SHAS as a Struggle to create a New Field: A Bourdieuan Perspective of an Israeli Phenomenon

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This article suggests that the SHAS movement should be analyzed as a 'field' as this term is understood in the theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu. I argue that the Bourdeauian framework serves as a theoretical superstructure within which to understand SHAS and build empirical research questions about it. This article opens with a short introduction to SHAS and a survey of the approaches that have been suggested to date in studying the movement. A short discussion of relevant aspects of Bourdieu's theory of fields follows. Then, moving to the crux of the matter, the primary components of SHAS as a field arising from a Bourdieuan analysis are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since it first appeared on the stage of national politics, in 1984, and throughout the years of its rapid growth, SHAS has been one of the most enigmatic phenomena in Israeli society and politics. Cross cutting between familiar cleavages of religion, ethnicity, culture and socio-economics, SHAS has left students of Israeli politics perplexed, seeking suitable theoretical and discursive frameworks for addressing the 'issue of SHAS' and analyzing the phenomenon it embodies. To date, no such comprehensive framework was offered.

Does such a framework exist? This article argues that the work of Pierre Bourdieu provides a theory enabling us to present a multifaceted analysis of SHAS. The article suggests that the short history of SHAS should be viewed as a struggle for identification and delineation of an independent field. Such a view can serve as a theoretical superstructure, or framework, within which and under which one can then build empirical research, addressing some of the most important issues raised in regard to SHAS. Offering this framework, the article

will deal with some of these issues, such as the reasons for the movement's success, the strategies employed by SHAS as a social movement and by the political party representing it, its constituency, and the authority structure of the movements.

This article opens with a short introduction to SHAS and a survey of the approaches that have been suggested to date in studying the movement. A short discussion of relevant aspects of Bourdieu's theory of fields follows. Then, moving to the crux of the matter, the primary components of SHAS as a field arising from a Bourdieuan analysis are presented.

SHAS — ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

SHAS first broke into the consciousness of the Israeli public as a religious-ethnic political party that first ran for election in the 1984 Knesset elections. From that point on, SHAS gradually grew in strength to become a *tour de force* in Israeli politics. This success was especially remarkable, given the relative failure of former ethnically oriented parties in Israeli politics.

SHAS, however, is not solely a political party (at least in the dominant, narrow sense of the concept in current Israeli politics). Together with its religious, educational, welfare and media institutions that have come to encompass a growing body of Israeli Jews (the overwhelming majority of *Mizrahi* origin), SHAS has been transformed into a dominant and influential factor in Israeli society and Israeli culture as a whole.

A note on terminology is necessary here. In the Israeli context, *Mizrahim* (literally meaning Easterners. singular: *Mizrahi*) has come to denote an ethno-social category of Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent, close but not identical to Sephardim. Unlike the term Sephardim (literary meaning "Spanish"), which is "religious" in origin (relating, together along with its counterpart, Ashkenazim, to the historical difference in religious customs and behavior among Jews), the term *Mizrahim* refers first and foremost to a rather "new" ethnic group among Israeli Jews, encompassing Jews from diverse cultures and countries of origin. This is a product of both the unique experience of these Jews in an Ashkenazi dominated nation state and culture and of contemporary identity politics in Israel. As will be discussed, this nomenculture sheds light on some aspects that are of high importance for understanding SHAS (see Shohat 1999).

SHAS' political, social and cultural agenda is one of Jewish *Mizrahi* religiosity. That is, SHAS, a religious movement headed by ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) Rabbis (Sephardic in their religious-behavioral orientation), is oriented towards a Jewish constituency of *Mizrahi* origin, of varying degrees of religiosity, the largest group of which is "traditionalists." Yet to be adequately researched, the *Mizrahi* traditionalism is usually described as a "partial" and "selective" religiosity

(or "tinted" secularism, for that matter), as the traditionalist observes only a limited set of religious rituals and rules (*mitzvot*).

SHAS is headed by one of its founders, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who prior to establishing the movement served in a long series of senior rabbinical posts, including as Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel. From a formal standpoint, Yosef and the *Moetzet Chachmei Hatorah* (Council of Torah Sages over which he presides, a body comprised of high placed Sephardic rabbis) serve as the supreme spiritual-rabbinical leadership of the movement for subordinates in the party and its representatives in the Knesset. In practice, Arieh Deri — the person who stood at the head of party during most of the years of SHAS' rapid growth — had been considered to be the political leader of the movement as a whole. His leadership has been accompanied by immense popularity that has endowed Deri with significant power and political clout.

