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THE NEW POLITICS OF
RELIGION AND GENDER IN ISRAEL

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Welcoming Remarks:

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Panelists:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WITTES: Ladies and gentleman, good afternoon, welcome to this special event.

For those of you whom I have not met, I'm Tamara Cofman Wittes, the Director of our Center for Middle East Policy here at the Brookings Institution.

We're here with a very special panel, which will begin in just a moment. But we're also here to launch a new initiative here at Brookings, and I want to tell you a little bit about why we're doing that.

Israel is a dynamic, modern society and economy, with politics that are boisterous and often quite polarized. But here in the Center for Middle East Policy, as we've done a great deal of work ever since our founding on Israeli foreign policy and on the U.S.-Israel relationship, we've found that the American policy community has not always kept up with the changes in Israeli society and what those changes portend for Israeli politics and policy.

And as the only think tank in Washington, it turns out, with a fulltime scholar devoted to Israeli affairs, we set out to do something about that. So, I'm truly delighted to welcome you for today's discussion of the new politics of religion and gender in Israel -- and, with this event, to the launch of our new agenda of research and activities designed to illuminate and understand Israel's future.

In Israel, the changes within Israeli society are the topic of intense debate and discussion. I was in Israel just last week for the Herzliya security conference. And I attended there a remarkable speech by Israel's President, Reuven Rivlin.

President Rivlin described a revolutionary transformation in Israeli society, one that presents new challenges to Israel's social cohesion, to its politics, and to its dynamic and highly-developed economy.

The transformation he described is a demographic one. Israel, he said, is no longer a society composed of a dominant majority of secular Israelis with minority groups of National Religious, ultra-Orthodox, and Arab citizens. Instead, he revealed the composition of the first-grade classes in Israeli schools, which he said show what he described as the four tribes of modern Israel.

38 percent of those first-graders are secular Israelis in the public school system. 22 percent are in the ultra-Orthodox school system. 25 percent are in the Arab school system. And 18 percent are in the National Religious school system.

And each of these four tribes, he noted, represents a minority within Israeli society. There is no more majority and minority. And the fact that these divisions are reinforced through the educational system -- but also in where each tribe lives, what news media they consume, whether and how they serve in the Israeli military, and work in the Israeli economy -- these realities push these four tribes of Israelis apart.

Now to those who follow Israeli affairs closely, this reality is not new. But it does have profound implications. Israelis today are wrestling with questions driven by this societal diversity. How does Israel manifest itself as a Jewish and democratic state when ¼ of its citizens are not Jewish? How does Israel sustain a dynamic, developed, globalized economy when nearly ½ of its population -- its ultra-Orthodox and Arab citizens -- are on the margins, both economically and educationally?

What is the proper place of religion in public life? When, for example, having religious courts manage personal status produces outcomes that disadvantage women economically. And how do all these societal changes affect the Israeli military, which traditionally has been a force for social cohesion in Israel, as well as a key gateway to university and to employment?

The changes in Israeli society are already manifesting themselves in

politics and in policy -- in debates over national service and military conscription, in the emergence of new or revitalized political parties, like the Jewish Home Party, in the fracturing of the Israeli Parliament, from a system dominated by two parties into a much more multipolar Parliament, where government coalitions are far more complex and far less stable. That's one reason why we've seen three Parliamentary elections in the last six years in Israel.

Now Israel is one of the United States's closest allies, and American policy toward the Middle East -- and toward Israel in particular -- continues to dominate the agenda of policymakers here in Washington. So, it's important that Americans gain a better understanding of where Israeli society and politics are today, and where they're going.

I've found that the Washington conversation on Israel is almost exclusively focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on terrorism, on Iran -- as if domestic politics were not a factor.

And that's not how we think here in Washington about any other major international ally of the United States. So, it's time for the Washington policy community to understand more of what Israelis themselves are thinking about, and what's shaping their elections, their politics, and their policies.

And that's why I'm so proud that we're launching today this new two-year initiative of research and activities here at the Center for Middle East Policy, to focus on Israeli society and politics. We'll be hosting more Israeli voices here at our podium, like our two guests today, as well as, I hope, more visiting Israeli Fellows. We'll be publishing more Israeli scholars and policy experts in our series of analysis papers and in our flagship blog, *Markaz*. And we'll be building up our own collaborative work with Israeli's growing array of policy think tanks.

All of these activities will build on the strong foundation of our work on Israeli foreign policy, on U.S.-Israeli relations -- including our flagship annual high-level dialogue, the Saban Forum.

And, of course, for us, this work is not just about helping Americans better understand an ally nation; it's also about what understanding Israel better can help us understand about ourselves and about the other countries we study.

In the United States, we are also on the cusp of becoming a majority/minority society. By 2020, a majority of our population will be made up of historically marginalized minority groups. In the rest of the Middle East, particularly where politics is opening up after years of autocracy, we likewise see robust debates about religion's role in public life, about the impact of religious law on women's empowerment and economic inclusion.

And so for Brookings, devoting attention to domestic Israeli society and politics will also, we hope, offer new ideas and new opportunities to bridge our work across the institution and across the Middle East, as well. We're very grateful in particular to the Morningstar Foundation for their support that is making this new initiative possible. And I'd like especially to welcome Susie and Michael Gelman of the Morningstar Foundation, who are with us today. Thank you so much for your support.

And with that, I'd like all of you to join me in welcoming our panel, our Israel Fellow, Natan Sachs, and our Israeli visitors, Rabbanit Adina Bar-Shalom and Havrat Knesset Rachel Azaria. Welcome.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much, Tamara. And welcome, everyone.

It's really a special privilege for me to introduce our panelists. When we were thinking about how to start our project, these two guests were really at the very top of the list, and I think you'll see why, both from the bios that you have with you and, also,

from our conversation.

So, I won't go through the whole bios, but these two panelists are very well-known in Israel.

Rabbanit Adina Bar-Shalom has been on the forefront of efforts to bring together religious and secular Israelis, Jews and Arabs, Jews and Muslims, in a whole wide array of issues relating especially to women in the Haredi ultra-Orthodox community. She is most known as the founder and CEO of a Haredi college in Jerusalem. She's also a Laureate of the Israel Prize, which is the highest civilian prize Israel awards anyone, and was widely applauded when that was received, I think, which says a lot about her standing in Israeli society, across all sectors of Israeli society.

She's also well-known for being the daughter of the late Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who was easily the most important Sephardic rabbi of our generation, and was a transformational figure in Israeli society, in Israeli politics, as well. And her voice in that regard carries a special weight within the Haredi community.

Member of Knesset Rachel Azaria is also extremely well-known, especially in my hometown, Jerusalem. She's been an activist for many years on environmental issues and social issues, both at the university and later in Israel -- and especially in recent years, when protest movements and social movements swept Israel. She was very active in many of those.

