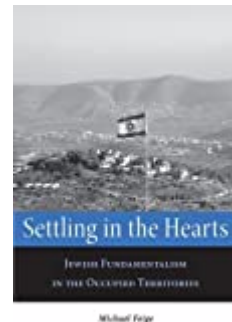


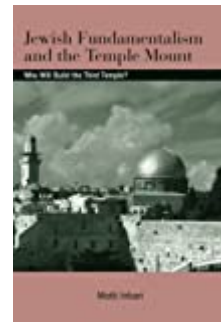
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Michael Feige. *Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009. 328 S. \$54.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8143-2750-0.



Motti Inbari. *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who Will Build the Third Temple?* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009. 211 S. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4384-2623-5; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4384-2624-2.



Nurit Stadler. *Yeshiva Fundamentalism: Piety, Gender, and Resistance in the Ultra-Orthodox World.* New York: New York University Press, 2009. 196 S. \$39.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8147-4049-1.



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Sammelrez: M. Feige: Jewish Fundamentalism

This year as many as three monographs on Jewish fundamentalism have been published, yet all three of them focus on different movements. Whereas Michael Feige, in *Settling in the Hearts*, deals with the religious Zionist settlement movement, Motti Inbari, in *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, focuses on groups that are located on the periphery of religious Zionism. Finally Nurit Stadler, in *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, concentrates on shifts of piety within the ultraorthodox world.

Compared to the numerous studies already published on the subject, Michael Feige's book *Settling in the Hearts* differs in methodology as well content. Almost all of the previous works dealt either with the political-religious agenda of the settlers, the impact on Israeli and Palestinian societies and/or the ramifications for the Peace Process. Feige however chooses to answer the question: how does a radical fundamentalist movement go about settling in the hearts of people? (Feige, p. 4)

In order to answer this question Feige's research does not focus on the history or politics of the movement as others did before, but and this is in wide part a new approach to research on the subject he concentrates on anthropological concepts of the settlers' lifeworld, such as time, space and memory, semiotics and semantics, or the perception of themselves vis-à-vis others. In doing so, he always contrasts the settlers' view to the logic of the non-settler Israeli society and thereby comes back to his actual task of analyzing to what extent the settlers succeed in incorporating their narrative into the wider Israeli narrative.

As an anthropologist Feige's research was conducted via several years of participant observation, a method which he applied also for previous works on the same subject. Therefore it is not surprising that he is a former student of Gideon Aran, who applied this method also in his groundbreaking study on Gush Emunim.

The book can be divided in three parts. The first part connects the central question of the book with the general logic and lifeworld of the religious settlers. Here Feige explains how the settlers construct their reality, how they interpret and apply Jewish religious tradition to the world around them, how they react to developments in their environment and to what extent their narrative is compatible with the Israeli narrative beyond the green line.

In order to give the reader an idea of the settlers' everyday life, Feige explains its significant features. He ex-

plains their concept of time, space and history (chapter 2), their self perception of living in settlements, as well as the outreach of the image of a settlement (chapter 3), the settlers' connection to the land and the attempts and methods of proving their authenticity (chapter 4), the role of the Palestinians (chapter 5), and the influence of the Intifadas not only on their daily life, but also on the whole construction of reality (chapter 6).

Among many good chapters, the second might be in respect to the leading question the book's most outstanding one. It shows most clearly the differences of legitimation between secular and religious Zionists and their concept of time and history. While both use the bible as a point of reference, the secular Zionists exploit it to prove their historical right of return, whereas religious Zionists refer to the ahistorical connection of Jews to the land promised to them by God. This is emphatically articulated, when Feige quotes Gush Emunim founding member Hanan Porat: "The historical reason, in its literal sense, is not relevant. If two millennia ago there were Jews here does that give us any rights? Will the Vikings come and demand rights to Scandinavia or England? [â] The uniqueness of the Jewish people is that their connection to the land is metahistorical. They create history and are not just derived from it." (Feige, p. 44)

In what can be seen as the second part of the book (Chapters 7 through 9) Feige switches from describing the inner logic of the religious settlers' world view to a portrayal of three settlements: Hebron, Gush Etzion and Ofra. In line with the argument of the book, Feige chose these settlements because each one of them takes a different stand trying to incorporate into the public narrative: Hebron calls upon Jewish religion and history, Gush Etzion appeals to the Zionist pre-state ideals, and Ofra pledges to the Israeli society that there are reasonable and normal religious settlements not fundamentally distinct from communities within the green line.

