Jewish Revenge

Haredi Action in the Zionist Sphere

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ABSTRACT

Jewish ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) cinema in Israel has become increasingly prominent in recent years. Emerging as a highly controversial, secluded, and gender-segregated form of "amateur cinema," it is currently seeing gradual professionalization. This article discusses Haredi cinema in the context of the Haredi community's relationship with the Israeli state and the doctrine of Zionism. Appropriating generic conventions of mainstream Hollywood cinema, yet keeping within the secluded Haredi space, this form of minority cinema functions as an alternative (virtual) sphere in which a complex set of negotiations occurs between Jewish ultra-Orthodox ideals and those of the surrounding Israeli society and Zionism. It is reflective of and engaged in the production of recent social and discursive transformations within the Haredi community in Israel. We examine this phenomenon through a focused analysis of the male action genre, specifically the popular series *Jewish Revenge* (Yehuda Grovais, 2000–2010). As we demonstrate, the mode of representation and the narratives of these films bring models of masculinities and notions of heroism under scrutiny. The Zionist narrative, the national body, and the (imaginary) place of the Haredi within it are being reconfigured through the prism of body politics and fantasies of transgression.

In recent years Jewish Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) cinema has come into being. It emerged in the early part of the twenty-first century from the Haredi community in Israel as a particular form of minority cinema. Its corpus includes dozens of

films that are made by and for Haredi viewers, and it is marked by strict gender segregation. Created for and watched predominantly in a self-segregated enclave on the margins of Israel's cinematic landscape, these films are produced outside the mainstream Israeli film industry and are rarely regarded as forming part of Israel's national cinema.

Thus far the Haredi films have gained modest critical attention, not least due to the novelty of this form of cinema and its secluded nature. Only a number of academic publications on the topic have appeared in Hebrew. Marlin Vinig's book, *Haredi Cinema* (2011), mainly charts the development of Haredi women's cinema. Vered Elimelech's 2009 work analyzes the representation of rabbis in Haredi films and the image of the Other in Haredi male cinema. Moran Banit's 2013 study examines models of masculinities in the work of the Haredi filmmaker Avi Grinberg.[1] This article seeks to expand on these studies. We discuss Haredi cinema in the context of the relationship of the Haredi minority with the Israeli state and with the doctrine of Zionism.

We focus our analysis on the Haredi action films, and specifically on the popular film series *Jewish Revenge* (*Hanekama Hayehudit*, Yehuda Grovais, Israel, 2000–2010).[2] These films address a specific target audience of Haredi young men. The Haredi appropriation of the cinematic action genre, we argue, is a poignant example of the way films, as potent sites of discursive enunciation, construct and reshape identities and social relations, in this case in the context of Israeli Haredi men. The notion of action is at the heart of the ideological split between secular Zionism and Haredi Judaism. The association of action with physical power, body spectacle, and masculinity, both within the Zionist narrative and the cinematic action genre, forms the main prism of our discussion.

The Alternative of Haredi Cinema

As a fundamentalist religious group that adheres to a strict code of Jewish law (*Halakha*), Haredi society seeks to preserve its boundaries and maintain its autonomous way of life. In so doing, members of the community continuously negotiate—at times through the mediation of rabbinic authorities—various aspects of modern life regarding private and public matters as well as the wider, non-Haredi, public sphere. Cinema, a quintessentially modern medium, was historically rejected both as being a key representation of Western culture that imparted foreign values and for its intrinsic representational nature.[3] The viewing

of cinema was forbidden by Haredi authorities as early as the opening of the first cinema hall, Oracle, in Jerusalem in 1908.[4] Rabbinic rulings that prohibit its consumption and warn of its sinful nature have marked the relationship of the Haredi leadership with the cinematic medium ever since. Successive advances in visual media and devices, such as television, video, and DVD players, were equally rejected for similar reasons.

Despite these prohibitions, the past decade has seen the emergence of a unique and contested form of Haredi cinema whose growing popularity evinces, if nothing else, the somewhat long-lasting fascination of many Haredim with the medium. Its development over the past decade has been marked by significant growth, gradual professionalization, and partial rabbinic approval.

Haredi cinema developed from within the community by self-trained individuals and in two parallel contexts: women's cinema that emerged from the Haredi education system and men's cinema that emerged from the IT and business worlds.[5] Its development could be attributed perhaps, more than anything, to the emergence of a Haredi middle class that gradually acquired a taste for consumerism and entertainment. The penetration of new media into Haredi society also played a role, as personal computers and digital cameras were the first tools for making and viewing films. Computers were initially legitimized as work tools. Later, personal computers and the internet, though still highly controversial, were introduced into Haredi households.[6]

Haredi cinema is modeled largely on the generic conventions of a commercial, Hollywood-like cinema. Nevertheless, a significant appropriation of these conventions occur, as the production models, as well as the films' narratives and visual representations, are governed by specific ethical and moral codes that adhere to Haredi values. Foremost among these is the separation of men and women not only on screen but also in the contexts of production and exhibition. A separate Haredi women's film market exists, which is typified by a specific mode of production and distribution. These films are made largely by women for women audiences exclusively and are exhibited at ad-hoc screenings in synagogues and other public venues.[7]

In parallel, a branch of Haredi cinema was developed exclusively by and for Haredi men. These films are typified by a mode of production and circulation that resembles that of exploitation cinema and B-movies. This category of films is driven more by commercial profit than artistic motivation. Their source of funding is business investment, relying on the profits generated from DVD sales.

They tend to exploit the popularity of specific genres or trends; are distributed directly for home consumption rather than cinematic exhibition; and often develop a cult status despite their small budgets and compromised production values. The status of Haredi male cinema within Haredi society is much more problematic than that of the women's cinema. Haredi men are expected to immerse themselves in Torah studies during every moment of their lives. Therefore "leisure," "entertainment," or "spare time" seldom form part of the Haredi male lifestyle. Any time spent on such activities is considered a waste and a desecration of the sacred. The limited rabbinic support such films receive is mainly aimed at providing "kosher" alternatives to those young men on the margins of Haredi society, who otherwise would be exposed to secular films, which are considered to be much worse.

The work of the Haredi filmmaker Yehuda Grovais is a poignant example of this mode of production. One of the pioneers of Haredi cinema, Grovais ventured into film production in 2000 when, working as a software designer, he identified the potential of new media for the Haredi public. Over the past decade his company has produced more than eighty titles in various genres. In total, despite the industry's lack of infrastructure and the controversy and resistance from rabbinic authorities it has engendered, the production rate of Haredi films is growing steadily.[8] In 2010 about two hundred DVD titles were circulating in the Haredi male film market.[9]

The relationship between Haredi cinema and Israel's national film industry, and with Israel's mainstream culture, reflects, in part, the recent sociopolitical dynamics at play between Haredim and the wider Israeli society. Working in the service of the national project and Zionist ideology, Israeli cinema in the first few decades of the state's existence spoke predominantly of and for the hegemonic center of Israeli society, which was secular, Ashkenazi, and male. By and large reflecting the Eurocentric imaginary of Zionism, with its intrinsic ambivalence toward both traditional (Diasporic) Judaism and the Middle East, Israeli cinema looked to the West for its sources of inspiration. Western notions of universalism and humanism shaped much of the themes, images, and narratives of this cinema.[10]