She was especially active in an organization helping Orthodox women who are -- or women in general who are chained, so to speak, to their marriage, if they do not receive a divorce from their husband -- something which, in the Israeli system, where Orthodox law governs marital affairs among Jews, was very important.

And then she was also the leader of a very noteworthy movement in Jerusalem called the Jerusalemites, but ran for the City Council. She led it. She became

Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, and was really one of the most important voices there.

She is now a brand-new member of Knesset from the Kulanu Party (inaudible) which is joined the coalition -- and will look forward to work in the Knesset.

And if I may, I'll start with you, MK Azaria.

Tamara mentioned the Saban Forum. And I think it was four years ago that Hillary Clinton -- you may have heard of her -- she spoke about democracy in Israel and challenges to democracy. And in part, she was talking about you. So, if you could tell us a bit about the background of that, the activity in Jerusalem -- what was Hillary Clinton speaking of?

MS. AZARIA: Okay. So, first of all, I want to say, I'm very happy to be here, and I think this is a very important discussion. In fact, because I'm part of the coalition -- we have a very, very narrow coalition these days in Israel, so I had to leave last night, and I have to be back on Sunday to make sure I don't miss any vote -- because if I miss a vote, the government can file.

So, I came for, you know, just, you know, 48, 72 hours, and I'm leaving back to Israel. But it was very important, because I think this is an extremely important topic.

Hillary Clinton -- thank you for reminding that event. When I was a Jerusalem City Councilwoman, it started out when I was running for City Council seven years ago, and they wouldn't put my poster on the bus. It's a very well-known form of advertising the fact that you're running in politics. You have to have your poster on the bus; otherwise, you're not a real politician. I can't explain how important it is.

And they wouldn't have my poster. And when I asked why -- so they said that there's a very small group of radical ultra-Orthodox that won't allow, you know, to have posters of women on buses -- because they fear that you -- you're not allowed to

see women in the public sphere.

We didn't give up. And I went to the Supreme Court. And at the Supreme Court, they said they have to have the poster on the bus. And since then, I found myself going back and forth to the Supreme Court on many issues regarding women in public sphere -- segregation and disappearance of women in public sphere, women in posters. We had buses in which women had to sit in the back of the bus. We had streets in which women had to walk on one side of the street, and men on the other side of the street.

But don't worry; there's a good end to this story -- because we went back and forth to the Supreme Court, and we kept winning. And that's something that I think is very interesting, because in Israel, the law's very liberal, but sometimes the people -- in some places, the people are very Orthodox or Conservative. It depends on how you -- what language you want to use.

And that's why there was a clash between the law in Israel and the way some people perceived the law. But every time I went to the Supreme Court, I kept winning. And at a certain point, it became too complicated, and the coalition I was part of in Jerusalem where we had 40 percent Orthodox -- and that's why the Mayor kicked me out of the coalition.

And I found myself a young City Councilwoman in a very small party, you know, and a very -- it was -- I led the party, and I found myself out of the coalition. And we decided not to give up, and went on a huge campaign on these issues of segregation and disappearance of women from public sphere, and became, you know, world-known. And there were very few people that were really backing me up.

And there were, you know, the women's organizations in Israel, but there was a huge discussion. And then when Hillary Clinton -- you know, she said out loud,

you can't -- the fact that there's segregation and disappearance of women from public sphere -- that's a threat to Israeli democracy. It was a moment that I could say, you know, this campaign -- there is a reason for it, and it's the right route to walk in -- because whenever you shake or move the boat, everyone's always, you know, are you sure you had to do it? So, big deal -- so they wouldn't have your poster.

So, you'd have some women sitting in the back of the bus if that's what they want to do. You know, why are you fighting?

I joined politics when basically, we realized in Jerusalem what the President and Israel talked about just recently, about the different tribes. Seven years ago, I joined Jerusalem politics when we realized that a lot of people were leaving the city, and the city became a city where you have basically four tribes -- the same tribes the President was talking about. And we decided that we have to form new coalitions that didn't exist before.

We decided to form a coalition between the secular and -- you call them the (inaudible) how did they call them?

MR. SACHS: National Religious --

MS. AZARIA: The National Religious sector -- and we formed together the party running for City Council.

And very quickly, with the campaign against the disappearance of women from public sphere, basically, we challenged the ultra-Orthodox society. And we started discussing, how do we want to see the public sphere in Jerusalem? And that challenge after, you know, huge battles -- what started happening is that suddenly, the ultra-Orthodox realized that we're talking about values and issues that we can't give up on.

And feminism and human rights are very important to us. We can't have

someone sit in the back of the bus. It's just -- you know, it's against everything we believe in.

And for the first time, the discussion between the ultra-Orthodox and the non-ultra-Orthodox wasn't about assets; it was about ideology. It was about what we believe; what we stand for. How do we want Jerusalem -- what kind of city do we want Jerusalem to be? Can it be just a radical city, or does it have to be a city that everyone feels comfortable living in?

Because not only that it became an ideological campaign; what started happening is that ultra-Orthodox women started calling me and thanking me for this campaign. And that was a big surprise, because I thought that we're campaigning against the ultra-Orthodox, and challenging what they believed in.

And what I realized is that there's always another voice -- and that other voice often isn't heard, especially in more Conservative societies. And I think that what's happening today in Israel is that this voice is being heard more and more.

A few years ago, there was a -- the new republic had one of their journals. There was a big article that was -- this was the name: "Will Orthodox Feminism Save Israel from Fundamentalism?" And I think they were right. And I think that the loudest and clearest voice regarding fundamentalism in Israel -- against fundamentalism - - is coming from women, and it's coming from Orthodox feminism. I'm Orthodox -- Liberal Orthodox. But it's coming down, more and more so from ultra-Orthodox women.

And we can see in different ultra-Orthodox groups -- dance groups or books that are being written -- you can hear feminist voices that are challenging the hegemony and challenging the radicalization and the fundamentalism that, on the one hand, is growing, but on the other hand, you have these undermining voices that are challenging it.

And I think that if -- I talked about three tribes, and I didn't talk about the Arabs in Israel and in Jerusalem. But I think that today, the Arab women are going through the same kind of campaign.

When I started talking about the disappearance of women from public sphere -- so there were some Arab women that approached me, and they said, you know, we have the same challenge -- because we are minority amongst the larger group, we always have to stick together against the larger group. And therefore, we can never bring any challenge to the minority, because we're a minority amongst the minorities. So, we always have to show, you know, the same stand, but we're dealing with very similar challenges.

And today, in the Knesset -- I just joined the Knesset, and the Knesset -- heading the committee regarding women's affairs is an Arab woman, Aida Touma-Suliman. She's a woman that founded centers for --

MR. SACHS: Victims of sexual assault.

