



Rabbis for Religious Freedom & Equality in Israel



“The State of Israel... will guarantee freedom of religion and conscience...”
Israel's Declaration of Independence (May 1948)

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June 6, 2016

Dear Friends,

If 77% of the students in Jerusalem are either Haredi or Arab, what does the future look like? Is the next generation being trained to live harmoniously in a single country? Are they learning one another's languages? Are they assimilating the basic skills both to create a society and to live together in peace?

[In this startling story from Arutz 2 in Jerusalem \[link\]](#), we have a perspective on the future, and while it's potentially hopeful, there are many open ended questions.

Most of the Arab population, the Haredi population and the secular population live separate lives, without ever encountering one another. The Arab students interviewed stated they had never had a conversation with a Jew. The Jews largely say they feel anger

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From Eastern Jerusalem to Har Nof: 77% of students in Jerusalem - ultra-Orthodox and Arab

Kooker News, June 4, 2016

[Click HERE for the Hebrew video](#), and scroll down for an English translation of the segment on ultra-Orthodox education in Jerusalem.

Please note that the ultra-Orthodox school presented in this video is Sephardic. Ultra-Orthodox Sephardic communities tend to be less religiously strict, less insular, and more tolerant than their Ashkenazi counterparts, although this distinction is gradually disappearing, as ultra-Orthodox Sephardim increasingly adopt Ashkenazi religious and social norms.

Translated transcription of video segment on ultra-Orthodox education:

Reporter 1: We are on HaKablan Street, coming from the house of Rabbi Ovadya Yosef, [Rabbi] Aryeh Deri [Head of the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox Shas political party] lives seven houses from here.

Reporter 2: The "mainstream" of the "mainstream."

at the Arab population; the Arabs often fear the Jews and see the city as occupied while belonging to them, and neither is preparing for an educational future in the modern world as we know it.

Yet, there are pockets that experiment with combined education, while studying to take the Israeli college entrance exams (bagrut), and cooperatively to build a unified society that can participate in the modern, technological world.

Here we present the results of a report from a Haredi school in Har Nof, where the students primarily seek to become Avrahamim, perpetual Talmud students, and didn't know the meaning of the word "engineer."

But in Yeshivat Hachmei Lev, also Haredi, they study for the bagrut, including civics, English, mathematics and science, a modern curriculum, along with Torah studies. While this approach is currently employed for a small percentage of the Haredi population, it may represent a more prosperous future for many.

Yet, at this rate, in another decade the city will be economically poor, with a separated and poorly prepared citizenry. But, if the alarm is heard now, there may be a new vision for the united population of Jerusalem: Arab and

R1: The "mainstream" of the "mainstream." In truth, it's Sephardic [rather than Ashkenazi] ultra-Orthodox Torah study, but it more or less represents everything that happens in ultra-Orthodox Torah study.

R2: This is most of the ultra-Orthodox citizens of Jerusalem in another ten years. What we hear from them, we may assume, is what will be in Jerusalem in another ten years.

R1: In the mainstream. There are nuances. There are Ashkenazim, and others.

R2: clearly.

R1: But absolutely, they represent the largest segment, the main segment, and they are positioned to become the next generation of yeshiva students. Come, let's see -

Inside the school:

R2: Hello.

School Principal 1: Hello, Danna, hello, Yair.

R1: Hello.

SP1: Welcome.

R2: How many students do you have here?

SP1: Approximately 258

R2: Wait, what am I hearing?

SP1: Right now, you're hearing Torah and Mishnah studies.

Inside the third grade classroom:

R2: This is third grade?

SP1: This is the third grade. Come, take a look.

R2: How many students are in the class?

SP1: 42.

[The students stand up]

SP1: Hello. Sit, students, sit, students.

Teacher: Every year, we merit to learn four books of the Mishnah; and they know them all by heart. Let's try it -

R1: Danna, what chapter do you choose?

R2: Four, four, I want four.

R1: Chapter four, Mishnah one!

[The students all recite the Mishna out loud together]

R2: What do you learn other than Gemara and Talmud?

Students: Math.

R1: Do you learn English?

Students: No.

R1: Who wants to grow up and become a greater Torah scholar?

Jewish, secular and religious.

This new vision depends on whether the politicians are willing to refrain from encumbering the school system with their political views. As we have seen, the new school curriculum seems to move in the opposite direction.

The RRFEI newsletter attempts to keep our members up to date on the trends regarding a pluralistic community in Israel. We invite your thoughts and perspective, which we would love to share with our members.

Please visit us on our FB group [\[link\]](#), or send messages to: organizers@rrfei.org.

B'yedidut,
Mark

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Resources

- [Western Wall compromise agreement](#)
- [Chief Rabbi Lau attacks Bennett over pluralism](#)
- [J-REC / AJC Mission to Israel](#)
- [Giyur K'halacha](#)
- [Acts of violence](#)
- [Kashrut regulations for hotels and event halls](#)
- [JFNA Israel Religious](#)

[The students all raise their hands]

R1: That's the answer.

R2: Who wants to be an engineer?

[The students all put their hands down]

A student: What's an engineer?