The third part of the book (chapters 10-12) looks at very different developments, all of them with a certain potential to distress the settlers' cause. Chapter 10 deals with the ramifications of the evacuation of Sinai for the settlers' relationship with society, which is in their view a kind of an original sin of the state. Chapter 11 deals with the challenges of feminism for a fundamentalist movement, and chapter 12 focuses on the first West Bank born generation, which displays compared to their parents a very different, dismissive attitude towards Israeli society. This chapter is especially interesting, as it is (to the best of my knowledge) the first scholarly, non-

Hebrew publication to deal with the so called "Hilltop Youth".

In the concluding chapter 13 Feige answers the question if the settlers have "settled in the hearts" negatively and he explains why. On the one hand the settlers did succeed establishing a settlement complex in the Palestinian Territories, which has assumed such vast proportions that it is probably the single-most important obstacle to the peace process. On the other hand Feige can demonstrate that the settlers failed to incorporate their view into the general Israeli narrative, by pointing out to different events. The most obvious display of failure was visible throughout the protests against the disengagement in Gaza. While the mobilization of the religious Zionist camp was close to total, almost no one else joined in.

Feige's insight that the settlers did not manage to ingrain their essentialist account of the West Bank into the Israeli narrative might be surprising to some, but it is nevertheless correct. Polls have indicated for a long time that for the majority of Israelis, the reason for remaining in the West Bank are more related to economics and security (however justified that may be), but hardly to a spiritual connection to the land in the settlers' sense.

But the greatest merits of the book lie elsewhere, namely in delivering an anthropological study of the life-world of the religious settlers, which permits the reader both, a very broad but also in depth understanding of the logic of this movement.

It is a pity that Feige draws no connection at all between different attitudes characterized in the book and the political differences within the religious settler community, as they erupt pretty much along the debate, if "settling the hearts" or "settling the land" is of higher importance. But besides these minor points of critique Feige's book is definitely a very valuable and knowledgeable contribution to the study of the religious settlers in particular and to the understanding of religious movements in today's world more generally.

One consequence of the settlers' failed attempt to establish their narrative as part of the mainstream is a fragmentation and radicalisation of Israel's orthodoxy. That is exactly the topic Motti Inbar's work "Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount" devotes its attention to. His book deals with the radical fringes of the Jewish religious scene - Inbar relates to them as "small, extremist and semi-clandestine groups." (Inbar, p. 15) In doing so, he provides the reader with an insight to a topic,

which was by and large neglected by scholarship so far.

Correlating to the fact that the book touches in wide parts on new aspects, Inbar's research has been conducted mainly with primary sources, being written materials by the various groups, interviews as well as participant observations in their gatherings and ceremonies.

Common to all of them is an experience of disappointed messianic expectations, which led them to take a more activist stance towards the fulfillment of redemption. This activism focuses in one way or another around the rebuilding of the Third Temple, and is normally accompanied by a political doctrine to erect a Torah state. Both are essential features of the Jewish belief of redemption.

Two of the book's chapters deal explicitly with post-Zionist or anti-Zionist and anti-statist movements, openly supportive of the use of violence, and for whom the establishment of the Third Temple is just a feature (albeit an important) in the course of the founding of a theocratic kingdom.

One of them is Yehuda Etzion (chapter 3) and his Movement for Redemption. Etzion is most famous (or better infamous) for his participation in the Jewish Underground, who planned to blow up the Temple Mount. Inbar depicts his theology, resting massively on the former Lechi veteran Shabbatai Ben Dov, as a plan to transform Israel into a theocracy. Etzion follows Ben Dov in his attitude towards democracy, being acceptable "only as a potential factor to be exploited." (Inbar, p. 64)

The other person who is very anti-democratic and anti-statist is Yitzhak Ginzburg, who is described in chapter 6. Ginzburg, best known for his apologetic writings of the mass murderer Baruch Goldstein, is particularly interesting for a political scientist, as he gets as close to the idea of religious totalitarian state as one can get it in today's Judaism. A sketch of his political ideas might be taken from a theory of religious totalitarianism: (1) a state exclusively according to the laws of the Torah, in which the individual will has to be suppressed until everyone realizes that his will and the teachings of the Torah are one; (2) thus the return of everyone to the active faith in God (-participation); (3) eventually the use of "holy terror"; and (4) a racist doctrine, which states that Jews are a fundamentally different species than other humans and therefore two different laws are required.

