encountered in shame-honor culture, namely a tiny segment of the in-group’s population becomes the carrier of group shame and aggression, leading regressed behavior by acting out attacks and projection of hatred onto the out group’s female. The ultra-orthodox community does not want its wives and children to be exposed to modernity’s ways of life, fearing lose of control of their own “Other” i.e. women and children, upon whom their entire system is dependent, which relates to the status of Haredi women. A fifty-something social worker from Bnei Brak who asked to remain anonymous was quoted saying: “...The Haredi world is self-destructing. The degree of abuse, crime, and erosion of core, Haredi values is at an all-time high. The latest rage is teenage pregnancy – and not as a result of marriage at an early age. The rate of boys and girls rejecting their parent’s values is way higher than the rest of the country. Something has to change but the people are powerless to change it.”⁶⁸

As we have seen non-Haredi women of Beit Shemesh have opened a channel of dialogue with Haredi women who themselves are interested to change the situation. The proactive and creative movement by the secular and modern Orthodox women provides a unique microcosm of how Jewish newcomers (*olim*) from America, Britain, South Africa and Australia have imported with them their educational experiences of having lived in diverse non-Jewish societies where

68 Blog of Rabbi Dov Lipman.

discrimination issues, especially with regard to sex have been discussed in their respective educational systems. They are not willing to tolerate the abrogation of their inherent civil rights. Furthermore, they are well educated, many Western trained college graduates as well as well-grounded in Judaic studies including Halakhah. They have grounding in psychology, feminism, pluralism and sex discrimination. Thus, they have been able to confront the violence of the Sicarii. They believe that any man, who spits on a little girl, communicates nonverbally his dread and terror of the female body. They do not want to see their rights taken from them and the violence to spread. They understand that the terror based behavior is done out of ignorance of the Other. They are themselves active in confronting such aggression immediately by setting limits and maintaining a “frame” to contain aberrant behavior as it will not be tolerated in a civil society even though such behavior may be passively condoned and unfortunately tolerated within the insular Haredi community due to issues of pressures to conform, yielding passive participation in the active extremist violence behavior, what can be termed as “turning a blind eye” on passive terrorism.

E. Conclusions

All three case studies manifest an immediate trigger and religious discourse for justifying violence but we found that they cover deeper social processes. The three cities undergo a demographic change thus creating cultural tensions involving identity politics and contesting public space. Durkheim theory linking violence to the modern development of identity crisis applies. The parties initiating violence in the three cases expect that their aggression will pay-off – a matter that we can find in Fanon’s theory according to which violence is an instrument for the achievement of political ends. But Hanna Arendt’s approach to violence could also be justified when one looks at how the violent series of actions ended. Arendt argued that violence is the opposite of power. Indeed, violence was used by the groups who felt powerless in the new social, cultural and demographic realities that developed in their city. Max Webber and Arendt believed that the lack of societal power may result in using violence. It seems that Israel is poorly performing in enforcing law when religious or ideological groups are challenging the law. The reason for this may be the special sensitivities and rifts between the many cultural groups. Charismatic leaders are using religious and national ideology to rally their followers to use violence as Sprinzak argued let alone that these groups had a previous record in using violence.⁶⁹

Comparing the three case studies leads us to conclude that religious intolerance emanates from a combination of issues while the special socio-historical background of each of the aforementioned cities makes the difference between them. As for the major drivers for dispute and violence we see in the three cases two repeating patterns in addition to a utilitarian driver:

69 S Peleg, *To Disseminate God’s Rage: From Gush Emunim to the Rabin Square*, Hakibbutz HaMeuchad, Tel-Aviv, 1997 [Hebrew].

Table 1. Immediate and social processes as grounds for using violence

Case study/Ground for using violence	Nazareth	Safed	Beit Shemesh
Immediate trigger	Demolish of “Waqf” school by Christian mayor and erecting of Protest tent as a temporary mosque on its spot by Islamists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishing a medical faculty that will attract more Arabs to the city 2. Rabbis campaign against renting houses to Arabs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haredi failure to take over a school and its surrounding public space 2. “Immodestly” dressed females enter Haredi public space or its environs
Social grounds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demographic change – Muslim majority 2. Social change – Muslim takeover of jobs and education while still feeling deprived 3. Party politics – Hadash vs. Islamists 4. Violence against the Other’s female 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One, the fear of inter-religious marriage, fear of loss control of their females 2. Fear of losing the Jewish character and hegemony of the city 3. Fear that Arabs undermine the safety and security of the city 4. Fear that Arab residents will disturb their Jewish neighbors by their different cultural customs 5. Fear of the drop in housing prices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haredi demographic boom 2. Gender – fear of Haredis to lose control of their females 3. Anglo newcomers who reside nearby and suffer from Haredi violence confront it 4. Fear of drop in housing prices

One, the crisis of identity emerging from demographic changes. By identity we mean the growing need of identity-groups to solidify their group-solidarity in times of crisis. The identity issue is reflected by the need of the socio-religious group to dominate the city and the lifestyle of its residents. The past character of Christian Nazareth, of Jewish Safed and of non-Haredi Beit-Shemesh is challenged by those who are afraid to lose the former identity of the city and those who want to change it. They are afraid that if they will not strive to maintain their identity principles they may be regressed and gradually they may disappear as a group. Thus identity drivers are competing with modernity as an assimilating mechanism.

Two, the crisis of modernity in acting out the need of conservative groups to counter modernity when they are exposed to it due to their immigration, while the modern and post-modern groups will find the actions of the conservative groups

as threatening their conceptual world. We observe a cultural struggle between modernity and religious conservatism. Gender issues are the main issue that the extremists dwell on when they confront the group of “other”. Ultra-Orthodox Islamists in the case of Nazaret and Jews in the cases of both Safed and Beit Shemesh want to keep the women out of the influence of modernity, i.e. of freedom. The gender issue goes hand in hand with pockets of shame honor patriarchal oriented groups of the extremists. The identity groups as conservative communities opt for triggers for conflict in order to solidify their identity during a crisis in order to restrain the effects of modernity.

Utilitarian incentives of housing prices and uncomfortable lifestyle of new neighbors of other groups is a third factor for boosting violence against the “Other” in the two Jewish predominantly towns Safed and Beit Shemesh.

Postscript for the Beit Shemesh Case:

As this article goes to press, a lawsuit was filed against the municipality of Beit Shemesh by patent lawyer and Canadian-Israeli resident of twelve years, Nili Phillip. The lawsuit states that it is a human rights violation to post signs excluding women from the public space. In an op-ed Nili Phillip wrote:

“Women were harassed and assaulted over their “lack of modesty” in proximity to these signs. We feel the signs act as a license for intimidation and violence. After months of the municipality repeatedly ignoring our appeals, a first draft of the suit was prepared in December by our lawyer, Orly Erez Likhovski of the Israel Religious Action Center, on behalf of the four of us, all victims of assault and/or harassment. Since then, we have raised thousands of shekels in local funding and nearly forty women, all residents of Beit Shemesh, offered to add their names to the suit. Subsequent lawsuits by these women are under consideration, with the possibility that even more may join.”⁷⁰

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