

Abstract

In this thesis, I research the relationships between fathers who are rabbis and public figures in Religious Zionism and their sons and daughters from the point of view of the children and from the perspective of everyday life: The nature of the physical connection with the father, the structuring of the house and its boundaries, and how the educational approach the father espouses created and shaped the relationship, as well as processes of cultivating heritage.

This thesis is unique in that it combines the intergenerational axis – issues of fatherhood and relationships – with the socio-communal axis – processes and developments that shape the religious Zionist community – and examines their effect on the relationship.

The research questions pertaining to the intergenerational axis are: what is "fatherhood" for the children of the rabbis? How is fatherhood expressed in everyday practice? How do father-son or father-daughter relationships influence processes of continuity? Regarding the socio-communal axis I query how the specific cultural context in which the relationship takes place, namely the social and communal processes of religious Zionism, affects the rabbi's standing, thereby affecting the image of the father in the eyes of his children and types of continuity.

The research is qualitative in nature and is based on 32 semi-structured interviews with adult sons and daughters of rabbis who are public figures in the religious Zionist movement. Herewith are the main findings:

1. **The rabbi-father as a unique fathering site:** In recent decades, there is growing awareness of the importance of fathers' involvement in raising and caring for children. And indeed, many fathers are no longer satisfied with the traditional role of financial provider, and strive for more involvement in their children's lives. I claim in this study that despite the great importance attributed to the father's involvement, all of fatherhood should be examined as "situated fathering" and discussed on the basis of its unique contexts.

The rabbi-fathers often tend to be absent from their homes because of their commitment to serving the whole Jewish people. Even when they are home, they are absorbed in meeting the needs of the community. Moreover, some of

them do not consider fatherhood as a mission on the same level of importance as they do the rabbinate. However, rabbinic fatherhood should be viewed as a differentiated "fathering site" with unique characteristics. Above all, it is a fathering site wherein fatherhood is generally not practiced as a direct interaction between father and child, but rather as an indirect interaction but one with clear impact. The education, conversation and personal example do not transpire "one on one", but rather the child is enveloped in his father's activities: his classes, his teachings and his students. The son or daughter is influenced through these channels and thus constructs a connection with him.

2. A **"Strategy of Insistence" aimed at the fathers**: The rabbi-father is not just a private father, but the father of the whole Jewish people, tending to their needs. I claim that the rabbis' sons do not forego a connection with their father and instead adopt a "Strategy of Insistence". The sons desire closeness with their fathers, and ponder how to actualize the connection given the father's limited availability.

This attitude of the children towards their fathers undermines the assumption of individualistic identity. The sons do not necessarily seek individuation, but are motivated more by a desire for connection. There is a relational synchronicity between the children and their fathers: Faced with the barrier of inaccessibility to the father the children expressed a high level of accommodation and responsiveness. If their understanding of how to draw close to their father and become visible is to emulate him – the children adopted their father's point of view even at the cost of foregoing the actualization of the connection as they had desired. If the optimal path was determined to be protest, manipulation, or change of status (becoming the father's student) – the children synchronized and conformed to such a behavior.

3. **Interpretation as Continuity**: The children do not realize their father's path through reproduction. They tend towards a transformative continuity, through which they carry on the father's values and ideals, but not necessarily in action, or they apply the value they inherited from the father in a different field.

In addition, the "Continuity effort" individualizes the children – a declarative effort aimed toward the outer world, to justify and explain why

their path is still within the realm of "cultivating heritage". The effort also includes avoiding undermining the father. There is a noticeable desire to protect the father, who, despite his greatness, or perhaps precisely because of it, is perceived as vulnerable and fragile. The "Continuity effort" emphasizes the aspect of connection with the father: the desire to resemble, please and protect him.

4. **The influence of processes in Israeli society and in religious Zionism on the relationship with the father:** The older generation of rabbis' children, who lived through the first years after the establishment of the state, grew up under a collectivist and conformist ideology and experienced religious Zionism in its "finest hour", when it strove to apply Jewish tradition to all areas of life and then to complete missions of Zionist idealism and settlement. The younger generation of rabbis' children, on the other hand, is a product of the general Israeli sobering of the late 1960s, which increased in the years after the Yom Kippur war and the rise of the Likud to power in 1977. This generation witnessed the transformation of religious Zionism from a leading societal group to an ostracized one suffering from fractures and crisis. Moreover, the older group lived a collectivist and conformist religious lifestyle. The younger generation, on the other hand, grew up in the midst of post-modern societies on both the global and local level. The relatively closed sequence of the lifecycle of the older generation diversified and the younger rabbis' children experienced more role instability and a plurality of options than the older ones.

These trends correlate with the perception of the rabbi- father by each of the cohorts. The older rabbis' children, who grew up with a father whose authority was clear in an elitist community, tended to describe an ideal and perfect father figure. On the other hand, the rabbis' children born in the mid-1970s and beyond, who experienced the deligitimization of religious Zionism and absorbed the new attitudes, described the father in concrete terms, more "earthly" and at times reserved.