MS. AZARIA: Victims of sexual assault in different villages, different towns in the Arab community. And today, she's heading the committee in the Knesset. The former head of the committee was an Orthodox woman, and I think that's because these are the two groups that are leading major changes today in Israeli society through feminism.

I just want to sum up my words by saying that, today, Orthodox feminism is the strongest feminist movement in Israel. We have, you know, the largest groups, the largest -- any gathering. We have hundreds and thousands of women that are part of this movement, and we're challenging almost anything regarding (inaudible) when there were Rabbis that had sexist says.

So, we came out against it when there were anything that anyone dares

to do anything about -- against women or feminism. So, there are very, very strong groups today in Israel that wasn't around 10 years ago -- or wasn't even around, you know, when I was in that campaign for disappearance of women from public sphere.

I needed Hillary Clinton's voice to make it clear that this campaign is real. And today, there's a very strong voice in Israel on these issues.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

One of the strongest voices on similar issues is with us -- Adina Bar-Shalom, if I may turn to you -- you've championed the revolution in a sense, in women's status and women's opportunity, especially in the Haredi community. The college you founded in Jerusalem was not just really important for the women inside it, but now men inside it, as well -- but, also, in the fact that it was a flagship for this brand of revolution.

Could you tell us a bit about the vision you had when you founded it, and what your hopes are for it now?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: My vision was not to be feminism; it was to be part of the Israeli society, to bring respect both to religion and to the Israeli community. The poverty of religious community was almost unbearable. The hatred towards the Orthodox was so unbearable because of the economic situation, and I understood. If I don't get up and do something to change it, all the Knesset members gave them funds and stipends, but they did not advancement.

So, the conversation that I heard from my father, and that I could talk and explain a different point of view -- maybe not political, maybe different in its essence -- because I said, we're asking for respect as religious people, and they cannot give us such respect if we're sitting on somebody's else's shoulders and making the economy and everybody else's life difficult -- and giving a bad name to ourselves.

I'm not talking about the way we are being seen. I'm talking about the

way we have to treat ourselves -- so not every other day, you will be knocked on your door and being asked and begged to help, and have another fund. And their child is sick, and there's nobody to take care of him.

The daily burdens of the Orthodox community came to his desk. So, it was easy to come and say, I will do it, and I will do it correctly. I need your okay and your backing that it's okay. He asked me, do you know exactly what I'm going into? And I said, yes, I do. The Rabbis have shunned higher education about 200 years ago in Europe, and that has come to Israel.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, there was no academics in the academia. Maybe I will exaggerate a little bit there -- maybe 25 people a year, but not more. But you cannot continue doing it in an advanced community that is becoming more and more technological, and we are living as if we were living 200 years ago. This cannot go on. We had to do some changes, and that's that I came from the house of my father, who said, yes, you can take those people. Take people who are academic religious people, who will bridge the gap between the conflicts.

There's so many conflicts between science and religion. We know that, but we have to learn the science, and you have to learn it together with the (inaudible) word, or other generations. We had enough Rabbis in previous generations who were both scientist and Rabbis. We have to go back to this flourishing time of this history of Israel that have brought both science and religion to flourish.

And, obviously, the beginning was very difficult. There were very few women who agreed. We had to build the base for the academic background. Can you explain what? Men or women -- and in yeshivot and in high school, they learn only Torah. They learn subtraction; they don't learn math. They learn a little bit the knowledge of Israel heritage -- very little about the world. They may say that Brazil is

somewhere in Alaska, and everybody's happy about it.

The broad knowledge is so narrow. They are grown, and their families Talmud (inaudible) Torah, but only a few of them. If all of them were becoming enlightened people, then at least, as the women take upon themselves the burden of economic, and raising kids, and find the time for political and social activities.

So, if we do all that, at least if they were -- if all of them were Talmud (inaudible) bright students, that would be fine. But maybe 50 percent or a few more sit and study Torah, and bring a lot of advancement of the Torah world. But the other part that cannot make it to those Torah levels, they should be able to go and study in academics, and to become -- share the economic burden.

At the beginning, it was very difficult, and only after five years, men started working in the academia. We started with 23 women; today, we have many such centers in the country. And in the Israeli academia, there are about 10,000 people, men and women. The studies are both for the first and second degree. At least 25 percent of the students continue to the second degree, to a master. There's a small group that even continues to the PhD. Even in life sciences, it's unbelievable. The question is, where is that front income coming from?

That is not simple. The resistance was very big, very strong in the Haredi community. The attacks on me were horrible. Even though my father was who he was, nobody thought about it -- that maybe I'm doing things in coordination with him. Nobody cared about it. They said I'm murdering Jewish souls. And to murder a Jewish soul is most against the Torah. It's bringing things to the nonreligious life, which is close to heresy.

My father said -- when I asked him for help, he said, I'm not going to be here all your life, if you think that I need to give you a hand. If you cannot stand on your

own feet, be courageous enough to accept the hits, as well, you will not be able to advance this and other projects that you're thinking of. He knew I had a lot of good ideas.

I think the way Rachel did was phenomenal in her strengths, because she's a woman, and it's hard to understand that women have a much harder way to participate in this society. She's in my world. It's much harder for us in the Orthodox or religious community to accept the political way when we live within those constraints that we want them, and suddenly we have to understand that the world also invites other compromises -- compromises in studies that may not be so up to us, but we need to accept it -- to accept the Israeli world with all its complexity.

I would like not to live in ghettos, but the Orthodox people want to live in ghettos, and that their children will not encounter not Shabbat keepers and un-Orthodox lifestyle. In my opinion, it's terrible. Our children have to understand and know the world as it is. The world is getting smaller. Israel is a few hours, and you complete the country -- driving from side to side. You cannot continue and neutralize the world, and to keep it so strongly.

If we don't give them tools to continue to advance, to know what's around them, and to challenge them to continue being Torah keepers and to be the men of the gebig world, we're going to lose.

MR. SACHS: You found that men who come to the academia do not have the core studies. Women already have them. What do they do, the men who find themselves in the academia? What do you do advancement? How do you bridge the gap between the ghettos and combining -- what happens when they come out of the college?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: The beginning, as I said, was very difficult. First of

all, I brought them to a pre-academic preparation in Bar-Ilan. They study what Bar-Ilan and Ben-Gurion University studies. They come to Jerusalem; the Professors are not religious, and the girls study that way to accept and know the outside world.

The men who came to the preparation academy studied about 14 months together with the psychometric studies, four units of English, which is a border to get into the college and universities -- unit three only for colleges, but four units for university, four units of mathematics. If you want to go to computers, you have to get the fifth unit in mathematics -- and Hebrew. They speak Hebrew, but the Hebrew is not proper for academic work. In order to study that, they learn all that in the preparation, the pre-studies.

