

Chapter 4

HOLY PIRATES: MEDIA, ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS RENEWAL IN ISRAEL¹

David Lehmann

Batia Siebzehner

Prefatory remarks

The principal aim of the paper is to describe, in a comparative framework, how modern media have afforded to religion new ways of carving out public space, and how in innumerable contexts worldwide these relationships seem to be changing in comparable ways, irrespective of differences of location, culture and religious tradition.

A society of enclaves

Israel is a society of enclaves, and of profound cultural divisions. They emerged in the way in which the country was settled, first in the quasi-legal status of early Zionist settlement, and in the leading role played in that settlement by highly centralized political parties parceling out power and space among themselves, and later in the peculiar relationship (for a modern democracy) between religion and the state. The pattern is graphically described by Swirski, who uses the term ‘micro-societies’.²

Since the boundaries are relatively porous, and their substance - political, doctrinal, ethnic, territorial, liturgical, vestimental, linguistic, educational, and of course socio-economic – extremely diverse, the word ‘ethnicity’ does not properly

account for this phenomenon. The word enclave describes spaces delimited in these many different ways.

The notion of enclaves is both territorial and analytical: it describes distinct territorial enclaves inhabited by the highly observant ultra-Orthodox Jews, the secular, and even the fairly observant – and the settlements in occupied territories are an extension of the same principle; it also describes the parceling out of state bureaucracies or departments as fiefdoms to particular parties or factions. It can even be seen in the way governing coalitions are formed: once a party has a Minister in place that Minister is in effect the owner of his Ministry and does not seem to be bound by collective Cabinet responsibility.³ Beyond these tangible enclaves are the less tangible ones: people signal their religious or political allegiance in how they dress, in whether they speak Yiddish, in what they eat and where they shop, even in how they walk on the street. Given that religious life is deeply marked by concepts of pollution and the proliferating taboos arising there from, it is hardly surprising that the social and territorial space of the country is criss-crossed by an infinity of additional boundaries.

Institutional enclaves are seen in rabbinical control over family law⁴, and indeed over nationality law, but also in the influence of rabbinic authorities over vast areas of public life, from the El-Al flight timetable to the subsidies accorded to hundreds of thousands of full-time young and adult Torah students (who neither work nor serve in the army) and their vast families (average fertility of 8), and to the institutions in which they study. Enclaves mean muscle, and the ultra-orthodox exercise their muscle in issues of Sabbath observance just as West Bank settlers exercise theirs territorially and politically. Likewise, state-funded education is divided, for the Jewish population, into a mainstream secular system and a ‘national

religious' system, both directly funded and operated by the state, and an ultra-Orthodox system, as well as a separate state-run system for the Arab population. The ultra-Orthodox educational system is in turn divided into two separate systems, one controlled by the Ashkenazi authorities of the Eastern European tradition and the other, recently created and predominantly Sephardi, is controlled by the leadership of Shas, the party of religious renewal and Sephardi identity, founded in 1982.

The discourse and actions of the Shas leadership and their most active followers have tended towards the superimposition of disagreement and conflict across several different fault-lines at once: the 'eternal' secular-religious conflict, the ethnic divisions between Ashkenazim - people of European descent - and Sephardim – migrants from North Africa and the Middle East and their descendants, and the division between elite and popular culture. Shas is different from the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox parties because of its emphasis on *t'shuva* – the process whereby large numbers of people are brought 'back' to religious observance.⁵ Shas attracts people who are either 'traditional' (*masorati*), in that they preserve some customs but are not punctiliously observant, or else from a highly secularized lifestyle. Shas is also recognized as the party of the Sephardim. The word Sephardi refers strictly speaking to the Judeo-Spanish (or ladino) speaking people of the Northern Mediterranean and Northern Morocco, but in recent decades it has come to refer to all Jews of North African, Middle Eastern and Persian descent, most of whom are by now second and third generation immigrants, and many of whom are married to non-Sephardim. Taking into account the resulting impossibility of giving precise numbers, it is generally accepted that they constitute slightly less than half of Israel's Jewish population. In political campaigns the party capitalizes deftly on the symbols and accoutrements of Sephardi identity – accent, popular language and culture, Oriental

music, popular religion such as healing and the veneration of saints – but in more formal statements of policy the leadership emphasizes t’shuva above everything else. The fact that different authors emphasize in different ways the ethnic and religious elements in Shas’s appeal, demonstrates the impossibility of separating the two (Herzog 1995; Willis 1995; Shafir and Peled 2002). In the long run, as some have also said (Zohar 2001), Shas is transcending these alternatives, and forging an Orthodox Israeli Judaism which, if its influence continues to grow, will become the dominant form, replacing the Ashkenazi-Sephardi divide inherited from Jewish history and deepening the divide between Israeli religious culture and that of the diaspora. Like the Pentecostals in Latin America, Shas and the t’shuva movement in which it is the leading force, can be understood as a revolt against the hegemony of a cultural elite, and it is also reshaping the religious sphere (Lehmann 1996; Lehmann 1998; Birman and Lehmann 1999).

What kind of social movement?

The genius or good fortune of Shas’s founders was to link ethnic and religious renewal, so that now it is hard to choose between a description of Shas as embedded within a broader t’shuva movement, or of t’shuva as embedded within the ethnic renewal, which Shas has led. In common with social movements generally, the t’shuva movement uses multifarious means of communication and organization – adopting a capillary approach to social mobilization as opposed to the hierarchical methods used by conventional political parties or trade unions, or the Ashkenazi haredim – whose communal activity is much more subject to rabbinical control and therefore leaves less space for initiative and entrepreneurship.(El-Or 1994)⁶ This

t'shuva movement lives by trusting its emissaries, and by drawing them from its 'target population'. A movement spreads by capitalizing on points of commonality with a range of constituencies as much as by broadcasting a message. Thus the emissaries or activists of Shas have a language in common with the second and third generation Sephardim, but they also have a common taste in Oriental popular music with some, and a common taste in Oriental liturgical music with others; with some they may share a hostility to the secular establishment, with others to the haredi establishment; they develop characteristic ways of dressing, characteristic headgear (black velvet skullcaps), and, as Nissim Leon (Leon 1999; Leon 2001) explains, a characteristic language, so that gradually people find multiple ways of joining, of being part of the flow. In all these niches of social life the movement's activists introduce an unfamiliar innovative set of signs, symbols, emblems, and markers, by joining a haredi motif with elements of secular Israeli culture which have been kept at arm's length by the Ashkenazi haredim: they bring in Army slang, they bring in the jargon of t'shuva (with, for example, special terms to describe newcomers, the ones who 'need strengthening', the ones whose strength 'is confirmed'), they adopt slight but significant variations in speech, accentuating Sephardi, or conceivably pseudo-Sephardi, pronunciation (Leon 2000).