Jewish religion and Jewish religious sentiments were mostly invisible in these Israeli films.[11] They tended to deal with issues of spirituality and religious sentiments through images and symbols associated with Christianity or Greek mythology rather than ones deriving from the world of Judaism.[12] In cases where Haredi characters or settings were depicted, they were largely portrayed within

the comedy genre, often in a negative manner that rehearsed familiar stereotypes associated with anti-Semitic discourses.[13]

Recent years have seen a significant transformation in the engagement of Israeli cinema and television with Jewish religion and with Israel's Jewish religious population: the religious settlers, religious Zionists, and Haredi minorities.[14] While these new films and TV dramas increased the visibility of the Haredi minority, and attempted a more complex representation—not least by moving from the comedy genre to more serious genres such as drama and documentary—several scholars have argued that some level of stereotyping and "Othering" has prevailed.[15]

While this recent surge of religiosity in Israeli cinema undoubtedly corresponds to a wider sociopolitical shift toward religion in contemporary Israel, it is also the result of a number of structural changes in the Israeli film and television industries. New legislation that came into force in the past two decades reflected a new emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in the face of the waning dominance of Israel's "old" hegemony. Such legislation tied the distribution of state funding for cinema to a set of criteria that included increased representation of minority groups and communities on the "periphery." A number of new institutions—such as Ma'aleh, the first of its kind Jewish religious school of television, film, and the arts, and the Gesher Multicultural Film Fund (GMFF)—contributed to the development of a new infrastructure that enabled religious (non-Haredi) filmmakers to enter the industry and opened up avenues for self-representation of religious communities and issues.

Yet these structural changes in the Israeli film industry played a negligible part in facilitating the development of Haredi cinema. Despite the increased interest in religiosity on the Israeli screen and the institutional efforts to ensure the representation of "minority groups," the support given to Haredi cinema by Israeli film funds and other public funding bodies has been almost nonexistent so far. The grounds for this minimal support move beyond the sociopolitical context to the realm of the cinematic. The formal characteristics of Haredi films—their tropes, narratives, and styles—are all at odds with the dominant characteristics of Israeli cinema. Their gender segregation, exploitation format, B-movie standards, and appropriation of popular Hollywood-like genres are often deemed unsuitable for support. Again, Grovais's experience provides an illuminating case in point. Over the years Grovais has made several unsuccessful applications for assistance from Israeli film funds, mainly the GMFF, which has a special commitment to Jewish heritage. A telling scene in the documentary *Film*

Fanatic (*Hared Le'Sirto*, Shlomo Hazan, Israel, 2006), which follows Grovais in his first years as a filmmaker, provides a poignant glimpse into the cinematic discourse that informs the allocations of funds.

The scene is set during a screening of one of Grovais's films at the annual Jerusalem Jewish Film Festival. In the postscreening discussion between Grovais and Udi Leon, then the managing director of the GMFF, the following dialogue unfolds:

> LEON: At the end of the day, you are using the conventional cinema language . . .
> you are not trying to be innovative in this regard. . . . My hope is that your
> films will develop to be something like Iranian cinema. . . . They created an
> alternative film language. Is this at all your dream?
> GROVAIS: Definitely not. On the contrary. . . . My model is Hollywood cinema,
> I try to see and learn from them.
> LEON [ADDRESSING THE DISAPPROVING AUDIENCE]: Well, to start with he
> lost my support! From now on, I'm not financing him.

In a follow-up one-on-one conversation between the two, in response to Leon's continuous plea that Haredi cinema should develop its own alternative film language, Grovais asserts: "Our Yeshiva boys that 'go bad' . . . go to see Van Damme and Steven Seagal. They don't go to see European cinema. . . . My goal is to provide an alternative to Van Damme that is appropriate for our public . . . an alternative for leisure activities."

Leon's attempt at persuasion betrays the discursive regime prevalent within the Israeli film industry. Rooted in European art cinemas, and typical of ~~sentiments throughout much of~~ the ~~global~~ world film festival circuit, this is a cinematic discourse that ~~privileges~~ the auteur over genre, the image over dialogue and action, and the small, personal narrative over spectacle and grand narrative. Indeed, films like *Ushpizin* (Giddi Dar and Shuli Rand, Israel, 2004) and *Fill the Void* (*Lemaleh et Hahalal*, Rama Burshtein, Israel, 2011), which emerged from within Haredi society and were funded by Israeli film funds, share an aesthetic and a mode of representation that hew to the art cinema mode Leon urged Grovais to adopt. As with other contemporary Israeli films representing spirituality, they depict ultra-Orthodox life with lyrical, reflective, and metaphoric aesthetics.[16] Both films went on to gain national and international acclaim, but in the eyes of Haredi filmmakers and audiences they were not considered to be Haredi films—first and

foremost because they broke the rules of Haredi cinema by presenting men and women together on screen.

Grovais's resistance to shaping his films to fit the dominant cinematic discourse in Israel can be seen as a resistance to conjure, in a process Thomas Elsaesser called "self-othering," whereby "the other," in this case the Haredi, presents the observer, in this case the non-Haredi Israeli audience, with what he thinks the observer wants to see.[17] In an interview Grovais explains:

> If I was willing to give the funds what they want to see on the screen, I too could have been embraced by the establishment of Israeli cinema, like filmmakers from other "minority groups." But they [the film funds] say they are looking for art, truth, exposure, when they actually mean images that would reinforce their stereotypical notions of Haredi life.... Haredi cinema is not cinema about Haredim but for Haredim.... I seek primarily to provide an alternative source of home-grown entertainment. Ideally, these films will reinforce Haredi values while allowing the escapist pleasure of Hollywoodic fantasies.[18]

The alternative that Haredi cinema offers is therefore inward-looking. However, if the production and exhibition contexts of Haredi cinema mark it as an outsider, and provide little space for dialogue with Israel's dominant culture, within the secluded space of Haredi cinema several explorations of the relationship with Israeli society unfold. The films' narratives reveal transgressions that are allowed to occur on the screen. It is precisely the emulation of genre cinema, we would like to suggest, that enables this. Genre cinema, as Richard Maltby argues, "allows deeply felt socio-cultural desires and anxieties to be explored . . . or disavowed within the relative safety of the well-regulated fiction that is within the fantasy framework."[19] As we will seek to demonstrate, the "well-regulated" generic formulas that Haredi cinema adopts open up a "safe space" for such explorations, albeit within the closed and protected boundaries of the community. In the following pages we will discuss how these explorations are constructed in the popular action genre and specifically in Grovais's series of films *Jewish Revenge* (2000–2010).

Jewish Revenge: Haredi Action in Zionist Spheres

Grovais's first *Jewish Revenge* film, released in 2000 (*Jewish Revenge* [*Hanekama Hayehudit*]), was one of the first action films to come on to the Haredi market.