Other groups, like Israel Ariel's Temple Mount Institute (chapter 2) or Gershon Salomon's Temple Mount

Faithul (chapter 4), focus more on the rebuilding of the Temple itself. Yet, the most interesting chapter of the book is on Yosef Elboim and the Movement for Establishment of the Temple (chapter 5). This movement is neither pro-violence nor anti-statist and even more remarkable, it is an ultraorthodox movement. Its founder Yosef Elboim does still believe in a state according to the Torah, but he puts his emphasis on convincing people. As Inbari explains, praying at the Temple Mount and the eventual erecting of the Third Temple appear as trigger facts in Elboim's thoughts for a return of the Jewish People to God – which is one of the key elements of the redemption. This is remarkable for an ultraorthodox point of view, as it is in several ways contrary to the common habits of the Haredim: Elboim takes an activist messianic stance, which is seen as strictly forbidden, he enters the Temple Mount, which is seen as strictly forbidden and he issues new halachic rulings, a matter restricted to the so-called poskim, a handful of senior rabbis. Therefore it is not surprising that the movement suffers under reprisals in the stern Haredi community. Especially Elboim himself is targeted. So was he banned from the bus line taking him to work, he was forbidden to enter the minyan (Jewish prayer quorum), and posters denouncing him have been placarded on Mea Shearim's walls.

Reading *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount* a few points can be criticized. First, an elaboration on the actual potential of some of the groups (especially Etzion and Ginzburg's) to conduct violent actions in order to fulfil their theocratic vision would have been interesting. In that course one also wonders where the remnants of Kach/Kahane (a fist in the face of a Gentile is Kiddush HaShem) are to be located, as they are in the book only connected to the as peacefully depicted group of Elboim. Secondly, a few more words could have been lost on the legal status of the Temple Mount, e.g. who is currently allowed to pray, how access is managed and so on.

But otherwise the book is well done. First it sheds light on movements hardly discussed before. Second it sets these movements in connection to each other and brings therefore some order in the ever more fragmented Jewish religious scene. Third, locating them at the (right-wing) periphery of religious Zionism enables Inbari to show that these movements are in contact with some major figures of the Israeli religious movements.

Turning to Nurit Stadler's *Yeshiva Fundamentalism* also means shifting to another sort of *Jewish Fundamentalism*, namely to ultra orthodoxy. The aim of the

book is to demonstrate a shift within the Haredi ideal of piety from an other-worldly to a this-worldly belief. In concrete terms she tries to show that the hitherto ideal life, in which Torah studies alone were regarded as crucial, has shown cracks and new ideals derived from the secular Israeli society have poured in.

This assumption is the product of quite an impressive research. Stadler states that she conducted more than 60 in-depth interviews with young yeshiva boys (aged 18-28) and read hundreds of guides and manuals concerning the correct code of behaviour within the ultraorthodox world.

The most important part of the book might be the one, in which Stadler elaborates on the change taking place regarding the approach to Torah studies, which has been so far the very defining criterion of this milieu (chapter 3). The ideal of Torah as vocation (*tora omnino*) forms the basis for what has been termed the *society of scholars*: a society in which every male is meant to study Torah most of his life. Consequently most of Haredi men do not work to earn their livelihood and hence they are, in spite of enormous state funding, the poorest segment in Israeli society.

Nevertheless, the official teaching of the rabbinical establishment denounces work as a distracting activity that endangers the scholar of sinning. Furthermore they call upon the young scholars to have faith in God supplying them with everything. As Stadler puts it: *As it was of old, so shall it now be: each Torah scholar will be the worthy recipient of the miraculous if he dedicates his life strictly to Torah related activities.* (Stadler, p. 81)

But this world view is harshly criticized by Stadler's interviewees, especially for two reasons. First of all the financial situation of most Haredim is worsening and poverty is an essential threat. Second the guiding ideal of this milieu, to become an outstanding Torah scholar, seems to become more and more unrealistic for most of the students, as the total number of students virtually exploded due to an average birth rate of approximately eight children per family.

Thus the students criticize the authorities for not opening up new possibilities and allowing new ways to go, what is very graphically illustrated by Stadler. She quotes her interviewees portraying the rabbinical authorities of being afraid of the outside world and changes in general.