The pattern can be described as the conformation of a movement's identity by the creation of unaccustomed, innovative symbolic and behavioral allusions across previously or otherwise watertight boundaries. The role of the broadcast media in promoting the movement, arises not only, perhaps not principally, from the size of their audience, especially in this case where television is excluded for reasons of principle and where the radios are mostly shoestring operations which rely heavily on phone-in programs and have a limited range. Rather the media provide more markers

for the movement and its followers: the regularity of programs, the consistent tone or content of programs broadcast at certain times of day on certain frequencies, the differentiation of the audience into t'shuva-defined segments, and perhaps above all the bridge provided by these media between public and private spheres, all make of the radios and the cassettes integral parts of the movement of ethnic and religious renewal.

Stated more simply the use of media characteristic of popular culture, namely radio and cassette tapes, of itself provides an interface between religion and the ethnic group most identified with 'the popular' in Israel. In appealing to Sephardim, and among them often to young people whom they regard as mired in the frivolities – or worse - of consumer culture, the broadcasters could not but adopt a language and a style unfamiliar to traditional ultra-Orthodoxy, more street-wise, less hidebound, less weighed down by the somniferous tones of traditional yeshivas, a trend reinforced by the intervention of free-booting social and religious entrepreneurs in media previously unused by ultra-orthodoxy.

All this does not mean that the core of Shas is not deeply rooted in yeshiva life. But social movements are like concentric circles, with a hard center (the 'cadres') and ever-softer peripheries, and they conform social spaces linked not by organizational structures but by inferential symbols embodied as we have indicated, in language, posters, iconic figures and much more besides.

Pirate radios in the broadcasting system

Until 1999 the Israeli state had direct legal control of all nationwide radio and TV stations through the Israel Broadcasting Authority. Only in 1995 were private

commercial radio stations permitted, and exclusively at the local⁷ level operated under a franchise arrangement with the Israel Broadcasting Authority. The state monopoly had been challenged long before, though more for political reasons, by unofficial 'pirate' broadcasting, which began in 1973 when dissident political groups, first against the country's occupation of the West Bank, later in favor of settlers in the self-same West Bank, began transmitting from ships offshore. By 1995, 'more than 50' active pirate stations were identified, and in the late 1990s Caspi, the leading authority on the subject, could still safely say that they were mainly broadcasting music and entertainment (Caspi and Limor 1999). After some resistance from their senior leader Rav Schach⁸, the Ashkenazi haredi community began to use radio stations, though they remain controversial in this prickly constituency, and today there seems to be only one pirate station broadcasting specifically in the idiom of the Ashkenazi haredim – Kol Simcha ('The Voice of Celebration'). However, radio transmission enables people to cross boundaries without doing so too publicly, and there is no reason to believe that Ashkenazim do not listen to other, stations of a more Sephardi complexion. The stations' broadcasts, despite their Sephardi tinge reflected in accent, style and music, do not give any space to material expressing some of the resentment against Ashkenazim which we have heard in interviews.

Although the Sephardi 'tinge' is not explicitly promoted, it is a very important feature of these radios' broadcasting and of their appeal, expressed in broadcasters' accents, in much accompanying music, even in the streetwise language they use. This appeal is most straightforwardly explained by the limited presence of Oriental music and culture in the official stations. Those stations only broadcast one hour of Oriental content until a few years ago, but even now, though the amount has increased, the content is not in tune with Israeli popular taste, let alone with the religious tastes of

the t'shuva movement or of Shas followers. Official radio in Israel is heavily oriented to high culture and educational themes, plus an endless diet of news, and this narrowness opens a space for more popular – and therefore more Sephardi – modes of communication and entertainment. The entertainment stations on official radio certainly lack any appeal to a public at once popular and interested in religious themes and traditions.

From another point of view, it could be said that by their use of Oriental-style music the stations are joining the Israeli mainstream, just as by promoting a Sephardi religiosity Shas is trying to create an Israeli mainstream Orthodoxy in the religious field. Israeli popular music is distinguished by continual mixing of styles, combining either the 'indigenous' tradition originating with the formative period of Israeli Jewish culture with rock and other cosmopolitan forms, or the Oriental style with those forms and with the indigenous ones, (Regev 1996). Although there was for a time a prejudice against both cosmopolitan and quasi-Arab music, this has now given way to post-modern syncretisms which are acceptable if they catch on. The pirate radios, then, which to some might appear as beyond the mainstream, may be fitting very nicely into this post-modern mainstream.

Today, at least in the Jerusalem area, many, if not most, of the pirate stations are religious, and although they sometimes like to call themselves 'Holiness channels' (*arutsei kodesh*), they are happy to be known as *piratim*. There are also pirate stations devoted to popular music, and serving the West Bank settlers and the million-strong Arab population. But the religious stations, whose central theme is t'shuva, are now so numerous that people find themselves listening almost by accident as they turn the knobs on their car radios or in their kitchens, and as a welcome alternative to the official stations.⁹ During 2002 it has been noticeable that they are going beyond their

core audience and penetrating the secular world, and they are also becoming the subject of debates on the mainstream channels' chat shows and political discussions. Their number and proportion are matters for speculation. In a Knesset debate on 20 October 1999, a Shas member (MK) stated that there were 150 between 1996 and 1999 of which only 14 were religious. Yet he also said that in 1999 the authorities closed down 90 stations, of which 48 were religious, and that in the two months prior to the debate 21 out of the 28 stations closed down were religious. Any conclusions drawn from these numbers should keep in mind that stations routinely reopen after being 'closed down' – a blatantly illegal procedure which has never been followed by a prosecution or conviction (which could in theory carry a sentence of three years' imprisonment or a fine of up to US\$330,000).