Proven extremely popular with young male audiences, the formula was quickly repeated by Grovais in a series of four additional *Jewish Revenge* films: *Jewish Revenge 2: The Story of Eichmann* (*Ha'tifat Eichmann*), *Jewish Revenge 3: A Mission in Nepal* (*Mesima Be'napal*), *Jewish Revenge 4: Secret File* (*Tik Sodi*), and *Jewish Revenge 5* (*Hotzi'a Mi'misgar Nafshi*).[20] Additional action films of a similar nature were produced by Grovais over the years, as well as by other production companies. These include titles such as Grovais's *The Silent Jewry* (*Yahadut Ha'dmama*) and *Sinai Treasure* (*Ha'otzar Me'Sinai*); *Operation Keshest* (*Mivtza Keshet*), by Gal-Disk productions; *David's Sword* (*Herev David*), a production of Cohen and a Half Brothers; and *Double Agent* (*Sochen Kaful*), produced by Sparks of Sanctity.[21]

Although extremely popular, the *Jewish Revenge* series was never given the seal of approval by rabbinic authorities. On the contrary, its popularity triggered much controversy and provoked several protest pamphlets (*pashkavilim*). The gradual process of negotiating the acceptance of cinema by the Haredi public and rabbinic authorities means that films are generally advocated to be first and foremost an educational tool. For a film to be embraced by rabbinic authorities, its plot must positively reaffirm consensual forms of behavior.[22] As Vered Elimelech noted, while Haredi films cannot be seen simply as propaganda of official Haredi discourses, the narratives of Haredi films largely avoid dealing directly with controversial social and ideological issues, such as tensions among different Haredi groups or the controversy over Israeli military service.[23] The controversial status of *Jewish Revenge* stems, we suggest, from the series' subversive messages, which transgress and challenge the dominant Haredi discourse both by pioneering experimentation with the action genre and by addressing thematically the relationship of Haredi society with Zionism and with Israel's armed forces.

The appropriation of the action genre to Haredi cinema is far from trivial. At the meeting point between the Haredi world and the conventions of Hollywood cinema, the appropriation of the genre encapsulates a multitude of meanings and opens up a space of liminality and transgression. The very notion of action challenges and subverts Haredi hegemonic ideas of masculinity and body, within the framework of the Zionist state.

Narratives of action films typically present redemptive tales of heroism, asserting masculinity, in which active protagonists overcome obstacles on the journey to personal and social resolution.[24] While the definition of the action genre is neither fixed nor simple, most scholars agree that one of its pertinent

characteristics is an overemphasis on the body and the propensity for spectacular physical action.[25] These include the genre's tendency to showcase scenes of chases, fistfights, gunfights, explosions, athletic feats and stunts, and, increasingly, special effects. According to Lisa Purse, action cinema is defined precisely by its focus on the exerting body. As she puts it: "The body is a physically empowered one, strong, agile and resilient, asserting itself in the field of action and risk, and thus acts out fantasies of empowerment that are inherently literalised and physicalised, rather than abstracted."[26]

The focus of action cinema on presenting bodies-in-action speaks of and for Western notions of masculinity that associate power with the physique, the material, and the corporeal. Moreover, narratives of Hollywood's action cinema often delineate tales of heroism that are specific to American national mythology and Christianity, invoking notions such as individualist heroism, regeneration through violence, and martyrdom.[27] These notions of masculinity stand in direct opposition to Haredi models of manhood and manly heroism.

The ideal model of Haredi manhood connects the binary opposition of passivity/action to that of spirituality/materiality.[28] Social and cultural constructions of the Haredi male body are based on bodily restraint as a route to achieve higher levels of spirituality. As Yohai Hakak explains: "The body is believed to be the domicile of evil inflictions and dwelling of impurity."[29] Thus the Haredi man is expected to restrain himself from physical activities and from extreme physical situations, such as absolute relaxation or maximum strengthening of the physique, typical of the secular body. Both of these situations are seen as devotion to the body.[30] In the ideal Haredi model of manhood, power is divorced from the physique of the male body and the performance of action. Haredi notions of manly heroism value submissiveness (in front of God) and passivity. A hero is he who controls his urges and earthly lusts and subordinates them to the heavenly logic embodied in God's commandments. This notion of heroism is applied not only to the temptations of the flesh but to any earthly dealing, including fighting enemies. It is epitomized in the saying, "The real hero, a Torah hero." A hero is not the one who conquers and vanquishes enemies but the one who conquers his passions.

Action, or the tension between action and passivity, is at the heart of the ideological split between secular Zionism and ultra-Orthodox Judaism. The revolution of Jewish identity led by Zionism was first and foremost marked by action. It is seen not only in its political call to take action in bringing about the

creation of a Jewish state, which ideologically stood in opposition to the passivity embodied in observing the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, but also in its vision of a New Jew. The New Jew was defined primarily by activism—in the physical and political sense. The process of "normalizing" the Diasporic, traditional Jewish body, deemed "feminine," was a process of constructing a new man according to the hegemonic model of European masculinity. Demonstrations of the muscular physique became paramount. The New Jew was therefore connected to his land, ready to defend it with his muscular and able body.[31]

Different studies evidence the incorporation of more assertive and physically active masculine models into Haredi society in recent years.[32] The demographic and political growth of Haredi society was accompanied by a growing sense of confidence, and the transition of many Haredi men from the closed and protected Haredi space into wider Israeli society both exposed Haredi men to new masculine models and forced them to compete with them. This, despite the disapproval of rabbinic authorities who attempt to preserve a perception of life in the State of Israel as a continuous "spiritual exile," due to the secular nature of the current state. In the official discourse of the rabbis, the only form of action that will end this state of "spiritual exile" is religious action—that is, more intensive Torah studies and stronger commitment to fulfilling religious commandments.

Thus, increasing incidents of political, active protest among Haredim, including signs of verbal and physical violence, a growing evidence of Haredi youths wanting to join the army, and the general political shift to the right, pose internal conflicts for Haredi society. According to Gideon Aran, Nurit Stadler, and Eyal Ben-Ari, the political shift to the right has a body-related dimension: "In adopting such tough ideology and style, the Haredim betray their desire to own a body. It seems to be a subliminal expression of their fascination with those very things that were long thought to be the province of Zionists, and of which the ultra-Orthodox have been deprived: physicality, manhood and action seeking."[33]

It is significant that the type of cinematic pleasure the action genre constructs consists of witnessing the perfect fantasy of empowerment, as the action hero shows off his physical strength (and mental fortitude) to succeed against all odds.[34] Recent studies of cinema spectatorship, adopting a phenomenological approach, call for the understanding of the experience of viewing on a corporal level as well as a mental and cognitive one.[35] As Purse argues, action cinema is a type of "body genre" that not only depicts the body in the grip of intense sensation but has the potential to prompt involuntary physical responses in the spectator.[36] It "invites

the audience to experience the action body's empowerment in a correspondingly physicalised way . . . [and] addresses the spectator's sensorium as well as his or her rational faculties, encouraging an embodied response to the spectacle of embodied empowerment playing out on the screen."[37] Considering the popularity of action films among Haredi young men from this perspective may suggest that the particular viewing experience these films provide betrays not only a level of fascination with the body but an opportunity for the Haredi spectator to embody, enact, and be empowered by alternative models of masculinity.

