

Haredi draft refusers: Truth carried on the shoulders of individuals

of Israel in 1948, Haredi Jews have refused to serve in the Israeli military for religious reasons. Typically, they study Torah in Yeshivas, and as such were legally exempt, until June 2024, when the Israeli supreme court overturned the exemption. This article explains why the Haredi claim, that Torah study and prayers to God are more important to Israel's security than the IDF, is justified by examining the foundation of Jewish education.

The approach to education embodied by the Haredi is predicated upon the sanctity of life as individual irreplaceability, insofar as its fundamental premise is ontological. This contrasts the secular approach whereby each point of view is depersonalized. It is then reconstructed, within a definitive framework that correlates those personal perspectives to an overarching meta-reality. Knowledge is obtained through dialogue insofar as perception is clarified through interaction, in order to decrease self-consciousness of the dialogical distance between oneself and the other.

A secular approach, meanwhile, is predicated upon the assumed universality and the exchangeability of the personal point of view as a de-constructible configuration of unique characteristics. In this schema, truth is derived from the increased precision of the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of the paradigm within a quantifiable, unifiable and impersonal meta-paradigm as the basis of scientific materialism.

The unique conception of personhood stems from a clear Jewish vision of the sanctity of the person created in the image and likeness of God which presupposes, and consequently affirms, the unique and unrepeatable experience of the individual point of view, as enshrined in Sacred Scripture and the Imago Dei teaching.

Likeness with God constitutively relates the human person to God in the most profound manner. The theological pedagogical approach is predicated upon the indissolubility of the individual point of view as ontologically definitive, where each individual monophony is integral to the whole by virtue of its distinctive tenet as a singular, sole and irreducible complex vision of the world.

The irreducible complexity, of experience, constitution and disposition, renders that point of view fundamentally irreducible to a series of taxonomic distinctions. In this manner the Haredi attest that truth is carried on the shoulders of individuals. The pre-eminent question of human existence, then, becomes not one of de-personal knowledge but rather personal significance.

For the Haredi, truth is framed dialogically through individual convictions and corresponding actions rather than abstract ideologies. If each indissoluble individual is equally capable of recognizing truth in the points of view of others, then the meaning of truth resides in comprehensibility and not linguistic uniformity.

Truth is foremost grasped by the individual, in the nexus of study and contemplation. The Torah preserves the memory of individuality by facilitating the existential unfolding of man's

self-consciousness, and sub-consciousness, in relation to the divine. The Haredi approach to education affirms the belief that people are made in the likeness and image of God.

Each person is foremost endowed with an individuality that should be cherished and preserved as a witness to the divine. The inevitability of imperfect comprehensibility disqualifies the possibility of truth claims commanding the status of absolute (insofar as they are recognizable by all, as applicable to all).

Haredi education is ordered towards discerning reality from the recognized truth inherent to the personal perspective, rather than constructive truth from the ordered experience of a majority. In this schema truth is recognized before it is comprehended.

This dialogical nature renders truth inexhaustible and subservient to the sacrosanctity of the individual's unique point of view endowed from within, by an innate, irreducible significance. By refusing the draft, and envisaged degradation of the individual to an apparatus of the state, the Haredi are merely testifying to their belief that, usurping democratic values and popular opinions, truth is foremost carried on the shoulders of individuals, according to conscience, answerable to God.