The pirate stations play a game of cat-and-mouse with the government, operating under the constant threat of having their equipment confiscated. They do not like to give out their address, and they say that not infrequently they have to bundle their equipment out of a location in the face of a possible police raid. Although insiders mention links between particular stations and religious organizations or prominent Rabbis, they do not publicize these links. The degree of indulgence or repression by the authorities varies with the color of the government of the day – the more right wing, the more tolerant. But the received wisdom among the haredim is that they suffer relentless persecution, and they make the point with the customary hyperbole of Israeli political debate. The Shas MK quoted above declared that the persecution of the pirate radios reminded him of when the authorities in his native Georgia sent tractors to steamroller their synagogues in 1953, and the people lay down on the ground to stop them. The unwillingness of successive governments and parliaments to legalize their radio stations is also taken as proof of the discrimination

they suffer at the hands of what they see as a secular dictatorship: the same MK, referring unashamedly to the pirate stations' support for his party, said that it was clear that 'they' want to 'silence millions who have no other station', and that the Prime Minister (Ehud Barak) 'wants to destroy Shas' (which was a member of his coalition). A broadcaster in Netania spoke to us bitterly of their treatment by the Rabin government. Haredim, of course, would never accept space in what they regard as a godless state broadcasting station, but this does not stand in the way of routine point-scoring: thus, the Shas MK did not miss the opportunity to make the further point that, although the religious population were 20 per cent of the population, religious broadcasting accounted only for 0.5 per cent of broadcasting time on legal channels.

In recent years debates on this subject have been held on 12 March and 28 May 1997, 18 February 1998, 20 October 1999, 20 June and 23 July 2001, and they convey both the tenor of debate in Israel on and with haredim, as well as the unwillingness of the political class to regularize the situation. All have a vested interest in the status quo whereby the pirate radios – mostly religious as far as the MKs are concerned – are de facto tolerated. Caspi and Limor (1999:144) confirm the same point, though writing at a time when the religious stations had not become major players in pirate broadcasting, saying that they preserve an 'illusion of media pluralism', and are 'not perceived as threatening'. Today, they are perceived as a threat, along with the t'shuva movement as a whole, by secular Israel, but in practice almost the entire political class has a vested interest in turning a blind eye. All the Knesset debates have a tone of polemical banter, and end inconclusively as the participants disingenuously fail to decide to which committee the issue should be referred. On one occasion the Chair asks how many pirate radios there are in

Jerusalem, and a Shas MK responds ‘one – the state radio!’ In March 1997 the Shas Minister of Transport said that when the only pirate radios were those of the Peace Movement (Kol Hashalom) and the settlers (Channel 7) they were left alone, but as soon as religious groups started to broadcast they were persecuted. In May that year a Shas MK said that the stations might not be ‘very legal’, but they do express the views of a ‘hated and persecuted’ section of the population. On another occasion a member complained that the police leave the Christian evangelical radios, ‘which propagate a mistaken interpretation of the sources’, undisturbed, leading gullible Jewish listeners to fall into a trap, while harassing the religious radios which broadcast ‘love for Israel and the truth’. Secular parties, namely Meretz (the Centre Party), and Labour, intervene little, and when they do it is to complain that the law is not being implemented – a complaint which cuts little ice with Shas, nor with any government in this connection.¹⁰

The views of the Shas MKs quoted above are echoed by the pirate station operators. The director of the Mikol Halev (‘Giving with all your heart’) station also says that there are hundreds of pirate stations in the country, but that only the religious ones are troubled by the police. Asked whether there might be advantages to illegality, he responds guardedly: he does not see benefits from legalization ‘in all situations’, especially because legal stations are watched by the authorities and he does not want any authority looking over his shoulder or, as he put it, ‘telling him what to say’. (This may reflect anxiety over a law against incitement which was passed in the wake of the Rabin assassination in 1995, described by some, again with customary hyperbole, as a device for muzzling right-wing voices.) A newspaper journalist explained to us also that becoming legal involves bidding for a wave band, which would be far beyond the means of any of these stations – because of the heavy

competition for the few legally available bands. Legality would also impose all sorts of time-consuming paperwork. On the other hand, legal status would allow the stations to earn revenues from advertising. In short, while radio ‘piracy’ is tolerated by the authorities, the attitude of the radios themselves is neatly summed up in a broadcaster’s comment that ‘no revolution is ever made in legality’.

Outside the officially recognized media sector cash is scarce. It can be raised from donors, and collections for the radios are often made at open-air public meetings in support of the t’shuva movement. At Mikol Halev, the broadcasters and workers, even the website designer, are volunteers, yeshiva students or people who have returned to religion full time. The station receives many offers – or approaches – from people who want to broadcast, but the director only accepts those recommended by trusted individuals. For someone who wants to build a reputation as a preacher the radio is a good opportunity, as in the case of Rav Shalom Arush who heads a network of several yeshivas and broadcasts on Kol HaChesed (‘The Voice of Charity’). There are also degrees of professionalization, exemplified by Rav Gilles, an experienced broadcaster in several different idioms on several stations, sometimes answering phone-ins, sometimes delivering learned commentaries, sometimes interviewing a guest - always adept at switching his accent and style of speech between different audiences. Stations are now taking to recruiting media professionals who have made t’shuva or are at least sympathetic to their cause. Rav Gilles’ ethnic/community identity is of no concern to the stations, who are eager to put this well known and experienced voice on their own wavelengths.

The radios do not stand still. Mikol Halev, which looks and sounds like a shoestring operation, has a website which permits listeners to hear native-speaking Rabbis expounding in Hebrew, Spanish, French and English. The size of their

audience is of course impossible to judge, and many wavering listeners, responding to an audience survey, might not admit they do listen until ‘they have crossed a certain line’. Rav Gilles reckons he can tell by the number of callers – on some stations he has long queues of callers while on others there are very few. All arrange for a few callers in advance to get the show going. On this basis he reckons that Mikol Halev is a small station, whereas its director says it is one of the biggest.

Pirate radios and the t’shuva movement

The pirate religious stations are linked with a range of grassroots and street-level activities. We have seen the links with evangelists, but the case of Kol HaChesed shows that these links can spread much further, and that their multi-media capacity has the effect of shifting established social boundaries. This is a nationwide broadcaster run out of Netania by a group who resemble a social rescue brigade. Asked about their mission the first word they say is ‘family’ – their vocation is to spread a message of love, of reconciliation within families, and to do so in a language which is readily understandable to people unfamiliar with Judaism. Their radio is at the hub of a range of activities: they distribute didactic cassettes by giving a person 100 to sell as a good deed (*mitzvah*), they respond to requests for help and advice, on family and education matters especially; they provide a marriage guidance service whereby listeners can consult a Rabbi personally or by telephone, off the air. And, as so often, there are miracles: when a lady rang in saying she was having difficulty finding a husband, the Rabbi on the air told her she should sell 100 cassettes – three weeks later she was married!