Indeed, adopting some of the central characteristics of the action genre, Haredi action films, including the *Jewish Revenge* series, feature scenes of intense physical action, such as chases, gunfights, and fistfights. These are often underscored by the generic Western, fast-paced music that connotes the films' relation to the popular genre. The depiction of violence and of the male body in Haredi action films emulates the conventions of the Hollywood genre during the classic era, a far cry from the gory, hyper-realist violence, heavy use of special effects, and intensive continuity that typify contemporary Hollywood action films. While this may seem archaic and somewhat lacking in thrill, it is certainly not the case for the films' target audience, whose exposure to Hollywood action cinema is limited.

In the case of the *Jewish Revenge* series, the viewing experience of action cinema alludes not only to a desire of Haredi spectators to own a body but also to a certain desire to embody a more active position within Israel's national mythology. In providing a homegrown "kosher" alternative to Hollywood's action films, Grovais sets his action plots within the historical and contemporaneous sphere of militant Zionism, evoking in full earnestness tropes of Zionist mythology that have long been forsaken by contemporary Israeli cinema.

Meaningful Encounters: Israeli and Haredi Men

The five films of the series share similar storylines and a classic narrative structure. The narratives of the first four revolve around a national mission: a Mossad (Israel's intelligence agency) agent is sent overseas to capture an escaped Nazi criminal or thwart a plot against the State of Israel conspired to by various Arab forces. *Jewish Revenge 5*, the final film in the series, deviates from the pattern inasmuch as neither the Mossad nor a national mission is part of its narrative. Yet it is connected to the series in its central themes, locations, and characters.

At the heart of the films' narratives, secular Israeli men encounter Israeli Haredi men in the hostile environments of non-Jewish men. With the exception of the character Kim Riamazai (Sores Muharjun) in *Tik Sodi*—a Nepalese insurance agent of Jewish heritage who assists the national mission—non-Jewish men appear in the films as one-dimensional characters and are depicted stereotypically as untrustworthy, sometimes evil, and sometimes inadequate or stupid. Their sole function in the narrative is to provide the background against which a more meaningful relationship unfolds: that of the Israeli Mossad agent with the Haredi character—a Chabad emissary.[38]

This meaningful encounter moves beyond stereotypical portrayals of the Israeli in dominant Haredi discourses. Like many other religious enclaves, Haredi society is under constant threat of defection by its members. The prevalent discourse positions the secular Israeli as the evil "outside," against whom the enlightened Haredi identity is constructed "inside." The stereotypical image of the secular Israeli as the epitome of evil is maintained by the notion that any contact with the Israeli body should be limited or avoided altogether.

In her analysis of Haredi cinema, Elimelech has demonstrated that the engagement with the Other—the non-Jew or the secular Israeli—is central to many Haredi films. Merely by exposing the Haredi public to images of the Other, Elimelech claims, Haredi cinema already deviates from the dominant discourse. Making a distinction between "first generation" Haredi films (produced between 2000 and 2003) and "second generation" films (produced between 2003 and 2010), Elimelech points to a shift in the representation of the Other. In the early films the Other—be it secular Israeli or non-Jew—is depicted as a one-dimensional character, often devoid of spiritual and intellectual faculties, whose main function in the narrative is to act as the antithesis of the Haredi hero. In some of the later films, non-Haredi characters are more rounded. While ultimately they function to reinforce the Haredi set of values, the narratives do expose their deliberations and motivations, and by so doing privilege them and transgress the hegemonic discourse. Similarly, Banit has argued that images of secular Israeli and non-Jewish masculinities at once challenge the dominant model of Haredi masculinity and reaffirm it.[39]

In the *Jewish Revenge* series, which cuts across the "generational shift" Elimelech proposes, the secular Israeli is not only a rounded character who goes through a transformation in the course of the narrative. In these films, significantly, he is also the agent of the story. The films' plots revolve around him, and the viewer's

point of view is often aligned with his~~, For example, the classic narrative structure introduces first the Mossad agent and the inciting event that constitutes~~ the dramatic conflict at the heart of the plot~~, and it~~ is motivated by his story. It is only at the point of crisis, when he faces increasing obstacles to completing his mission, that the Israeli hero encounters the Haredi one.

Two important things happen during the encounter between the two main characters of the films. The first is that the Haredi hero leaves the protected space of his community, and his spiritual work, and gets immersed—physically and mentally—in the affairs of the secular state. Reluctant to get involved in the beginning, he proves to be central to the mission's completion; thus the Haredi body is also propelled into action. The Haredi hero is seen participating in chase scenes, concealing and finding documents, and even physically confronting the non-Jews.

Second, in getting involved with the national mission, the Haredi hero facilitates a transformation in the worldview of the secular Israeli by explaining to him the true nature of Jewish revenge. Rather than physical combat and retaliation, true Jewish revenge is guided by the spiritual work of God and the continuity of the traditional Jewish way of life. This transformation in knowledge of the secular Israeli undoes the conflict at the heart of the plot and leads to the resolution. The mission is completed against all odds, and a new state of equilibrium is restored, wherein the secular hero is closer to his Jewish identity.

This is perhaps best exemplified in the first film in the series: *Jewish Revenge 1* (as it was labeled on the later DVD release). Here a Mossad agent named Yoav (Evyatar Lazar) is sent on a mission to Ukraine. The nature of the mission tightly links the Holocaust to the contemporary Israeli-Arab conflict: an escaped Nazi criminal named Ziege is found to be living under false identity in Ukraine and is involved in smuggling nuclear weapons to Hezbollah. Yoav is sent to kidnap him and deliver him to stand trial in Israel.

Yoav has a vested interest in his mission. The escaped Nazi criminal was his father's tormentor in the concentration camp, and Yoav sees the national mission as an opportunity to get the personal revenge he seeks for his father. Before leaving for his mission, he visits his elderly father, pledging to avenge his suffering. On his way back from the visit, he passes a *shaliach Chabad* (Chabad emissary), who urges him to lay tefillin. Yoav, reluctant at the beginning, finally submits.[40] In the course of a casual conversation that develops after the prayer, the emissary tells Yoav about his brother, also a Chabad emissary, who is posted in Ukraine.

FIGURE 1. Yoav (Evyatar Lazar, right) puts on tefillin in the exposition section of *Jewish Revenge 1* (2000).

"What do you know?" replies Yoav. "I am just on my way there." The emissary gives Yoav his brother's address, and Yoav dismissively notes it.

The scene has two functions: the first, characterization, establishes Yoav's attitude toward the Jewish religion; the second, foreshadowing, acts as a narrative device to provide motivation for a later development in the plot. As one of the early films of Haredi cinema, *Jewish Revenge 1* already reveals at this point the subversive propositions of the series, in comparison to the films Elimelech discusses. Yoav, the archetypal Zionist, is portrayed rather positively: dismissive and lacking self-awareness, perhaps, and too preoccupied with his earthly dealings, but far from being demonized as the epitome of evil.

Beyond that, the tefillin have a symbolic meaning in this scene. The meaning behind the precept of tefillin is for one to achieve a unity of the brain and the heart. In Hasidic philosophy the intellect should control the emotion. Yoav, as we see in the previous scene, is motivated by his emotions, which cloud his intellectual judgment. Yoav, and the viewers, are yet unaware of the significance of the meeting,

FIGURE 2. The first moment of transgression in *Jewish Revenge 1*: Yoav (right), in a Haredi outfit, speaking to Shneor (Michael Vagiel).

and it is only in hindsight that the act assumes meaning as the beginning of the intellectual (and spiritual) journey that leads to his transformation.