They arrived at 4:00 in the afternoon, and studied until 10:00 at night, five days a week. Five days a week, they sat and studied. Some of them even studied that they made cards with A-B-C cards so that they could study and rehearse, because that was very difficult for them.

From 100 who arrived to the first pre-program, 50 percent dropped, and we was left with 50. And those 50 continued to computer studies; 48 completed with summa cum laude -- because it's not that easy in the computer studies, and mathematics, because of the studies, was easier for them to understand it -- to understand the sciences.

The women studied the same as women in other schools. They study in the (inaudible) movement. There's not much of a difference.

I'm already administering -- from the first college group, I am in communication with the politicians to bring into the elementary schools -- not starting at 14-year-old -- here, I compromise with the child -- whether they want to become -- and let the kid to decide whether they want to become a Rabbi or to choose a person of the

world.

They have to know what's ahead of them. And therefore, I get their point of view -- that between 14 and 18, you can study in the yeshiva. But every child from the age of six in first grade to the age of 14 will study English in the highest level possible. Those kids, they receive everything. My father agreed with me; they perceive everything. They insisted on just to include the nonreligious studies for all those elementary schools. His definition was -- and I say the same -- I wish I could know -- I wish I knew English, and he would say the same. Then I could have talked to you without the headset, if I could speak English.

So, we are bridging this hurdle daily and every hour. Let's give our children the opportunities that we did not have.

MR. SACHS: Let me switch languages and gears, and turn to politics.

You're now a member of Knesset. The vision that (inaudible) described is one of, on the one hand, transformation of the ultra-Orthodox community -- and especially the women's status. But it is still very much a vision of separate systems -- of one, in fact, that enables ultra-Orthodox to study separately, and therefore stay in accordance with their -- with love for their traditions, especially issues of men and women together and public modesty.

Where do you stand on this? You come from a different background, but also very different activity -- one that was actually somewhat based on fighting against these kinds of differences. How do you see this, and how do you see this, especially in the context of the new coalition of politics today?

MS. AZARIA: First of all, I think -- in at least society I come from, it's a coed -- definitely until high school. In high school, sometimes it's separate, the school system.

But the ultra-Orthodox society -- I think that the politicians amongst those Orthodox society, they can't lead any change. They are busy keeping, you know, the old system. They're doing everything they can to fight against these winds of change, but I think that's how political groups usually behave under these kind of circumstances.

There was a small group of ultra-Orthodox women that -- first of all, there was a larger group that held a campaign amongst the ultra-Orthodox, at least for City Council or for the Parliament. There are no women. There are no ultra-Orthodox women. They're not allowed to be in any political position, at least, you know, the way these parties are defined.

And there was a campaign of ultra-Orthodox women saying, you know, if you won't have a woman on these lists, we won't vote for you. And then there was a party of ultra-Orthodox women running for the government, for the Knesset, for the Parliament, but it is very hard. You have to have a lot of votes to be able to get into the Parliament, and it was impossible. But I think that was a voice that it was very important for it to be heard.

Today in the government, first of all, the ultra-Orthodox -- they weren't part of the former government, and that's why, in a sense, they're like, you know, now it's our time; now we're in the government, you know. Now we want to achieve everything in the former government. And that's something that Israeli society is struggling with -- because of this kind of tribal society, every time -- this was my opening speech in the Parliament -- we live in a society, a tribal society, that -- this was the opening, of course, at Hebrew University 15 years ago. He said like this, the Professor.

Israeli society's a tribal society in which every night, every one of us goes to sleep, hoping that when we'll wake up, one tribe will disappear. And you can be as liberal as you imagine, but even you deep, deep inside know exactly which tribe you hope

will disappear.

And I argued with the Professor very, very strongly -- you know, that's a description of Israeli society. Can't you say -- whatever. I was very vocal about it. But I think that the past few elections show that -- I don't know if we think the other tribe will disappear, but we definitely hope they won't be part of the government, and we'll be able to do everything, you know, the way we think Israeli society should be held, and ignore the other tribes.

And this is more or less what's happening now with the ultra-Orthodox parties, because they weren't part of the former government. So, now they're trying to make sure, you know, the old school, the old way of ultra-Orthodox society that will be kept.

But we're struggling, because, for example, the chained women you talked about -- the women that can't get their divorce -- one of the party, Shas, the party that Adina Bar-Shalom's father founded -- today, they want to make changes amongst the rabbinical courts that will make it harder for women to get their divorce. And we are the -- the Kulanu Party -- we're in very intensive campaign against it.

This past week, this is basically what I was working on, to make sure that, on the one hand, they'll be able to get the political power they're interested in, but at the same time, they won't be able to make it harder for women to get their Jewish divorce. And this is a big struggle. We're going to have the same kind of struggle, also, regarding the kosher certificates that the rabbinic -- the different companies.

There are many issues that now are going to be out there, but I think that what's interesting is that when I ran the organization for women that can't get their Jewish divorce, it didn't really interest politicians. It was almost like a nonissue. It was an issue that interested very few people. And today, you can see that it's a big issue. It's

something that many members of the Parliament -- they care about it. They don't feel comfortable with this change that one of the ultra-Orthodox parties is trying to create.

And I think that that does show -- basically, we're dealing with two streams. One is, on one hand, more radicalization, and then maybe more fundamentalism. But on the other hand, another stream kind of undermining it -- and we can feel in the government. On the one hand there, we have a party that's trying to make it harder for women to get their divorce. But on the other hand, you have a lot of people that are against it. And I think that it will even out, in a certain way.

I do think that in the long run, the religious issues will become more moderate in Israel, I think. I think that's where we're going.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

Could you tell us a bit more about the struggles inside the coalition now? One of the main things that people here, too, are asking about is, with the ultra-Orthodox parties in and Yesh Atid out, that there would be, as you said, a repeal of everything that was done in the previous one.

What is the forefront of the challenges, in terms of your party, your real position? What do you think would happen? You're obviously very different from Yesh Atid, but you're also very different from the ultra-Orthodox. What do you think are the main challenges going forward, and you and your party's challenges in that?

MS. AZARIA: So, I think one issue is always the budget, okay? How much of the budget goes to the ultra-Orthodox as ultra-Orthodox? One issue, for example, is the child welfare. And the ultra-Orthodox were -- historically, they're always pro-child welfare, because they have more children.

MR. SACHS: And so children subsidies -- per child.

MS. AZARIA: Children subsidy, yeah -- per child that you get. Every

month, I get a few hundred shekels. It doesn't really affect your bank account in many ways, but for the ultra-Orthodox, that they're usually -- the families are poor, because the fathers don't work, and only the mothers work. So, it's very important to them.