The station operates within the framework of a NGO which is itself involved in many other activities – indeed our interlocutors say that they could not operate without that framework. The NGO is in the early stages of setting up a school for yeshiva drop-outs who, having never served in the army, fall between these two poles of Israeli society and find themselves unequipped for making their own lives. Volunteers provide their services as teachers, and the students serve a type of apprenticeship, but there is an important condition for their participation: they must study Torah for two hours per day. Another project takes in 120 school dropouts – in premises which are rented out for private gatherings to fund the operation. Together with other organizations, they provide food boxes to 1000 needy families, train orphans for their bar mitzvah, and help young women who might be thinking of having an abortion – if necessary and possible by arranging marriages for them. Through the organization 15 doctors provide weekly free medical attention – and though this is unpaid they benefit from the advertising of their work on the radio station. Their radio also advertises seminars – often residential and sometimes unpaid - run by Arachim (‘Values’) an organization devoted to the cause of t’shuva and also to training activists and professionals in propagating the message of t’shuva.

Thus we can see how radios are linked with other activities and organizations, crossing boundaries which in the routine of everyday life would be much thicker. The non-sectarian quality of the Kol HaChesed operation is seen in the lack of interest in emphasizing Sephardi or Ashkenazi traditions and in the use of Rabbis from different traditions and tendencies. The wider impact of such an approach should not, however, be exaggerated. Sectarian attitudes to secular Jews are definitely not softened, as witness the barely concealed fury at the persecution the Netania radio activists say they suffered from the Rabin government. Also, our conversations in the one

Ashkenazi *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox¹¹) station revealed Ashkenazi indifference to reaching out to the Sephardi population or to potential returnees, jointly dismissed with the quip: ‘T’shuva?.. that is for Sephardim’. The consequence of such attitudes is that the t’shuva movement does not have an Ashkenazi voice, but rather a distinctively Israeli (not just Sephardi) voice.

Partly because of its doubtful legal status, pirate broadcasting creates an intimacy with its audience: callers are not all that numerous, so they have time to chat, they are invited to make their needs known, and the speakers follow up through their religious or political networks to satisfy urgent personal needs. Most programming consists of homilies or phone-ins, with musical interludes of varying length. Mikol Halev is hosted every morning by a former ice-cream seller known as Ovadia Mehaglida (‘Ovadia Ice-Cream’), for whom nothing is too much trouble. While we were there, someone rang in with a request for thirty items of religious apparel for a group of students who want to begin adopting religious dress. They sounded like candidates for *t’shuva* and the radio’s prompt call brought immediate offers of money or donations in kind. Once a week there is a program to match buyers and sellers of anything from household goods to real estate. Many stations reserve extensive airtime for requests from individuals for help in emergencies. They also broadcast on health issues and (not surprisingly in this connection) alternative medicine¹². Whereas previously the stations tended to shy away from explicit political statements, in the increasingly polarized context of the second Intifada (from late 2000) some stations have become more vociferous and partisan on the subject of Jewish relations with Arabs and Palestinians. Sephardim may express occasional nostalgia for an the North Africa of their ancestors where Jews and Arabs coexisted in peace, and ‘everyone was religious’, but they do not transpose that into the context of contemporary Israel.

The radios, therefore, fit into the dense undergrowth of the t'shuva movement. The Sephardi element is not explicitly played up, but is an implicit presence through references to Shas or to Ovadia Yosef, through the accent of broadcasters and their chatty style which stands in contrast to the formalism of the state channels, characteristic of the Ashkenazi (secular) elite. Boundaries are redrawn by bringing listeners into new networks, which at first may be only virtual; but, if the radios achieve their aims, they eventually will reshape social lives as people put children into religious school, start attending synagogue, and become ever more involved in religious life. The content of the broadcasts, like the videos and tapes directed to the popular, less educated sectors, could be described as 'folksy'. They make a point of using images, proverbs and examples from everyday life, and these produce conclusions in the manner of folk wisdom. There is a similarity with Pentecostal preaching, and a contrast with the heavily text-centered disquisitions of fundamentalist Christians and of the more erudite, especially Ashkenazi, haredim. Indeed, it is a trademark of Ovadia Yosef himself that he peppers his addresses – though not his writings – with popular language and anecdotes.

It is clear that women are an important section of the audience, and that stations pay a great deal of attention to their needs and problems. Although managers are uneasy about allowing them to speak on air, the emphasis given to family problems – and family solutions – reflects women's presence in the audience. Some speakers allow women on the air (but only 'so long as they keep to the point') while others only allow them to leave messages - questions which are read out and answered, and which listeners can then follow up with requests for further clarification. In response to frequent requests for advice in overcoming family conflicts, speakers tend to recommend patience, long-term commitment, love in the

family. For these broadcasters, even major political problems have their solution in the rebuilding of the family, helped by a more observant lifestyle. This reflects the much-discussed collapse of family values and parental authority among Israel's Sephardi population. A man wants more children but cannot convince his wife; a woman wants to convince her household to adopt more strict observance, but encounters resistance among her men folk; men and women call to ask advice in resolving family conflicts. The responses tend to focus on 'peace-building' in the home, especially by advising women not to respond to their husbands' inconsiderate or offensive behavior. Thus a woman calls to complain that her husband shouts at her constantly. In response the speaker (somewhat counter-intuitively) tells a story about a Rabbi who gave a woman an amulet to put in her mouth and keep it there. As a result she could not speak of course, but each day her husband came with more and more generous presents – flowers, a diamond ring, and so on. Eventually the Rabbi tells her that the 'amulet' is nothing but an empty card... Independently of the content of such advice, the allusion to an amulet provides a ready referent to the world of Israeli Sephardim.

Listeners identify quite readily with 'their' station, to the point that, when asked to place themselves on a religious spectrum, they may use the name of their preferred station as a shorthand response. The format makes of the station an extension of the home, helped in this by the unofficial status of the station, and the friendly, helpful, 'can-do' responses of the speakers. Some daytime programmes are for children, often using cautionary tales to convey a message.