After this scene, Yoav leaves for Ukraine. The mission goes wrong, his cover is blown, he suspects his contact man in Ukraine betrayed him, and he finds himself on the run from the local police. At this moment of crisis, which constitutes the inciting event of the plot, he remembers the words of the Chabad emissary in Jerusalem and begins looking for his brother's address. He finds it, and thus encounters Shneor (Michael Vagiel), the Haredi hero of the film.

Shneor takes Yoav into his home and offers him dinner and shelter for a night. As early as this first meeting, the cinematic fantasy allows moments of transgression, as Yoav, in need of a different set of clothes, puts on a Haredi outfit.

A more explicit moment of transgression happens in a subsequent scene, when Yoav asks Shneor to get actively involved with the mission. Shneor refuses at first, visibly uncomfortable with Yoav's requests, but when Yoav dramatically

reveals to him the nature of his top-secret mission, Shneor declares "*we* have to stop them." Shneor thus transgresses the boundaries of his community for the sake of the nation, and in so doing he is propelled into physical action. The scene cuts to an action sequence, this time depicting Shneor, not Yoav, as the "body-in-action." The camera, subject to generic conventions, follows Shneor running, and the action is punctuated by generic action music, turning it into a moment of spectacle. Seen from a Haredi perspective, this is not a trivial image. Running is a matter of great importance, seen as an extreme physical situation the Haredi body should avoid. Haredi running is rare and considered in many cases obscene. There are numerous rabbinic rulings that restrict, supervise, and condition situations in which running is permissible.[41]

The second act of the plot intertwines the quest to complete the national mission with the developing relationship between Yoav and Shneor and the transformations they both undergo. Shneor's involvement with the national mission becomes transformative when news arrives that Yoav's father has died. For Yoav, the mission has lost its purpose and meaning; he is overwhelmed by his emotions, but Shneor gently guides him into the Jewish law, explaining to him the meaning of Jewish practices of mourning, of dealing with the Holocaust, and of the nature of Jewish revenge. It is here that the educational message of the film is explicitly articulated by Shneor, as he says:

> You know Yoav, I think that the real revenge is the fact that you are still here. What the Nazis, *yimach shmam*, were trying to do was to destroy our people. Our revenge is the continuation of the Jewish people; that we keep on living and doing. Do you understand, the real Jewish revenge is to continue Jewish tradition.[42]

The difference between Yoav's emotional impulse to avenge through violence and Shneor's composed response reflects the opposing Zionist and Haredi discourses. The scene also reveals the opposing meanings ascribed to the Holocaust in Haredi and Zionist discourses. Whereas in Zionist and other secular responses to the Holocaust an act of retaliation is desired, in the Haredi worldview, the Holocaust, as any other earthly disaster, happened according to God's will, and it is only God who can retaliate against or punish the perpetrators.[43]

Moreover, in a later scene, when Yoav in his despair resorts to planning to kill the Nazi criminal, Shneor convinces him to put down his gun and conceives a nonviolent scheme to frame the Nazi. This leads to the successful completion of

the mission. The Nazi criminal is exposed and captured by Ukrainian authorities and transferred to Israel.

Grovais appropriates the generic conventions here in significant ways. If climax points of Hollywood action films conventionally feature action scenes—as Lisa Purse puts it, "in an environment fraught with risk and danger . . . , the body poised between mastery and loss of control"—Grovais constructs the climax points of his narratives around mental breakdowns and intellectual/spiritual dilemmas.[44] Crucially, at this heightened point of tension, the central conflict is drawn toward resolution not by a demonstration of physical strength and mental fortitude to succeed against all odds but by intellectual inquiry and spiritual acceptance of God's will.

It is significant that the film does not end when the national mission is completed, as its focal point is the relationship between Shneor and Yoav, not the mission. The penultimate scene sees Shneor and Yoav in a heart-to-heart conversation. The dialogue articulates mutual goals and points of similarity:

> YOAV: I really owe you for this one.
>
> SHNEOR: What do you mean? I only did my obligation.
>
> [LYRICAL MUSIC FADES IN]
>
> YOAV: I have known tougher assignments before, but I'll never forget this one. My father's death, the discussions we had, gave me a whole new perspective.
>
> SHNEOR: I often ask myself what am I doing here . . . but then I meet a dear Jew like you and it all falls into place . . . I feel like a sleeping agent sometimes. Suddenly he is called upon to execute a mission, and then instantly he wakes up and performs the mission exactly according to the plan.

The two then bid farewell at the airport with a brotherly hug. The visible difference between them is blurred by their nearly identical outfits, and the physical contact between them transcends the Haredi conventions of avoidance and seclusion.

The film's final scene sees Yoav back in Israel at his father's grave. Observing all the practices of the Jewish law, he confesses to now grasping the true sense of Jewish revenge.

This fantasy of rescue—saving the lost souls of secular Israelis and through this redeeming the State of Israel as a true Jewish state—sits well within the internal discourse of the Haredi community, especially that of the Gur Hasidic group to which Grovais belongs, and within the institution of Chabad. Glimpses of this

FIGURE 3. Yoav and Shneor embrace in the penultimate scene of *Jewish Revenge 1*.

fantasy can be found in other Haredi films, including *Operation Keshet* (*Mivtza Keshet*) and *Lost* (*Avudim Ba'derech*, 2005), where the narratives present secular Israelis who return to religion through their encounters with Haredi characters. The message ~~suggested in~~ the *Jewish Revenge* series extends beyond such a one-sided impartation of Jewish values to suggest a fantasy of mutual exchange and cooperation. For the Haredi viewer, *Jewish Revenge* offers not only the fulfilment of a Chabad mission but, as Grovais puts it, "a fantasy of national masculinity." It addresses, he says, "the secret fantasy of many Haredi youth to take part in defending the State of Israel."[45]

In *Jewish Revenge 2* Grovais moves from the realm of fiction to the historical. The film's plot is based on the true story of the Mossad operation to capture Adolf Eichmann in 1960. According to Grovais, the script was based on the memoir of Isser Harel (the head of Mossad at the time), in his book *The House on Garibaldi Street*, and was inspired by the American television adaptation of the book from 1979, and by *The Man Who Captured Eichmann* (William A. Graham, TNT), a 1996 American television drama starring Robert Duvall. The DVD cover of

Jewish Revenge 2 boasts about the film's authentic reconstruction of the true event, including the exposure of heretofore unrevealed details of tensions among members of the operation team. It promises the Haredi viewer a thrill of action and historic authenticity enriched with "Jewish atmosphere and Jewish values." In fact, however, the plot remains loyal to only some of the historical facts. The setting, the methods of operation, and parts of the course of action taken by the Mossad team in the film indeed reference the official historical account of the operation, but Grovais changes the story in several important ways.