So, those kind of issues -- regarding the budget and the Kulanu Party, we were more kind of, you know, flexible about -- because we didn't think that what we need to do now is argue over, you know, how much money children will receive. And that's something that we felt that, as you know, we can live with it -- and, also, because the Kulanu Party talks a lot about the poor people, and that has to do with sort of the poor people.

But issues that -- I think there are three issues. One is joining the army - - if ultra-Orthodox men will join the army. The Yesh Atid legislation they were working on -- I called it Tel Aviv legislation -- like, Jerusalemites would never write the legislation in that way, because it's legislation that doesn't really know ultra-Orthodox. It's people that live in a city where -- in Tel Aviv, there are no ultra-Orthodox, basically. In Jerusalem, we have 1/3 ultra-Orthodox. So, we really know the society, the community, and it's very different.

And therefore, I was very much against their legislation. Their legislation -- instead of helping ultra-Orthodox join the army, the numbers of ultra-Orthodox that were joining the army -- they didn't grow, and they even decreased. It depends how you count it, but, basically, the numbers decreased. And so I'm pro, you know, we're going to vote against that legislation. I think it's fine.

The two major issues that are awaiting us is the issue of the rabbinical courts. That's what I talk about the women. And the second is the kosher certificate. They want to really change the law to make it much harder for -- basically, to make the word "kosher" belong only to the rabbinate -- and therefore, people won't be able to use

it. It would be against the law -- very, very radical law, anyway. Now we're in a big campaign against it, and I think we're going to win. But those are the major issues today.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

Adina, I wanted to ask --

MS. AZARIA: Sorry -- I just wanted to say something.

MR. SACHS: Yeah, sure.

MS. AZARIA: Over the past -- I don't know -- 20 years, every time we had issues of state and religion, it was always state or religion, okay? It was always, you had the ultra-Orthodox saying, this is how Judaism has to be, and we had the very secular group saying, you know, get out of our plate. Get out of our life, you know. You don't tell us what to do. You're not going to decide what's happening in Israel. Give us the freedom of choice -- whatever.

And what we're trying to do -- and I think that's what Israeli society is struggling -- is, what kind of Judaism do we want to have, and how do we create Judaism? And I think that's the path we're starting to walk towards -- Judaism that will be moderate, but will -- on the one hand, there'll be a Jewish identity or Jewish flavor to Israeliness, but it won't be necessarily ultra-Orthodox or Orthodox; it will be more liberal.

And it doesn't mean that the way Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox people, you know, practice Judaism -- it doesn't mean that that has to be Jewishness to everyone in Israel. And on the other hand, it doesn't mean that you can't have Jewishness in Israel.

And I think that what we're working now is to write up what that means. And once we know, once we have a feel of it, then we can turn it into legislation. And I think that this is a big issue we're working on today in Israel.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. I'm sure we're going to get back to this in the Q&A, as well --

MS. AZARIA: Okay.

MR. SACHS: And I will, if not.

But, Adina, I wanted to ask you here -- speaking about politics and the role of Shas -- if I may put it bluntly, why are you not a member of Knesset (inaudible) Shas? It would be so natural -- or, I think we're allowed to say, you could've been a member of Kulanu. You were, in fact, invited to join Kulanu, and you would've been a member of Knesset.

MS. AZARIA: And we'll be together.

MR. SACHS: (inaudible) personally. But of course, it's not -- I don't mean to make it personal. More generally, do you think that, in the next 10, 20 years, we will see ultra-Orthodox members of Knesset who are women and fighting your battle?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: In the coming 10 years, I hope yes -- so it will be. It depends on the women, more than on the men. The men will say no. After all, it's their chair, so why should they give it up? They're sitting comfortably. 100 men want to sit on every chair, and they'll say, what, come and join us?

So, it's not only in the Orthodox parties; it's in all the parties. How many women are in the Likud? Three women? A few more -- so four women in the Likud, of 30 representatives. That's not enough. It's definitely not enough.

We woke up late. We, the Orthodox women woke up late. If, five years ago, it would've offered to me, I would've said, what, are you crazy? What have I got to do that? We were used to the fact that women do not go certain places. It's not right for them to stand in the Knesset and to raise their voice, and it's not right for them. They should be fair, and they should work hard day to night; it's good enough. They shouldn't have to be feminine and cute.

But in the Knesset, it's not hard work -- only to hear their voice will be

unfair. Maybe that's it, following the college. Maybe it's because women who really manage the schools, and work, and the family -- and half of the Haredi world is run by women -- maybe that what made them start thinking, I don't want to stop here. I want to influence through the Knesset -- not to get money and sit there. I want to legislate in the local and in the general, so that it will be easy -- for example, very simple thing -- something that only a woman will think of, to have an easy way to get the baby carriage down from the sidewalk to the street.

It's very hard. Nowhere is it -- in Ilad, for example, in Orthodox -- women didn't want to be there. I didn't want to be there. But lately, I started thinking about going to Kulanu. I did not join because my father's project was Shas. I couldn't see myself to destroy the party that was -- and it was in danger. It was in danger that they will not get into the Knesset.

For the first time since Shas was established in '84 to to-date, I've never been involved in politics and in this party -- because part of the things that they did was not up to -- I didn't like it. But because it was my father's baby -- and to see it disappear would have been -- my conscience wouldn't have let me do that.

So, I gave up -- and maybe today, my students -- we will prepare them to go to the Knesset to join and to come to a better situation. And when I mean "situation," not situation of honor. I'm talking about doing. I'm talking about influencing socially and physically -- make laws that aren't good to us. For example, the issue of the gunot -- the women who don't get their get.

I don't want to make it part of the religion. The religion finds a solution for everything, and that's what hurts me as a woman, as a religious Orthodox woman. It hurts me to see that the religious makes it so that women cannot live in it. That's why I want to be there. That's why I want Orthodox women there -- to know what hurts the

community, and we'll know how to heal it.

The difficult situation of 69 women who cannot get their get -- who cannot get their divorce. There are 10,000 women who get get in the habanot, and 69 of them -- the number that Dahon quoted two months ago -- and this is the number he quoted -- 69 women who cannot get a get. There are another 119 women that are being discussed in the rabbinical courts for over a year. I don't know why. You (inaudible). They get married through love, and you get divorced through much hate.

And I hope we will solve these problems for these women in a more emotionally involved way. My father said to the Rabbis in one place, every Dayan has to look at the woman who comes to the courthouse as if she was his daughter. Don't say you can't include emotions in court. In this case of agunah, think of it as if it was your daughter.

And if there's more time at the end, I'll talk about the agunot of the Yom Kippur War.

MR. SACHS: (inaudible) please wait for the mic, which is on its way. Secondly, please identify yourself, and, third, please ask a question with an actual question mark at the end.

Thank you.

MS. REISER: Hello. My name is Mindy Reiser, and I will ask in English so that everybody will understand.