Thus we see a range of mechanisms whereby the activities of radios, when combined with other organizations and of course with politics, are redrawing some of the boundaries which separate – though, by emphasizing religious belonging and

encouraging religious and political activism, they also integrate - the multiple ethnic, religious and cultural enclaves of Israeli society. Listeners can find a radio which uses a particular style of speech, uses a certain type of music, emphasizes certain themes, and enables them to combine religious observance with an engagement with the media – something quite uncommon in the haredi world until the t’shuva movement took hold. The intimacy of the radio – both in the sense that it can be heard in private and in the home, and also that its style is designed to make listeners feel at home among an audience with whom they have a strong social and implicitly ethnic affinity – redraws boundaries in a society where these are unusually important in daily life. The airwaves are used to form networks of solidarity which feed in to Israel’s enclave system. Politically, the organizations which the radios promote rely directly or indirectly on government funding, and thus Shas’ strongholds in the apparatuses of Ministries of Social Affairs, Labour, the Interior, and Religious Affairs are strengthened. This fits in with the pattern of Shas activism, and indeed of nationalist and religious activism in Israel generally, which advances by creating ‘facts on the ground’, enclaves which begin as territorial entities – settlements, ultra-orthodox neighborhoods – and then become institutionalized in political parties or factions, and may eventually gain control of Ministries or ministerial departments.¹³

T’shuva and the tension between high and low culture

For those whose knowledge or experience of Judaism is limited to the diaspora it is hard to imagine the adoption of strict religious observance as a dissidence directed against high culture, or that the propagation of an observant lifestyle might be wrapped in symbols and motifs drawn from the sphere of popular culture. Ultra-

Orthodoxy, after all, seems so austere, so bound up with the written word and canonical texts, that it is hard to think of it as anything but high culture. In Israel, the ultra-Orthodox communities could for a long time be regarded as erudite, austere and self-isolated, relating to the rest of society only through their leaders' indefatigable political pressure and occasional direct action against violations of their bodily inhibitions and Sabbath observance. Drawing the line between high and popular culture turns out to be a complex issue, requiring account to be taken of the diversity of the ultra-orthodox world itself and the difficulties of setting the secular-religious contrast against that between high culture and its popular counterpart. For the time being, therefore, it is enough to say that the powerful *Chassidic* strand in ultra-Orthodoxy, with its anti-intellectual elements of mysticism and physical expressions of devotion and identity (through chanting and dance), is clearly self-identified as popular culture; that the text-centered character of the life of ultra-orthodox men (including the Chassidim, for they too learn) does not in itself detach them from the popular; and finally that even in nineteenth century Eastern Europe, ultra-Orthodox identity developed as a reaction against the sophistication of secularized and modernized Jews who wanted to join an overwhelmingly non-Jewish elite (Katz 1973), and was also powerfully enhanced by the struggles over intellectualism within highly observant circles, which witnessed ferocious denunciations by extremely learned Rabbis of the Chassidim for their corporal effusion and messianism.

To understand the popular cultural dimension of today's movement of return to religion, it must first be recalled how radically different circumstances in Israel are from those in pre-Holocaust Europe or indeed in today's diaspora, if only because as a state it constitutes a space in which the interaction of high and low culture is bound up with relations of power. In Israel also, high culture is not a matter of religion – rather

it is the culture of the secular elite, English-speaking, sophisticated, cosmopolitan and enamoured of the canon of Western civilization, and many indications tell us that the t'shuva movement is a cultural dissidence against that culture and its secularism. The Rabbinic erudition of the haredi communities stands in sharp contrast to the secular erudition of the university: where academics bring modern sciences such as archaeology and linguistics to bear on canonic texts, and place them in a historical context, while in the yeshivas the Rabbis do not accept the treatment of those texts as historical documents. Although they cultivate an extraordinary command of the texts, as far as they are concerned, Rashi (1040-1105) in France, Maimonides (1135-1204) in Cordoba and Cairo, and the authors and editors of the Talmud (500 - 100 BCE) in Babylon and Jerusalem, might as well all have lived at the same time in the same place.

The Ashkenazi Rabbinical world has imparted to their Sephardi pupils its hostility to the secular elite. The broader Sephardi population, for their part, are themselves marked out from the secular elite by a range of linguistic, educational and socio-economic markers, and they repeatedly charge that elite with making them feel inferior in culture and social status. So the t'shuva movement has been able to mobilize popular culture and strict religion against the secular elite and its cosmopolitan (European-Ashkenazi) practices, building on the affinity of the ethnic Sephardi theme with return to religion. The streetwise tinge to the movement – evidenced in Ovadia Yosef's asides, the chatty style of some cassette tapes, the religious music on tape, and the fabulous imagery (mixed with an abundance of wit) of Amnon Yitzchak's apocalyptic discourses – is the vehicle for its openness to the broader society, and demarcates t'shuva from the haredi obsession with practices denoting taboo, pollution and thus closure, introspection and exclusion. The circle of

dissidence is finally closed by the identification in Israel of the popular sectors with the Judaeo-Arab heritage, rather than with the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European culture, because the Sephardim are disadvantaged, because theirs is the language of the street, of the criminal underworld, and even because the pronunciation of modern Hebrew itself derives from the Hebrew of the Northern and Southern Mediterranean shores and of historic Palestine itself. Similarly, Israeli popular music also derives from the North African and Middle Eastern musical modes, not from those of Eastern Europe.

Some might remind us that outside Israel other t'shuva movements also use modern media and also conduct extensive t'shuva campaigns. This is true especially of Chabad, also known as the Lubavitch Chassidim, the one Ashkenazi sect which regards t'shuva as its primary commitment, which uses cassettes, co-opts popular music, and also New Age themes and motifs into its activities. Chabad has outreach programmes in the Jewish community, on many university campuses especially in the USA, and is well known for its missionary activities in peripheral Jewish communities, for example in Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santiago, Caracas and Buenos Aires. But these are directed inevitably at middle class people, and operate in a parochial Jewish cultural field in the diaspora, not in a national cultural space as is possible in Israel. Indeed it is striking that Chabad, though it has extensive operations in Israel, including an entire settlement known as Kfar Chabad, and although its methods have been borrowed by sections of the t'shuva movement (especially the Or HaChayyim educational network which is closely identified with Shas), does not have a high profile there – for example in radio or other media. The Israeli t'shuva movement, in contrast, with Shas as its vanguard, has developed not just as a 'conversion' (or 'reversion') movement, but also as a form of cultural

dissidence vis-à-vis the Ashkenazi secular elite, and with Shas as its political wing has been able to marshal an ethnically based electorate and large scale state finance to fuel its advance.