The Mossad operation included two teams of about ten operational agents.[46] None of the operation's commanders was religious. The film presents a team of three fictional characters. The operation commander (Evyatar Lazar) is a religious character whose name is not revealed to the viewer throughout the film. Wearing a black skullcap, he can be clearly identified by the informed viewer as ultra-Orthodox. His subordinate agent, Daniel Hirsh (Ronen Hershkowitz), is a secular young man who was chosen for the mission because of his first-hand encounter with Eichmann as a boy in Auschwitz. These two are later joined by a physician, who indeed represents more factual accuracy. The actual team was accompanied by a doctor whose mission was to assess Eichmann's mental and physical health. Grovais explains: "In Harel's memoir there is a mention of a team member who was religious, but he was not an operational agent in the field and played only a minor part in the events. I based it on this fact, but I turned him into a central character."[47]

If, in the first *Jewish Revenge* film, Grovais allowed the fantasy of national masculinity to be embodied only partly by Shneor's involvement with the national mission, here the religious commander fully embodies the fantasy. His character, whose gaze the viewer shares throughout the film, combines Yoav's physical masculinity and Shneor's Jewish wisdom. Apart from proving to be militarily and psychically competent, he and his actions as a commander are driven by Jewish moral and ethical considerations that fill the national (secular) mission with meaning. For example, in one key scene, after a long period of preparation, the team finally receives the order to go ahead with the abduction. The order arrives on a Friday night, as they are engaged in the traditional Sabbath *kiddush* (including the religious ritual of blessing the wine as well as the candles and challah). The commander decides to postpone the action until after the Sabbath, despite the objections of the others. He explains to them: "I have two reasons to use my own judgment here. First, from an operational perspective, time is too scarce tonight

and we might put the operation at risk; secondly not observing the Sabbath puts us at even greater danger." According to Grovais, this twist of the plot is also rooted in a true event Harel mentions in his book. The real commander on the ground had taken a decision, against his superior's orders, to postpone the mission by a day. "All I did," Grovais says, "is to change the reason behind it."[48]

As he does in the series' previous film, Grovais weaves into the action plot an intellectual and spiritual journey of inquiry. The commander, again operating outside the remit of his orders, takes it upon himself to investigate Eichmann. To Hirsh's growing distress, he spends hours in lengthy conversation with the fugitive, not only to establish his identity, as he was instructed, but in an attempt to understand his mindset and motivations. Here also the narrative creates a binary opposition between intellect and emotion. Hirsh, the young secular agent, fueled by his emotions of rage and vengeance, seeks to act hastily and violently, while his religious commander, demonstrating measured thought through perspective, tames and enlightens him. A substantial part of the film is dedicated to the disagreement between the two, and their evolving relationship, as the religious perspective is being asserted as superior and more humane.

The next three films in the series are all set in Nepal and share a Haredi main character—Hezki Lifshitz (Yehuda Grovais), the Chabad emissary who runs the Chabad house in Kathmandu. The character of Hezki, as a caption informs the viewer at the beginning of the fifth film, is named after the real Chabad emissary to Kathmandu, but the events, the caption emphasizes, are fictional.

These later films shift from the historical to the contemporary, and the Holocaust slowly loses its centrality in the narratives. In the third film of the series, A *Mission in Nepal*, Gideon Cohen (Shlomo Sadan) is a Mossad agent who is sent to Nepal to prevent an Al Qaeda biological attack on Israel. A much more removed allusion to the Holocaust is made here, inasmuch as the Al Qaeda terrorist is assisted by a son of German diplomats. The familiar plot is repeated: Gideon's mission goes wrong, and he finds himself in prison, unable to get hold of a test tube containing the deadly weapon that is about to be used in Israel. He encounters Hezki when the emissary, in search of young Israelis in trouble, makes a routine tour of the prison. This setting is familiar and plausible to the Haredi viewer. The Far East is a popular destination for many young Israelis who travel the world after their national service in the army, and Chabad postings around the world often act as a point of contact with home, thereby engaging in the mission of *kirov levavot*.[49] In his despair, Gideon pleads with Hezki to

help him obtain the test tube. Hezki, reluctant at the beginning, is drawn into the mission and, as in the previous films, he is at once propelled into action; he wittingly saves the mission by force of intellect rather than physical prowess. The key lesson of Jewish revenge is reiterated, and the secular Gideon—as the viewer learns in the following film, *Tik Sodi*—returned to faith. *Tik Sodi* (*Jewish Revenge 4*) tells largely the same story, in different circumstances. A different Mossad agent, called Haim (Daniel Yaakov), is sent to Nepal to retrieve a file containing top-secret documents that expose an arms deal with Iran. Cinematically, this film is richer than the earlier films. The plot is more complex, combining two storylines; the structure is constructed more carefully to create suspense; and the cinematography is more sophisticated~~, in that the film features several sequences that are dominated by visuals rather than action or dialogue~~.

Of more interest to our arguments here is the development of the character of the Chabad emissary throughout the film series. If in the first film the plot is propelled by what happens to the Mossad agent, in the later films Hezki's character is given a story line in his own right and thus acquires greater agency.

Additionally, he becomes more and more proactive in relation to the national mission and the idea of action, reflected by fewer signs of anxiety and fear in his behavior. For example, in the first film of the series, in one of the action scenes, Yoav and Shneor break into the escaped Nazi Ziege's flat. The idea was Shneor's, as part of his scheme to frame the criminal rather than kill him. But when it comes time to *act* on it, Shneor is seen hiding in the wardrobe in terror, waiting for Yoav to rescue him. In the later films Hezki, the Chabad emissary, is no longer frightened. His confidence is apparent in his bodily gestures and is articulated verbally. For example, in the exposition of *Tik Sodi*, Hezki is seen telling the Mossad agent Haim about his part in preventing the terror attack on Israel, referring to the plot of *Jewish Revenge 3*. As he tells the story, key action scenes from the previous film are replayed. Haim's response affirms Hezki's act of heroism by telling him how renowned he is within the Mossad.

The link of the fifth film to the series is established primarily through the character of Hezki and his Chabad house in Kathmandu. Here two story lines are intertwined with that of Hezki and Roy (Daniel Yaakov), a young Israeli travelling in Nepal; the encounter between them occurs only toward the end of the plot. The national mission, as we have already noted, disappears in this film. Yet it is significant that Hezki's character arrives at his full agency. His story is no longer subjected to that of the secular hero, but the two narratives develop in

parallel, and equal screen time is devoted to each. While the central message of the return to faith remains constant, the development of a kind of partnership between the secular and the Haredi in this film seems effortless and requires few narrative devices to establish.

Conclusion

Haredi cinema could be thought of as a particular form of digital minority cinema. Recent decades have seen numerous examples of minority cinemas emerging across geographical and social settings, from indigenous people to different migrant communities. Such cinemas, as Faye Ginsburg puts it, are "vehicles for internal and external communication, for self-determination, and for resistance to outside cultural domination."[50] Often the analyses of these film practices emphasized their function as "counter-cinemas" seeking to undo the legacies of misrepresentation of these groups in dominant cultures by appropriating Western cinema and media forms and developing alternative practices and aesthetics.