To take this in a little bit of a different direction, particularly for you, I have heard some interesting developments of settlers in the West Bank meeting with Palestinians. These are Haredi settlers. And I'm wondering what you see as the possibilities of Haredi women, who, in some ways, have more of a lifestyle in common with Haredi Muslim women. If you could talk a little bit about a vision -- a hazon shalach

(inaudible).

MR. SACHS: Thank you (inaudible).

MS. BAR-SHALOM: See that -- in the room, when we were talking, I was telling about groups of Haredi women who, with a special budget of the U.N. in the Education Department, study second degree in conflict resolution. One group already finished their studies, and those women meet with women from Jerusalem, Muslim women from Lod, Nazareth.

They have contact that started in studies four years ago, and it continues through today. They help also to bridge between the communities in place. For example, the Garin Torani, the core in Lod that took away a little bit their participation in certain activities -- and it was the religious women who was able to bring them back into the community, both the religious women and the Muslim women.

The contact is very natural. There's so many thing we have in common. For example, the dominance of men and other things -- taking care of children, large families -- the common denominator is very broad. And Haredi women will find faster the common denominator with Muslim women than the women in Tel Aviv who have a different lifestyle. It's very befitting the Haredi women to do that.

Also, I think that the Haredi women have an internal influence on their husband and their children. Our wish to stop the war -- women can lead that movement fabulously. We don't think you need the man to deal with politics. Haredi women can do that, too, and can maybe find better solutions.

MR. AIBASHIR: Hello. My name is Nasir AIBashir. I'm a student at Amherst College.

And I wanted to ask about a question that Ms. Azaria touched upon earlier. You were mentioning the idea of separation of state and religion. And the Middle

East in general -- not just Israel -- is notorious for sectarian conflicts and having issues with regards to religious identity. And I have noticed that one main issue is that people tend to conflate national identity with religious identity, and that maybe Iran should be predominantly Shia, or that certain areas should be Sunni, or Christian, or Jew.

And so my question is that -- sorry -- for example, Tunis, who, people argue, has made strides with regards to this, is known for having issued a secular constitution, but still, in that very constitution, they highlighted Islam as the religion of the state.

So, my question is that, is it possible to have a national identity that also encompasses a religious identity under its umbrella and maintain democracy, or do we need to find a way to separate both in order to achieve democracy and remain liberal?

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

MS. AZARIA: Okay. First of all, I think this is a huge challenge that we're going to have to face, and we're going to have to deal with it. And I believe it's definitely possible. Otherwise, you know, I wouldn't be doing everything I'm doing.

I think basically, what we're trying to create is a moderate Judaism or moderate religion. I think that's our challenge. And I think one of the reasons women are very much part of this debate is because we have the most to lose. And when there was this -- we felt it was almost like a tsunami of, you know, hiding women from the public sphere very quickly. I have four children -- three daughters and a son -- and very quickly, my children at school, their books suddenly -- the girls disappeared from their textbooks.

And when I went to the Supreme Court, they said, you know, what do you care what's happening in the ultra-Orthodox society? And I said, you know, first of all, we live in the same city. So, anything that happens, you know, to Orthodox society -- you know, we're in the same public sphere. And the second issue I talked about is what

happens to my daughters. You know, what kind of textbooks do they see?

And I think we are pushing towards a more liberal and -- you know, to deal with fundamentalism and a more liberal Judaism, because, you know, at a certain point, the reason I became Orthodox feminist is because I felt that there was a huge gap between what I can do as a woman in Israel -- you know, I can run for City Council, I can be a doctor -- you know, I can do anything I want. Everything -- we have a woman, you know, at the head of the Supreme Court in Israel. We have a woman head of the bank -- how do you say the --

MR. SACHS: Bank of Israel.

MS. AZARIA: Bank of Israel. We have women -- you know, women have done everything, and, really, we can be out there. We can do everything, and there's nothing that can stop us.

But once we go to anything that has to do with Judaism, we're blocked. We can't -- you know, we're talking about the rabbinical courts. There are only men sitting as judges. There are no women, even though they're discussing divorce, and divorce is always -- you know, and until decided differently in Israel, it's men and women that divorce. And the fact that there are only men deciding -- that's a huge challenge for every woman that goes to the rabbinical courts.

And so you can be the head of the Supreme Court in Israel, but you can't be, you know, a regular judge in the rabbinical courts. Everywhere -- I could be a member of Jerusalem City Council, with tens of thousands of people voting for me, but I can't lead in the synagogue. I can't be, you know, a leader that leads the ceremony. And the gap between, you know, this kind of woman -- you know, one side -- and the other side became too big.

And what we realized -- that our daughters won't be able to hold this gap

anymore, because they're going to live in two very different worlds. And that's how we also explained to Rabbis why we're so feminist -- because, you know, our daughters will probably -- they won't be Orthodox. And Orthodoxy has to change, if you want to make sure that it stays, you know -- that Judaism becomes relevant or stays relevant as the years go by.

And therefore, I think women have a huge part in this, and I do think this is what's going to happen -- because I see these streams in different ways amongst women. Also, Muslim women, also Orthodox, also ultra-Orthodox women -- because we have the most to lose, and because if we can handle this gap -- so Orthodoxy will change. So, they might -- I don't know -- disappear or whatever. I don't know if disappear, but it will challenge them.

So, we say, you know, you might as well, you know, start negotiating with us how Judaism should be, and not deal with it, you know, 20 years down the road.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

Yes, here up front.

SPEAKER: First of all, all the best -- my ear is for what you're doing. I'd like to include not just what's going on in terms of religion and state in Israel, but how it affects the entire Jewish world.

And I want to ask specifically about (inaudible) freedom of choice of marriage in Israel -- which is not just, as you know, an internal Israeli issue, but affects many, many Jews outside of Israel, either Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative Rabbis who cannot marry their congregants in Israel. It's not recognized -- or people who are making aliyah under the Law of Return, but are not recognized halachically as Jews and cannot get married, et cetera.

And I think -- I don't know if the audience knows, but you both are no

doubt aware that this is an issue that is growing in prominence in the diaspora, in terms of being sort of at the crossroads of the relationship in the future between Israel and diaspora Jewry, because it's that critical. So, I just want to ask both of you, how do you see this being solved? And, you know, what's your opinion about how this can sort of be the intersection of religion and state, and resolved in a positive way?

Thank you.

MR. SACHS: (inaudible).

MS. BAR-SHALOM: I'm a pessimist in this respect. If, at one point 50 years ago, there was traditional Judaism, and the Orthodox Haredi Judaism was not so strong, and did not impose itself on all the ways in Israel -- today, it's different. Today, there is no place for traditional Judaism. And who is in charge and who is taking charge is the Haredim.