The confluence of popular culture, religious renewal and multi-media intervention is well represented in the figure of Amnon Yitzchak. Yitzchak is a one-man roadshow: his cassettes are distributed for free at street intersections, he makes CDs of his appearances in Israel, England and the US, and his personal appearances in Israel seem calculated to challenge or offend the country's cultural elite. Like evangelists in other religious traditions and other places (Birman and Lehmann 1999), he uses shock tactics in a symbolic anti-elitist crusade, for example by hiring venues usually occupied by symphony orchestras and international theatre groups. When he hired Tel-Aviv's *Hichal Hatarbut* ('Temple of Culture') legal challenges were (unsuccessfully) taken right up to the Supreme Court to stop his appearance there, and the audience at his – by now unchallenged – appearance in the equally highbrow Jerusalem Theatre auditorium in November 2001 were gleefully treated to a video of those very protests. To support his campaign against television, another symbol of Israeli secular culture, Yitzchak promises that anyone who throws theirs out will receive a free copy of the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Babli), and to demonstrate the success of his evangelizing campaign, he exhibits a box of earrings and ponytails discarded by women and men (respectively) who have converted at his public meetings. ('Throwing the television out' is a metaphor, or at least a rhetorical device: ultra-orthodox people still watch approved videos, for example in community centers. Yitzchak's target audience, though, are people who have still a long way to go before their 'conversion' has reached the point of literally throwing out the television.)

Yitzchak's Yemeni origin is central to his mediatic persona: his accent identifies him with that underprivileged and Oriental sector of society, and he wears a *djellaba* with unique accoutrements, including a skull-cap which he jokingly refers to as his 'antenna'. He litters his addresses with wordplay, talking of the 'temblevisia' instead of the 'televisia' – an allusion to the mind-numbing effects of television¹⁴ - and likening (George W.) Bush's name to the Hebrew word for embarrassment – *busha*. Yitzchak manages to soften stark choices and thick boundaries, presenting t'shuva as a gradual purification of social relations, with an emphasis on joining a new community rather than on breaking bonds with the old, as a solution to everyday problems of love, family, and finding a spouse, and as a gradual process rather than a painful radical break.

Yitzchak's roadshow is also a business operation with some characteristics of a NGO, since it relies in part on the cooperation of volunteers and on donations. His Shofar organization claims to have distributed a million videos for free in its first year, and to have sold a further million after 1996. The free distributions of videos and cassette tapes are made in the expectation that a certain number of the recipients will then become buyers and sellers. At meetings he invites his audience to 'win' (i.e. buy) 1000 cassettes by making ten monthly payments of 100 shekels. If, as in one instance, he persuades a mere 20 people out of 500 at one neighborhood meeting to sign up, that makes 20,000 tapes in a small area.

The mischievous millenarian: the use of parables and myths to subvert official discourse

His Judaism apart, Amnon Yitzchak has many, if not all, of the attributes of a Christian evangelist. His Shofar organization claims to have distributed a million videos in one year for free, to have sold a million a year since 1996, and to have brought 100,000 returnees per year back to religion. (If that were true the whole of Israel would soon be ‘black’¹⁵.) As illustrated in the previous paragraph, blanket coverage trawls a small number of committed activists, who then become collectors and distributors of cassettes and propagandists for the cause. His Hayyim Keflayim (‘Living Twice’) program follows up people who give their names at meetings, and gives them cassettes. Thus the organization builds up a database of people with whom it comes into contact, who might become more involved or donate funds. Like the radio stations, it encourages people to put their children into religious schools and encourages returnees on their road back to religious observance, but Yitzchak and his people have gone much further than the radio stations in creating a public of their own, in the application of business principles, and in adopting the content of American millenarian fundamentalism (Ammerman 1987). His rhetoric also goes further than (almost) any Israeli politician would dare.

At the Jerusalem Theatre Yitzchak made constant reference to his cassettes: ‘I am saying this now that we are on cassette 200, but I already predicted it in cassette 35’; in responses to the public he would say – ‘but have you not listened to the last cassette’; the promotional warm-up videos already had shown his supporters distributing cassettes for free at road junctions. The cassettes seem to be the emblem of his operation, to own and listen to them is to belong, and to distribute them among one’s friends and relations is to draw even closer to his campaign of t’shuva.

Dressed in his distinctive attire, Yitzchak is his own trade mark. The format of his meetings includes an address by him followed by questions from the floor. Many

people want their personal problems resolved – one needs a husband, the other a wife, a young boy wants to attend religious school but his mother will not let him, and so on. Almost all the questioners – some of whom may be ‘planted’ – speak with ease and eloquence, and Yitzchak responds in a down-to-earth sort of way. Those who have specific needs are asked to hand in a piece of paper and he blesses them all at the end of the meeting.

Anti-establishment rhetoric is fuelled by wordplay and judicious use of accent and turns of phrase. In one video-cassette, filmed live, he defends the privileges enjoyed by haredim in Israel, on the analogy of a watermelon. This is a reference to a remark by Ezer Weizman, Israel’s recent Head of State and, for the preacher’s audience, an archetypal representative of the European, educated, secular elite, who had picked out the development of the seedless water-melon as a source of great national pride. For religious people, for whom Israel is above all the Promised Land, the notion that the country should take pride in such mundane achievements is itself laughable. But Yitzchak builds his retort around the metaphor of ‘black’ as the colour of strict religious observance. For him, Weizman, like all secular Israelis, wants an Israel without the black seeds – without the haredim¹⁶. For Yitzchak, in contrast, the haredim are not only black seeds, they are also the seeds of continuity of Judaism, while the red flesh represents communism and dictatorship – i.e. the godless Zionist secular regime – and the green outer skin represents fertile pasture, an image of a fertile Israel. The kibbutz, secular and emblematically Zionist, took the juice of state subsidies first, and so the haredim then had to come and extort their due: if the haredim had staked their claim first, they would not have had to exercise so much pressure later on. He then attacks a towering icon of Zionism, namely David Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion, he claims, had said that Israel had to make the Jews into a

‘people with a culture’ – thus ignoring 5300 years of Jewish culture - and introduced a German culture – that is, anti-semitism. What, Yitzhak asks, of charity, of Sabbath observance, of respect for the sages – are these not also culture?