Haredi cinema shares some of these characteristics. It appropriates Western forms of cinema and serves as a vehicle for internal communication that challenges the dominant Haredi discourse in important ways. Yet Haredi filmmakers put little emphasis on the external communication with the wider Israeli public. In so doing, the inward-looking Haredi cinema—featuring "films for Haredim not about Haredim," if we are to use Grovais's words again—reflects the prominent tendency of Haredim in Israel to integrate but not assimilate.[51]

The action genre, whose primary characteristic is creating spectacles of physical action and the body, has been appropriated in Haredi cinema in several ways, adhering to a governing principle of gender separation and shifting from the generic emphasis on physical combat toward a more cerebral quest. In this way the emulation of the genre enabled, on the one hand, the fantasy of physical masculinity, and on the other, the assertion of Haredi values.

The emergence of Israeli Haredi cinema as a whole, and of the *Jewish Revenge* series in particular, should be seen in the context of the transformations in the engagement of Haredim with the wider Israeli society, and with Zionism, over the past few decades. Recent years have seen a growing movement from the secluded and protected Haredi space to a broad variety of settings in the Israeli public sphere, including the army, and points of contact and social encounters between Haredi and secular Israelis are increasing.

Although they emulate Hollywood escapist genres, the narratives of many of the films are set within the Israeli sociopolitical context and address the relationship between Haredim and the wider Israeli society. They thus act as (virtual) sites where the Haredi meets his significant Other, the Israeli secular Zionist. The *Jewish Revenge* films' particular engagement with security, militarism, and Israel's armed forces resonates with the long-running controversy over Haredim serving in the military, which is not only the cause of deep division among members of the Haredi public but also the key area of tension between Haredim and Israeli society at large. Israeli mainstream public opinion sees military service as the "rite of passage" into the Israeli national body, and the Haredi official refusal to perform military service as an evasion of the moral duty they owe to serve their country. At the time of this article's writing, the Israeli government, in an attempt to address this tension, is about to introduce legislation compelling Haredim to perform military service.

The *Jewish Revenge* films address the already existing desire among Haredim to serve in the army, despite the official position of rabbinic authorities. According to Grovais the films' fictional plots speak to a growing number of Haredi youths who dream of taking part in the national task of "defending Israel."[52] "The problem for Haredim," he suggests, "is not the military service itself but the demand to assimilate that comes with it. At the moment that the issue was turned into a political struggle between Haredim and Israeli society, the Haredi public feels a need to resist and defend its autonomy."[53]

In the films, the imagined meetings between Haredi characters and Israeli armed forces which Grovais creates provide opportunities to resolve such differences. The relationship between the Haredi and the Israeli secular Zionist is reworked through a set of negotiations that leads to the transgression of the traditional subject positions of both parties. If traditionally the attitudes of Haredi groups range from anti-Zionism to strategic cooperation with Zionism, the fantasy of a different relationship in these films moves beyond strategy, into the realm of shared values.

Directed to an internal Haredi discourse, the films seem to offer the viewers a more empathic representation of the Israeli Jew and an opportunity to "belong" to and influence the Zionist act. It is the "safe" space that narrative cinema provides for the projection of desires and anxieties; where young Haredi men can exercise fantasies of national masculinity by projecting it not only on screen but in the private spaces of their homes, away from public supervision (which is so ingrained

in the Haredi way of life). Moreover, by setting the plots in real-life contemporary and historical contexts, the films rewrite the Israeli national imaginary and carve out a place for the Haredi Jew—previously excluded and secluded—in the Israeli national body.

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Notes

1. See Marlin Vinig, *Haredi Cinema* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2011); Vered Elimelech, "From the Far Past to the Present: Rabbis in Haredi Cinema" [Hebrew], in *Leadership and Authority in the Haredi Society in Israel*, ed. Kimmy Caplan and Nurit Stadler (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute/Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2009), 99–126; Vered Elimelech, "Attitudes to *the Other* in the Haredi Society as Reflected in Haredi Cinema" [Hebrew], in *From Survival to Consolidation: Changes in the Israeli Haredi Society and Its Scholarly Study*, ed. Kimmy Caplan and Nurit

Stadler (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute/Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2012), 116–136; Moran Banit, "Fantasy on Different Masculinity: Male Identities in Haredi Cinema" [Hebrew], in *Identities in Transition in Israeli Culture*, ed. Sandra Meiri, Yael Munk, Adia Mendelson-Maoz, and Liat Steir-Livny (Tel Aviv: Open University, 2013), 339–359.

2.   The series was produced between the years 2000 and 2010, but exact release dates for the titles were not published. Emerging largely from self-trained filmmakers and produced outside the Israeli film and television industry, Haredi cinema as a whole does no always comply with the conventions of the industry when it comes to marketing and cataloging information. Several of the films we discuss in this article were released on DVDs with ~~no or only partial~~ information about year of production, full cast list, and director's credit. ~~When this information was provided on the DVD,~~ we have included it with the first mention of the title.

3.   Halakhic interpretations of the biblical prohibition, "you shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exodus 20:4), include in some contexts the visual arts.

4.   See Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); David Shalit, *Projecting Power: The Cinema Houses, the Movies, and the Israelis* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Resling Publishing Ltd., 2006).

5.   While many of the pioneer filmmakers are self-trained, the production of Haredi films relies significantly on cinema professionals who returned to the faith and now utilize their skills, experience, and expertise to produce a new form of "kosher" cinema. For a more detailed discussion, see Vinig, *Haredi Cinema*.

6.   Unlike traditional forms of media, the personal computer was quicker to gain legitimacy with rabbinic authorities, mainly because it was perceived as a work tool rather than a media or cultural platform. During the 1990s the use of computers in Haredi households, education, and working environments spread quite quickly, and a distinct, secluded Haredi market has developed. For a discussion of the ideological and social implications of the legitimacy given to IT-related vocational occupations, see Yohai Hakak, *Vocational Training for Ultra-Orthodox Men* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2004); Neri Horowitz, "Haredim and the Internet" [Hebrew], *New Directions* (*Kivunim Ha'dashim*) 3 (2000): 7–30. For a report about the patterns of use of the internet in the Haredi sector, see Assaf Malkhi, *The Use of Computers in the Haredi Sector* (report for the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment) [Hebrew] (2009).

7.   For a detailed discussion, see Vinig, *Haredi Cinema*.

8.   Rabbinic authorities gradually give permissions for some films. This is far from being

a "blanket" approval. To date, the process requires that each filmmaker/producer seek approval for each film. Some filmmakers, especially women filmmakers, will avoid working without some rabbinic approval (*hechsher*), as this sanction functions also as a marketing tool, alleviating some potential concerns of audience members.

9. Cited in Elimelech, "Attitudes to *the Other* in the Haredi Society," 116.

10. A more nuanced discussion of the relationship between Israeli cinema and American and European cinemas is beyond the scope of this article. See Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West*; Yigal Borshtain, *Face as Battle Field: Cinematic History of Israeli Face* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd., 1990); Moshe Zimerman, *Hole in the Camera: Gazes of Israeli Cinema* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2003).