Even when there was the Rabbis of Sohel who tried to impose not only reform -- I'm not talking about Reform and Orthodox -- the counterpart was so strong that I don't know how we will open a door for the optimism that you're asking for.

SPEAKER: Can you talk about Sohel?

MS. BAR_SHALOM: The Sohel Rabbis are Zionist movement, Zionist rabbinical movement, who talk about getting people as they are, and to marry people in a way that is more encompassing, that is more understood to the young people, and not to make it so difficult with religious rules that they have no relevance to.

For example, the prenuptial agreement that every young couple signs today -- the Haredi Judaism does not accept it. Ravlao does accept it, but the majority of them -- I would say more than 80 percent -- do not accept the prenuptial agreements. And that is -- even with issue of bar mitzvah -- that they ignore the fact that you take pictures in the synagogue and so on -- you live the reality.

That was the reality 50 years ago. My father never asked somebody if he drove to get to synagogue or not. That traditional Judaism sort of got disappeared from our life, and maybe my father, when he went abroad, did find them. He did not ignore them.

That means that there's a way to do it without hurting the Torah, without hurting the Haredi. In Israel, there are very few Reform and Conservative Jews, and they do not touch the security of the Orthodoxy. So, there is a place for cooperation. I don't know how. I don't know how it's going to work out, but I'm not optimistic about it. I'm sorry.

MS. AZARIA: Maybe because you already had huge challenges that you dealt with, and I have my challenges still ahead of me -- so I think I agree with you that this is a challenge. And, also, I think it will take a few years to see a change, but I think it's part of the discussion that I urge Israeli society to hold regarding what kind of Judaism are we interested in having -- or practicing.

And I do think that the traditional and not Orthodox -- the more liberal Judaism -- I think it is going to gain power. I think that today, as I was talking about, that basically it's the ultra-Orthodox and the secular that are discussing. And most of Israeli society is more traditional. And I think that force will gain power.

I think, also, the Kulanu Party -- one of the reasons I joined Kulanu Party, even though I'm Orthodox -- and, you know, some people expected me to join the Zionist Orthodox party --

MR. SACHS: The Jewish Home.

MS. AZARIA: -- the Jewish Home. The reason I joined Kulanu is because I think that this is a very important voice that has to be heard. Also, for other reasons, but also because I think that the traditional voice -- I think that's the future of

Israeli society. And I think once we bring the traditional voice to the front scene, I think people will be much more tolerant towards many different issues -- because when you think about it, Israeli society is a very liberal society, and it doesn't really make sense.

You know, on the one hand, we have -- the gay community has very, very, you know, very many rights -- except for marriage. That's true that's a challenge. But when the gay parade last week -- two weeks ago -- was it last week; Friday? We had, you know -- many members of the Parliament were marching -- left-wing, right-wing -- you know, it's a nonissue, as far as Israeli society is concerned. It's just a nonissue.

I mean, even amongst a lot of Orthodox Jews, it became a nonissue in many ways. And, you know, that wasn't there 10 years ago. The issue of abortions, right -- you call it women's health, right -- yeah, whatever -- nonissue in Israeli society. It's just not something that's being discussed. You know, it's not -- you know, it's not pro and against. It's just not a political issue at all.

In many ways, Israel is a very liberal country, and I think that that gap between -- on the one hand, you know, the Orthodoxy, and on the other hand, the liberalism -- I think that means that there is, like, a language that wasn't figured out yet -- which I think is the traditional language.

MR. SACHS: (inaudible).

MS. BAR-SHALOM: The only problem I see in marriage is because they're afraid that if there will be -- who has been married according to Judaism and who got divorced according to Judaism, people who live in Israel want us to be one people without such questions. And therefore, that's why the rabbinical court is in charge.

If that will not be that way -- and it'll start being lists of who got divorced in this courthouse, and this got divorced in that court, and whose children are bastards according to Jewish law, we will have much more pointed issues than right now, as it is

now -- that in my eyes, everybody is a full world. But some people are having such a hard time because of the Rabbinim in charge of the rabbinical courts.

I was hoping that some -- you need to know that it is not allowed to get -- you have to have a Rabbi who knows the local language. And it doesn't say "woman who knows it," but a man who knows it -- because if you don't know the local language, you cannot understand the issues that come before the courthouse. And that's why the Rabbis, according to the Talmud, have to be that. And if the Rabbis cannot judge people, maybe they shouldn't be in the courthouse. Your, Rachel, should be to create better Rabbis in the rabbinical courthouse.

MR. SACHS: (inaudible) even with the traditional segment rises in Israel, we already have the fact of two very large Jewish communities in this country and in Israel. And there, the majority of Jews are not secular (inaudible) but non-Orthodox -- Conservative and Reform.

The attitude in Israel, to a large degree, from Orthodoxy is that seculars are bad Jews. We can live with them. It's too bad, but we can live with them. They are the largest group and, traditionally, the majority -- and that (inaudible) are semi-good, but Conservative and Reform tend to be viewed very negatively.

Am I right on this? Is this -- and if not, are we already in a situation of two communities that can't cooperate?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: First of all, I'm refuting the issue of good-bad, good-bad. Everybody is a good person, and everybody was born in the image of God, and should not be judged but by their actions. And good actions, we are good. It's not a matter of what kind of traditions you keep.

I don't know if quantities of people -- that is, numbers -- see, we have in Jewish Home people who are less extreme than in other places. But when assigning

judges, it's the Orthodox who are in charge of it.

Now, for example, it's a very difficult time for the courthouses. The two cadences in the Knesset -- we don't have new judges. The 10 people who are in charge that the (inaudible) the government determines who they are, and they determine who are going to be the judges in the religious courthouses.

These are people. This is not something that is outside the law or inside the law. There are some wonderful Dayanim who can find a solution for every issue, and some people who it's really a shame that they're there. It's a shame that they are -- and it's very painful to see them in that situation. It's not an issue of Reform or other. There is, within the Torah, ways to solve any problem.

Don't misunderstand me. Our Torah is Torah of life. And every issue and every case that I see -- I'm crying in anger -- not because of the Torah, but because of the people who made people anger at the Torah. The Kiddusha shame religious people, but they should let the people go, so as to prevent the division in the nation.

If this way of the Haredim will continue, we'll have a split in the people, a split in the nation. We'll have civil weddings, and God knows what is going to happen.

MS. AZARIA: I feel I've answered that. I mean, I feel that we have to work on this issue, as I said. How do we create a more moderate Judaism? Yes.

MS. BAR-SHALOM: Thank you.

MR. SACHS: Let's open it up for more questions -- over there.

MS. AZARIA: I'm willing to help you, says the Rabbinot.

SPEAKER: Hi. I'm Jodie (inaudible).

MS. AZARIA: -- dramatic change in the issue -- anything regarding personal status; that won't happen in this kind of government.