We had occasion to appreciate the effectiveness of Yitzhak’s use of these devices in his address, entitled ‘Before the End’, more or less word for word the same as a cassette he issued the day after the 11 September attacks –which offered a golden opportunity to merchants of biblical millenarianism. He recalled his prediction at the time of the 1993 Oslo agreements that ‘there is no peace with terrorists’. (Cassette no. 35 noted above.). Two years before he had predicted that ‘the great America would shrink’: no one would have predicted it, not even in their worst nightmares.... 1,000,000 Interpol agents... millions of recorded telephone conversations... all these ‘sources’ are of no use because those without ‘*spiritual* sources’ are unprotected. Only those who had the Jewish ‘sources’ knew it would happen.

The discourse then discusses the biblical origins of claims to the land of Israel, and quotes the Zohar, a Kabbalistic text which, having been compiled in thirteenth-century Spain (Jacobs 1995)¹⁷, is claimed as their own by Sephardim: ‘there will come a time when their right to the Holy Land will expire. Then the sons of Ishmael will wage war on the whole world – on sea, on land and near Jerusalem, and other peoples will participate in the struggle, but there will be no victor – there will be three months of war in a far-off place – and in the end only Israel will remain and the whole world will recognize the one God and his name is One...No one believed these or other prophecies, yet “the sons of Ishmael”¹⁸ have made us – the sixth power in the world – and the Americans, look like circus performers, like dwarfs: they took away the King’s crown and slapped him in the face’. Yitzhak ridicules the Americans – branded by implication as the global champions of the consumer society - and indeed

the Israeli state itself, which trusts too much in military prowess. He predicts that two thirds of the world will perish in the war of Gog and Magog¹⁹: ‘in 9 months of catastrophe, there will be epidemics, and limbs will be cut from bodies. Two thirds of the world will die. It is all written down – there is nothing to be done. The American attempt to impose globalization, democracy and liberalism, ignoring all religions, has come to this.’

But there is a chance of salvation for Israel if the people make t’shuva and return to God. The history of the Jewish people is an endless alternation between abandonment of God and t’shuva – but ‘maybe this is the last t’shuva, maybe we can be saved as in the Exodus from Egypt. Maybe now we have finally understood and the Messiah will return in our times’.

Apart from the violence of the language and the message, it is worth remarking on the constant inversion of official language in the discourse, with the use of wordplay and caricature: the Twin Towers and the tower of Babel; Bush juxtaposed with the Hebrew word ‘busha’, the ‘intelligence sources’ juxtaposed with ‘spiritual sources’, and the ridiculing of a great power humiliated, an image of the ‘world upside down’.

Written black on white, the speech seems extremely threatening, but in the auditorium, delivered in a low-key measured tone, mischievously peppered with jokes and ridicule of the great and powerful, including all Israeli political factions – save Shas - the audience did not respond with abnormal emotion or enthusiasm, as they might have done to fiery political rhetoric in a less genteel location.

The t’shuva movement in a comparative perspective

As occasional remarks have indicated, there is much in the t'shuva movement which we have already encountered in Latin American Pentecostalism, and, although of course there are differences, it is the similarities which deserve close attention, simply because similarities across the boundaries established by religious tradition – and of course by the interests of religious bureaucracies - are more counter-intuitive, as are differences within the boundaries.

Both Pentecostals and the t'shuva movement propagate a change of life, a strengthening of the family by infusing their discourse on family relationships with a halo of happiness and positive feelings, together with a strengthening of parental control over children and of husbands' authority over their wives. There are variations within as much as between: some churches insist more than others on the authority of husbands, as do some Rabbis; some Rabbis and preachers direct a message towards women and focus on the misfortunes of family life – unruly children, cruel husbands, lack of self-esteem – and both movements have in common a focus on changing one's life by changing one's attitudes or outlook, through return to Christ or trust in God. Occasionally a New Age tinge is added, as when people are called upon to 'listen' to one another, to stay calm, to find an inner peace, but for the most part the solution offered is t'shuva in one case, and 'accepting Jesus' in the other.

In both cases we observe much attention to fund-raising from the public, fronted by mediatic entrepreneurs of varying wealth, effectiveness and influence. These entrepreneur/preachers who combine proselytizing, managerial and communications skills, have become a standard feature of religious campaigning worldwide. The example of the Brazilian – but now international - Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Campos 1997), (Birman and Lehmann 1999), (Freston 2001), which has developed a vast centralized bureaucratic and commercial apparatus

out of this combination, is exceptional, but emblematic: for the most part such ventures are one-man shows which operate in conjunction with other religious organizations on the ground, as Amnon Yitzchak does.

There is a straightforward explanation for the preference for radio over television, and for local stations over national networks.²⁰ Radio is cheaper and allows the broadcaster to target a niche audience. Local stations have technical and commercial advantages: their phone-in programs have low start-up costs, they probably avoid liability for copyright fees, operate with volunteers, and do not need to sustain uninterrupted programming – their audience quickly becomes accustomed to tuning in, so long as broadcasts keep to a regular timetable.

In Latin America Pentecostalism has evolved a subtle and complex relationship with popular culture, and with the complex of relationships which bind the popular to the erudite in both religious and secular spheres (Lehmann 1996). Pentecostals attack the culture of Catholicism and its intertwined institutional and popular expressions, yet manage to do so while apparently deepening their penetration of popular culture. The institutional Catholic Church is depicted as luxurious and self-satisfied, cosseted in its finery and arrogant in its elaborate architecture. As in Israel, the intertwined secular cultures of the elite and the people are also targeted, using the media to present a counter-culture against the rational secularism of the intellectual elite, and against the political elite (Birman and Lehmann 1999)

Popular culture exists in interdependence with the culture of the erudite and the elite – it is not a relationship of dependence, nor is the popular a mere artefact of elite manipulation. Rather in these contexts the cultural struggle is not only for the control of popular culture, but also for the power to state with authority what that culture consists of.

The paradox is that, despite their often-dramatic rejection of the culture of the popular sectors Pentecostals also successfully portray themselves as closer to the language and daily concerns of those same popular sectors. This is achieved by a refashioning of the imaginary of popular culture and by operating transformations in the popular-elite relationship. Pentecostals benefit from the contrast between the social distance separating highly trained priests, educated in seminaries and sometimes abroad, and the style of their own pastors who are close to ‘the people’, speak a direct, jargon-free language, and confront the day-to-day problems of their followers. But the pastors retain a distance, though a different sort of distance: they do not adopt a humble persona of ‘men of the people’. Instead, they present to their followers a role model of prosperity and petty bourgeois respectability.