R2: (repeats) What's an engineer?

A student: God will save us [from that].

R2: (repeats) God will save us.

SP1: Children, thank you very much.

In the school corridor:

R1: How many students in grade 8?

SP1: In grade 8, there are 27 students, and in grade 1 there are already 43 students.

R2: That's the story of Jerusalem.

R1: Demographically, that's the story. Undoubtedly.

R2: So every year, how many classes do you have to open?

SP1: I can open at least... every year at least 20 classes.

In the school courtyard:

SP1: We are exiting to the courtyard. This is supposed to be the school's courtyard. Unfortunately, we made it smaller in order to add more caravans, due to a lack of classrooms, and we still lack classrooms.

Inside the seventh grade classroom:

SP1: Now we are entering grade 7.

R2: Hello, how are you?

Students: Okay.

SP1: Sit, Righteous ones, sit.

R2: I see that they're dressed differently.

R1: They are children, that this year... this year is their bar mitzvah year, right?

R2: So those who have had their bar mitzvahs - white and black. And those who have not had their bar mitzvahs can still wear colors?

R1: You can already see their first hats [hanging] on the wall. Those [belong to] the ones who are "adults" - they have jackets and hats. That's the ceremony of adulthood.

R2: We're going to ask them a few questions. Is that okay?

Teacher: Please.

R2: How many siblings do you have, brothers and sisters?

[Expression Platform](#)

- [JPPI report: Jewish & Democratic](#)

Contact us

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A student: six.

R2: Six. How many do you have?

A student: I have nine.

R2: And you?

A student: I have 5.

SP1: The average here is 7-8.

R2: When I say to you "Jerusalem," what goes through your minds? What is "Jerusalem"?

Students: The city where we live, the Western Wall, the Holy City, the capital city, the Holy Temple...

R1: Holy Temple, Western Wall, what else?

R2: Who believes that the Holy Temple will be rebuilt in the coming years?

[All the students raise their hands]

R2: What is in that place now, on the [site of] Holy Temple?

Students: The mosque. The Al-Aksa mosque.

R2: So what will happen to the mosque?

Students: It will break [apart].

R2: Break apart?

Students: Explode, disappear...

R2: Who among you has met an Arab boy in the last year?

[Many of the students raise their hands]

R1: Where? Where did you meet an Arab boy?

A student: Near the Western Wall

R2: And you spoke with him?

Student: No. He pushed me, but he left.

R2: And what happens when you meet and see an Arab boy, what do you feel?

A student: A feeling of rage.

R2: Rage?

A student: That he wants to murder me.

R2: What happens when you meet a secular [Jewish] boy?

A student: I pity him for not being born ultra-Orthodox.

R2: Why do you pity him for not being born ultra-Orthodox? What is he missing [out on]?

A student: He's not going along the True Way.

R2: When you think about Jerusalem in another 10 years...

Students: Everyone is ultra-Orthodox.

R2: Everyone is ultra-Orthodox?

A student: Not everyone, not everyone. Some are Arabs, some are ultra-Orthodox.

A student: Everyone is Jewish, and there are also Arabs who are slaves. 80 Arabs carry us, and we go to the Western Wall.

R2: So the Arabs carry you to the Kotel?

A student: Yes, because the Messiah will come.

R2: Because the Messiah will come, I understand. Yes, what do you say?

A student: There will be a war, and all the Arabs will die, and the remainder will be slaves.

R1: Everyone who wants to be an adult, full-time yeshiva student, raise your hand high.

[Most of the students raise their hands]

R1: What does a full-time, adult yeshiva student do?

Students: Learn, learn all day long. Learn Torah.

R2: So how does he earn a living?

A student: God sends [him one].

Students: The wife works.

R2: Who [among you] wants to work when he is an adult?

[None of the students raise their hands]

R2: Who among you has a father who works?

[All the students raise their hands]

R1: Have any of you considered becoming soldiers?

A student: I want to.

R1: You want to be a soldier?

Student: Yes. To sit in the yeshiva, learn Torah, and give strength to the soldiers.

R1: Who among you has a father who was in the IDF?

[Half of the students raise their hands]

SP1: That's the story. You've gotten all the story you wanted. Children, thank you very much. You were great, continue succeeding, and we'll see you in the yeshivas.

In the school corridor:

R2: What can be understood from what we saw in the 7th grade classroom? To what extent is this representative?

SP1: First of all, what you saw, that really reflects the reality.

R2: This school, if I were to come in another five or ten years, it would be the same thing?

SP1: It is expected to grow in numbers, basically.

School Principal 2: In numbers, it will grow, but the exams, the education, and the style of education, that will remain the same.

R2: Curriculum, computers, something, another kind of learning?

SP2: The same thing, the same thing. As you saw in the third grade classroom, the boys learn Mishna. That's how it was

with my grandfather, and that's how it was with his grandfather. So too these children will grow up, and when they are adults, each will pick his path.

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel represents a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice, and champions the values of religious freedom and equality fundamental to World Jewry, in partnership with Hiddush for the realization of these principles in Israel and the Diaspora.

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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