We have a very narrow coalition with two ultra-Orthodox parties. I can

tell you, you know, it's challenging for me to be part of this kind of government, and I'm dealing with the challenge -- because I'm very liberal. These issues are issues that are very important to me, but that's how our democratic system works -- that, at the end of the day, you're a part of a coalition, and you have to play, you know, the rules of the game that are decided at the beginning when the coalition is formed.

But I do think that the Minister of Gender Equality -- I know that she's going to work on many issues -- a lot, economic issues. There is a gap between women and men's income, a lot of educational issues. And I think that everything that has to do with the state and Orthodoxy -- or state and Judaism -- we have still a path to walk until we'll get to any legislation changes.

And I want to say something else. I think that the idea of changing the society through legislation -- I don't think it really works. In a sense, I would like to compare us to Turkey. If you think of -- God, this is the jetlag -- the head of Turkey, the one that --

MR. SACHS: Erdoğan?

MS. AZARIA: No, no, no -- the one that created (inaudible) yeah, Kemal -- Mustafa Kemal --

MR. SACHS: Atatürk.

MS. AZARIA: Atatürk. So, he basically -- what he tried to do is, he took a very traditional nation, and he turned it into a, you know, secular nation. And he tried to -- you can think a bit of, like, grass -- and he tried to put, like, a floor on the grass.

But the traditional -- people that are traditional -- you know, they stay very religious, and it just doesn't work. And years later, I think, in a way, Turkey is struggling with similar issues that we're struggling with -- where is the place -- what is the place for their religion? How do you deal with, on the one hand, the liberalism or

secularity with traditional people and with religion you believe in? How does that work together?

And if you think about it -- also, in Turkey, in these last elections, the power that really changed the political situation are the women. And I think -- you know, when I look back at what -- also, in Israel, you know, Ben-Gurion -- that was something that was tried in the past -- to change traditional affairs through legislation. And I think that the way to change it is with legislation, but, in many ways, also working with the people to create a language that everyone can live with.

I don't think it will be, you know, an issue of, you know, power issues. I don't think it works in the long run. And I think this is a major challenge we need to deal with, and I think that's what we're doing today.

MS. BAR-SHALOM: We saw that with Yair Lapid.

MR. SACHS: In what sense?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: Many religious people, Haredi people, went to the army, to the military before Yair Lapid, in his ministerium, created and changed the law. And then the same year he did, no more than 20, 30 men did go to the military. The year before that, 2,000 men did volunteer for the service -- and now, down. It doesn't (inaudible).

MS. NORLEN: Hi. I'm Tova Norlen, from SAIS. I think this question's for Ms. Azaria.

Strategically, into the future, how do you work with these issues? Because, in some ways, the numbers are against you. So, assume that the Middle East does not implode -- or it does implode, but it doesn't necessarily affect Israel -- which may not be a good assumption, but -- assume that things sort of stay; the status quo remains.

What, strategically, are you focusing on, in terms of bringing these issues

more to the fore? Do you focus on changing Orthodox society more, or do you focus on converting people to secularism? How do you think about these things?

MS. AZARIA: Okay. So, I think there are two routes we have to take. One is to basically force the secular and the traditional Jews in Israel to take responsibility regarding anything that has to do with Judaism -- because, for many years, it was like, we'll leave Judaism for the ultra-Orthodox. They know what to do, you know. We don't want to know, or it's too complicated -- no.

Everyone has to take responsibility. If everyone that wants to divorce divorces in the rabbinical courts, the rabbinical courts belong to everyone. And you can't just say, okay, we'll give it to them. In any coalition agreements, that's one of the first things that are given away to the ultra-Orthodox. And I think this time, for the first time -- I don't know if the first time -- but something that's very strong -- that the rabbinical courts - you know, one of the ultra-Orthodox parties wants to make a change there. And a lot of members of the Parliament are discussing it and, you know, feel very strongly about it. And we're working on this issue together. So, I think that's one route.

The second route has to do with the ultra-Orthodox and the Orthodox society. I think we have to change those societies from within. I think that's something that's happening.

Israeli society -- we always tend -- what you're saying about the demographics -- Israelis always tend to take one of the groups and say, you know, they're such a strong group; we can never -- you know, no one can touch them. We did it with the kibbutzim -- you know the kibbutz. They used to be considered the strongest stream in Israeli society, you know, and then they just (inaudible) okay, we don't agree; that's okay.

And then they just, you know, kind of changed from within. And, you

know, no one even noticed that happen, but that society changed.

Then there were the settlers that everyone's like, oh, the settlers -- no one can do anything against the settlers. That was so strong. And then the evacuation of the Gaza Strip -- and, you know, oh, so maybe they're not so -- you know.

And now we're doing the same thing to the ultra-Orthodox society, saying, you know, oh, they're so strong; no one can do anything. No, I think they have their changes. I think that they used to be a minority. They're not a minority anymore. I think that we're also -- that's part of what's so challenging -- them saying, you know, you're not two percent of Israeli society. You want to, you know (inaudible) no, I'm saying you're not two percent. You know, you're 10 percent and the numbers are growing.

So, how are you going to take responsibility for what's happening in Israel? You can't continue with the, you know, feeling of being a minority. Everything is changing around you. So, that's one way we're challenging them.

And I think the other way is also through feminism, we're challenging ultra-Orthodox society. And people say, I don't know. I'm not sure what I think about it. But there is this notion in Israeli society that we know how many children are being raised now as ultra-Orthodox, but we don't know how many ultra-Orthodox will actually be there down the road.

But I don't like that kind of, you know, talking that they won't be ultra-Orthodox; I prefer to say, you know, everyone has the choice to be part of any community they're interested in, but the ultra-Orthodox community has to be one of Israeli communities, and has to take responsibility for what's happening in Israeli community. And, you know, they can't be like a community that is further away and not part of the society. And I think once they're challenged in that way -- so the status quo doesn't work anymore.

MR. SACHS: Final words, Adina?

MS. BAR-SHALOM: I agree 100 percent with that. I do believe that the Haredi community has to take a responsibility on itself and not rely on fundraising and other things, and they have to go out to work and make money, and understand the society in which they live. 10 percent cannot rule over 90 percent. That's what needs to be understood.

When I heard you said eight percent, I sort of got challenged. We are 10 percent, but 90 percent of Israel do not want these laws. And a religious law is a law that has to understand to its time. That's why my father wrote 56 books. And in these books, he gives answers to all the daily questions that we have, in order to live with them.

Israel religion is a religion to live by, and not to die by, not to perish by, not to do hallulah shame, not to feel that we are limited by it, not to feel that it's shoved down our throat.

If marriage will stay within the religious courts -- and so will the divorce -- it won't be a reason to get it out of there. There are very good things that need to be highlighted and enforced. The good things, we need to live for; bad things have to be left to something else.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

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