If in Israel we have observed the affinity of t’shuva with the renaissance of the Sephardi ethnicity, in Latin America we find that Pentecostals are particularly successful among indigenous people, and that in Brazil Pentecostals have appropriated and refashioned the symbolic apparatus associated with the African heritage, while claiming to discredit them. The t’shuva movement’s Sephardi leaders have inverted symbolic structures of exclusion and low status by invoking them as emblems of a grand tradition which, they say, remained unbroken while the Ashkenazi tradition was interrupted and weakened by the Enlightenment and the Holocaust. Like the Pentecostals they have also mounted a two-pronged attack on the religious establishment of the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox – whose parties Shas outnumbers by 17 to 5 Knesset seats – and on the secular elite. They have adapted the music of popular culture to their religious crusade by keeping the tunes but exchanging secular lyrics for liturgical verses; their radio broadcasts are a permanent thorn in the side of the regulators of broadcasting; they transform talmudic debate by

their use of street language and their evocation of the stresses and strains of daily life – sprinkled with abundant Rabbinic allusions and stories.

T'shuva Israeli-style does not explicitly confront the religious establishment in the same way as Pentecostals confront Catholic hegemony. But in these matters content counts for less than form – and by form is meant the rearrangement and appropriation of symbols and ethnic identifiers, and the concomitant redrawing of public spaces. In this paper we have shown how, for all the use of modern communications media, the time-honored formal accoutrements of religion – ritual, taboo, the delineation of space, style, language, dress and more besides – are more than equal to the challenge of reclaiming public space from a secular intelligentsia to whom these arms are quite foreign. They are hardly likely to reclaim the whole of public space, as no doubt they would like, but they are certainly redrawing its boundaries.

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Endnotes

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² ‘The major Zionist camps – the socialist camp, itself composed of several parties, the Zionist National Religious Party; the mainstream, liberal General Zionist Party; the right wing identified with Jabotinsky - all developed their own autonomous organizations in the various fields of Zionist activity: agricultural settlement, schooling, youth movements, banking , housing, employment, health, and defense.’ (Swirski, 1999:88).

³ Since Cabinet votes and the votes are published, the Cabinet can be seen as Israel’s de facto Upper House.

⁴ Technically this is on a par with Muslim and Christian control over private law as well, following the pattern established by the Ottoman Empire. On the Muslim side of the equation and the general framework see Eisenman, R. (1978). Islamic law in Palestine and Israel. Leiden, E.J.Brill.

⁵ *T’shuva* literally translated means ‘return’ or ‘repentance’. Estimates based on social surveys and the census show that the ultra-orthodox population in 1995 numbered 280,000 and accounted for 5.2 per cent of the total Israeli population (including Arabs); but their very high fertility plus t’shuva will bring those figures to 510,000 and 7.7 per cent, and possibly more by 2010 Berman (2000). "Sect, Subsidy,

and Sacrifice: An Economist's View of Ultra-Orthodox Jews." Quarterly Journal of Economics 115 (3): 905-953.

⁶ Tamar El-Or describes how the leader of the Gur Chassidim (Chassidim being the more mystical wing of the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox community) decreed that in order to extend their influence in Israeli society young married couples should live at least five years away from their parents. The result was that they created the same inward-looking communities, but as islands in a secular sea. The Chassidim, dependent as they are on very thick and impermeable boundaries to protect their ever-more-severe stringency, have not developed the method of concentric circles which serves Shas and the t'shuva movement, and many other social movements, so well.

⁷ The Israeli term is 'regional' but it is better rendered as local given the small spaces involved.

⁸ Schach died in November 2001 at the age of 107 (or thereabouts).

⁹ There are seven official stations: two belong to the army, of which one is a mainstream news and current affairs channel and the other transmits mostly music – in both cases with an eye to a highly secular, youthful audience, especially soldiers; Programme 1 consists largely of high culture; Programme 2 consists mostly of news and politics; and Programme 3 concentrates on Israeli music of all sorts; Network 88 broadcasts jazz and 'world music', and Kol Hamusika (the Voice of Music) specializes in classical music. It is not hard to see that this leaves plenty of room for alternative stations.

¹⁰ An additional sub-controversy concerned air safety, since it is widely believed that the radios interfere, or could interfere, with air traffic control (hence the involvement of the Minister of Transport, who, however, seemed more concerned to make a political point than ensure air safety!) On 2 September 2002 several flights

had to be cancelled because the pilots could not communicate with the control tower, apparently because of the pirate radios, and there was talk of a protest strike by air traffic control staff.

¹¹ The word *haredi* is frequently used to describe the ultra-orthodox community: it is a modern term which has come into currency in recent decades meaning ‘those who tremble’ before God.

¹² ‘Not surprisingly’ because of the elective affinity between movements of religious renewal and the ‘New Age’ culture, given their interest in healing, and in the case of Jewish Ultra-orthodoxy, an uneasy attitude to medical manipulation of the body – especially of women’s bodies.

¹³ Even the history of television provides an example of this. The Second Television Channel started to function as an ‘experiment’ in 1986 and continued to do so for seven years before the authorizing law was finally passed. This was partly due to the need to ‘seize’ frequencies before other countries in the region did so, but also to meet public demand for an alternative to the only other channel available. (Caspi and Limor, 1999:153) An article in *Ha’aretz* (Hannah Kim: ‘The secret of the settlers’ strength’, 2 July 2002) explains how West Bank settlers, despite the lack of support for their cause in public opinion, have become an indispensable part of the Israeli economy and how they have also attracted a steady flow of people not for ideological reasons, but because they provide cheap (subsidized) housing and social services, and even schools with smaller class sizes. These benefits are a result of unremitting political pressure creating, once again, ‘facts on the ground’, not only physically, but also politically.

¹⁴ *Tembel* is Hebrew for ‘foolish’.

¹⁵ A standard usage referring to the black suits worn permanently by *haredi* men.

¹⁶ The word ‘black’ is synonymous with haredi: thus a black neighbourhood is one dominated by the ultra-Orthodox.

¹⁷ The legends and controversies are summarized by Louis Jacobs (1995:628-630).

¹⁸ i.e. the Arabs.

¹⁹ A periodic theme in Jewish and Christian eschatology, derived originally from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, 38,39.

²⁰ Even the one apparent exception to this statement – Brazil’s Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which owns a nationwide television network (TV Record), is only an apparent exception, since TV Record only transmits religious content very late at night and very early in the morning: for the rest its content is standard television – though a little more restrained than its rivals. The church operates numerous local radios throughout Brazil.