11. See Roni Perchak, "On the Other Side of the Fence: The Religious Sentiment in Israeli Cinema," in *Fictive Looks—On Israeli Cinema*, ed. Nurit Gertz, Orly Lubin, and Judd Ne'eman (Tel Aviv: Open University of Israel, 1998); Yael Munk and Nurit Gertz, "Israeli Cinema: Hebrew Identity/Jewish Identity," in *Zman Yehudi Hadash: Tarbut Yehudit BeIdan shel Hilun* (*New Jewish Time: Culture in the Age of Secularity*) [Hebrew], vol. 3, ed. Dan Meiron and Hanan Hever (Tel Aviv: Keter Publishers, 2007), 269–276.

12. Perchak, "On the Other Side of the Fence," 329.

13. This was mostly evident in some popular comedies from the 1960s that mocked Ashkenazi Haredi characters and settings, and in the *bourekas* films that tended to feature traditionalist Mizrahi Jews in a similar manner. For further discussion on this point, see Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West*. For a discussion of similar representations in Israeli media, see Yoel Cohen, "Religion News in Israel," *Journal of Media and Religion* 4.3 (2005): 179–198; Matt Evans, "Exacerbating Social Cleavages: The Media's Role in Israel's Religious-Secular Conflict," *Middle East Journal* 65.2 (2011): 234–250.

14. Films that indicate this trend include *Kadosh* (Amos Gitai, 1999); *Time of Favor* (*Hahesder*, Joseph Cedar, 2000); *Campfire* (*Medurat Hashevet*, Joseph Cedar, 2004); *Ushpizin* (Giddi Dar and Shuli Rand, 2004); *Purity* (*Tehora*, Anat Zuria, 2002); *Stones* (*Avanim*, Raphael Nadjari, 2004); *Psalms* (*Tehilim*, Raphael Nadjari, 2007); *The Secrets* (*Hasodot*, Avi Nesher, 2007); *My Father My Lord* (*Hufshat Kayitz*, David Volach, 2007); *Bruria* (Avraham Kushnir, 2008); *Eyes Wide Open* (*Einayim Petukhot*, Haim Tabakman, 2009); and *Fill the Void* (*Lemaleh et Hahalal*, Rama Burshtein, 2011). A number of popular television drama series, such as *Meorav Yerushalmi* (*Jerusalem Mix*, 2004–2010), *Merhak Negi'a* (*A Touch Away*, 2007), *Srugim* (*Knitted*, 2008–2010), and

Shtisel (2013), were also instrumental in bringing images of Jewish Orthodox life into the Israeli public sphere. See Dan Chyutin, "Negotiating Judaism in Contemporary Israeli Cinema: The Spiritual Style of *My Father My Lord*," in *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*, ed. Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 201–224.

15. Vinig, *Haredi Cinema*, 26–30.

16. On the mode of representing spirituality in contemporary Israeli cinema, see Chyutin, "Negotiating Judaism in Contemporary Israeli Cinema."

17. Elsaesser, writing about the links between European cinemas and the concept of "world cinema," raises concerns that contemporary transnational production and exhibition contexts—whereby European funds support the production of films from "other" parts of the world that are in turn premiered in European films festivals— prolong a legacy of Eurocentric "othering." It produces, according to Elsaesser, a cinema that "'others' the other, even if the other colludes in the othering." Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 509.

18. Yehuda Grovais, private interview with Yael Friedman, Bnei-Brak, Israel, October 8, 2013.

19. Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 17.

20. In Hebrew: "set me free from my prison." The title comes from the book of Psalms (142:7): "Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name."

21. Released on DVDs only, these films will commonly not follow the conventions of contemporary cinema. They often do not include a year of production; and, not unlike in the early days of cinema, the creator's credit is often given to the production company, not the director.

22. Grovais, private interview (see n. 18).

23. Elimelech, "Attitudes to *the Other* in the Haredi Society," 117.

24. Harvey O'Brien, *Action Movies: The Cinema of Striking Back* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

25. See, for example, Yvonne Tasker, ed., *Action and Adventure Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Lisa Purse*, Contemporary Action Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2011); O'Brien, *Action Movies*; Eric Lichtenfeld, *Action Speaks Louder: Violence, Spectacle, and the American Action Movie* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).

26. Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema*, 3.

27. See Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992), 8.

28. Gideon Aran, "The Haredi Body: Chapters from Ethnography in Preparation" [Hebrew], in *Israeli Haredim: Integration Without Assimilation?* ed. Emmanuel Sivan and Kimmy Caplan (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute/Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2003), 99–133.

29. Yohai Hakak, "Who Shapes Haredi Bodies: Religious Discourse or Secular Men?" *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spiritualities* 3.2 (2009): 100–122, 106.

30. Aran, "The Haredi Body," 121.

31. For a comprehensive discussion of the New Jew see, for example, Rina Peled, *"The New Man" of the Zionist Revolution: Hashomer Haza'ir and His European Roots* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishing House, 2002).

32. See Yohai Hakak, *Yeshiva Learning and Military Training: An Encounter between Two Cultural Models* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2003), 94; Nurit Stadler, "Playing with Sacred/Corporeal Identities: Yeshivah Students' Fantasies of Military Participation," *Jewish Social Studies* 13.2 n.s. (Winter 2007): 155–178.

33. Gideon Aran, Nurit Stadler, and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Fundamentalism and the Masculine Body: The Case of Jewish Ultra-Orthodox Men in Israel," *Religion* 38 (2008): 25–25.

34. Lisa Purse, *Gestures and Postures of Mastery: CGI and Contemporary Action Cinema's Expressive Tendencies,"* in *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Film, Pleasure and Digital Culture*, ed. Jason Sperb and Scott Balcerzak (New York: Wallflower Press, 2009).

35. See Patrícia Castello Branco, "Editorial: Cinema, the Body and Embodiment," *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 3 (2012): 1–9; Vivian Sobchack, "Fleshing Out the Image: Phenomenology, Pedagogy, and Derek Jarman's *Blue*," *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 3 (2012): 19–38.

36. Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema*, 43–44.

37. Ibid., 3.

38. Chabad is one of the world's largest and best-known Hasidic movements, especially known for its outreach activities aimed at unaffiliated Jews.

39. Elimelech, "Attitudes to *the Other* in the Haredi Society"; Banit, "Fantasy on Different Masculinity."

40. Observant Jews use tefillin—a set of two small leather boxes containing verses from the Torah—during daily weekday prayer. As part of the ongoing activities of Chabad,

emissaries are sent to public spaces to convince Jewish passersby to join a daily prayer.

41.   Aran, "The Haredi Body," 118–119.

42.   The English translation of the film dialogue is taken from the English-language DVD version of the film.

43.   Yohai Hakak, *Spirituality and Worldliness in Lithuanian Yeshivas* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2005), 82–84.

44.   Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema*, 3.

45.   Grovais, private interview (see n. 18).

46.   Official details of the Eichmann operation are published on the Israeli security services webpage. See www.shabak.gov.il/heritage/affairs/pages/eichmann-capture.aspx, accessed September 10, 2014.

47.   Grovais, private interview (see n. 18).

48.   Ibid.

49.   Bringing secular religious Jews closer to religion.

50.   Faye Ginsburg, "Mediating Culture: Indigenous Media, Ethnographic Film and the Production of Identity," in *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader*, ed. Kelly Askew and Richard R. Wilk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 210.

51.   Grovais, private interview (see n. 18).

52.   Ibid.

53.   Ibid.