Therefore it is not surprising that the young students

look for new ideals of piety and masculinity, and where else should they derive it from, if not Israeli society. Stadler highlights two developments: The idealization of the soldier (chapter 5) and the forming of an ultraorthodox emergency response team, ZAKA (chapter 7).

The army is traditionally depicted by the rabbinical authorities as realm of sin, with the capacity of leading the young Haredim, who are exempted from military service, astray. But in spite of the warnings of the rabbinic authorities, military fantasies have poured into visions of the Haredim, as Stadler demonstrates. She does not only describe how military jargon has been included into the regular yeshiva life (the scholar is a soldier in a war between good and evil), but also the yearning not only for spiritual, but physical excellence. Thus the image of the God fearing, ultraorthodox IDF soldier has become wide spread. This becomes especially evident on Purim – a religious feast, on which kids dress up – when the favourite costume is the IDF soldier.

Another manifestation of the searching for new ideals is ZAKA, an ultraorthodox organization which collects body parts after terror attacks or accidents. Through this organisation some young Haredim do actually manage to incorporate both, religious (as the body has to be complete for burial) and physical ideals. Furthermore it is source of pride for the participating Haredim, as it enables them to contribute to Israeli society and thus refutes to some extent the predominant picture of being parasitic.

Summa summarum, Stadler provides the reader with an excellent account of the changes within the Haredi youth. Some of these changes have been topics of recent essays by herself and others (like Jacob Lupu or Eyal Ben Ari), but the book allows the reader to get an overview to the current situation. Furthermore the topic becomes not only for the scholar of religion, but also for the scholars of Israel and the Middle East in general interesting, as latest data has shown that ca. 25% of Israel's first graders are enrolled in ultraorthodox schools. The future course of the Haredi community will very likely play a major role in Israeli politics.

Yet her major assumption, the shift from other worldly piety to this worldly piety, has to be seen critically in one, but important respect. She writes, that "Yeshiva students, the core of Haredi fundamentalism, are acting as the agents of reformation." (Stadler, p. 160) The problem is (which she admits) that this change has hardly materialized (with exceptions like ZAKA) and certainly not been institutionalized. The socio-moral grip of the leadership is still strong enough to detain the over-

whelming majority to look for jobs outside their milieu or enlist in the army. Thus one has to wait how the opinions of the youth will translate, once they gain leadership positions.

Also her critique on previous works (especially on Friedman) appears at times a bit harsh, all the more as Friedman himself has pointed out that patterns within the ultraorthodox community are very likely to be changing, considering their enormous growth and economical dependency on the state (cf. e.g. Friedman's essay "The Family-Community Model in Haredi Society").

But despite these minor critiques, this book is a must read for the scholar interested in Israeli ultraorthodoxy and because of the rising importance of the Haredim, of Israel in general.

As concluding remarks some words should be said about the notion of "Fundamentalism", which is the common topic of all three books. Even though above mentioned authors refer to the crucial studies in fundamentalist theories (Almond et al., Eisenstadt, Riesebrodt, and so forth) the term fundamentalism is at times used as a self-enforcing attribute, whose explanatory function is at least unclear. But that is more of a general problem of fundamentalist theories than really restricted to these books.

Two problems stand out in this respect. First, it is not clear if fundamentalism denotes necessarily political activism or not. Thus, when Inbari defines fundamentalism as "religious movements that [...] seek to manifest their religious faith in the political arena," (Inbari, p. 11) one finds a description fitting the groups in his book. On the other hand, in Stadler's view, the four prevalent features of fundamentalism are antimodernism, scripturalism, massive institution building and separatism. (Stadler, pp. 6-10) Thus there is no notion of a compulsory political activity, as the Haredim do not view politics as religious means.

But this is just a problem on the surface. The other problem is more basic. The common feature, in which all theories of fundamentalism agree, is its hostility towards elements of modernity, such as enlightenment and secularization. Yet one still might ask, if the "formations of the Secular" (to use Talal Asad's phrase) are not a constituting fact of modernity itself. To answer the question which elements of modernity fundamentalists are coming out against, and which they incorporate by just engaging with the outside world, we still need to integrate the ongoing debate of the last two decades about the role of "the secular in the modern" into the wider frame of fundamentalist theories.

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