The message that SHAS has broadcast over the years is one of "a return to one's roots" — back to Jewish *Mizrahi* religious values and behavior — a reversal from the secularization and westernization process to which immigrants of North African and Asian origin have been subject (some would say subjected) since their arrival. This message is founded on sharp criticism of the values of secular culture and society in Israel, and championship of what is presented as being traditional values of *Mizrahi* Judaism.

SHAS led a broad-scoped movement of *hazarah b'tshuva* ('repentance' or a return to strict religious observance) of *Mizrahi* Jews, a movement whose essence is a comprehensive change in the lifestyle of the individual, the family and the community so as to be in keeping with what is presented by the movement as the authentic values of traditional Judaism.

Over the years, SHAS has been the focus of widening and deepening controversy in Israeli society, politics and culture. The party has been in the limelight because of its position as the deciding factor, capable of tipping the scales (or at least its image as such) within a split electorate, and thus determining the fate of the Israeli governmental system and who will assume or retain power. As the party has gained in power and SHAS' influence over politics and society has grown, attention has been further amplified. The controversy surrounding SHAS spans a host of domains — culture, society, politics and jurisprudence, with a number of the most prominent leaders of the party, first and foremost Arieh Deri, being subjects of criminal cases which have generated controversy. Heads of the party have responded by launching what critics consider a critical attack on the Israeli justice system.

SHAS IN RESEARCH —
THE FAILURE OF SINGLE-FOCUS OBSERVATIONS

There has been tremendous public occupation with SHAS that tends to mix together scientific-scholarly approaches with critical, political-ideological

approaches. To date, interest in the 'SHAS phenomenon' within the research community has yet to present a comprehensive framework capable of analyzing the movement. The research on this subject to date can be described as a series of attempts to focus on and decode one of a series of cleavages that typify Israeli society — namely, the attempt to position SHAS on the societal, political and cultural map vis-à-vis the religious-secular cleavage, the economic-social cleavage and the ethnic cleavage.

The Religious-Secular Cleavage

The religious-secular cleavage has attracted the most attention. The primary course of research and explanation in this context is oriented towards political-party explanations: perception of SHAS as first and foremost a *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) party (albeit with ethnic hues). Research along this course deals primarily with voting patterns and SHAS' position vis-à-vis matters of religion and state, and the attitude of the party towards the religious-secular *status quo*. In this research context, special emphasis is placed on the ramifications of SHAS being the first (and only) *haredi* party to become an official and active member of an Israeli coalition government, particularly their actions as holders of the Ministries of Interior and Work and Welfare through which representatives of SHAS can impact on the Jewish nature of the Israeli public sphere. As members of a coalition government, SHAS had played a pivotal role in settling core issues regarding the relationship of religion and state in the special coalitional context of Israeli politics (see Don-Yehiya 1990, 1997; Cohen 2001; Cohen and Susser 2000). Thus, the attitude of SHAS towards Zionism and the state, and the positions of its parliamentary representatives and spiritual leaders on national issues, have also been subjects of scrutiny (see for example Baum-Banai 2001; Horwitz 2000).

Another course of research in the context of the above-mentioned religious-secular cleavage seeks to tag SHAS as a religious phenomenon by employing some tools of the sociology of religion. The typology set forth by Max Weber and the distinction made between 'sect' and 'church' has been adopted as a key tool in this respect, with scholars underscoring the comprehensive character of SHAS as a "church," in comparison with the cloistered "sect"-like character of Ashkenazi *haredi* society (Fisher 1999; Fisher and Beckerman 2001).

The Economic-Social Stratification Cleavage

The economic-social stratification cleavage is the second focal point, around which critical and neo-Marxist (as well as pseudo-Marxist) discussions and explanations have been proposed for understanding SHAS. The critical stream perceives the growth of SHAS as the product of economic and cultural oppression of *Mizrahim* in Israel. This approach views SHAS as a 'proletarian'

phenomenon (whether in purely economic terms or in terms of division of 'cultural labor'; see Peled 1998). That is, SHAS is the product of partial emergence of class-consciousness among Mizrahim; the incomplete and backward character of this consciousness is evidenced in what is presented by critics as the "social but non-Socialist" (see Chetrit 2001:44), and sometimes even anti-Socialist, behavior of SHAS, particularly vis-à-vis Knesset legislation. This has led to criticism regarding the failure of the movement to respond to its 'historical call.' As one critic put it, "in its self-definition as ultra-Orthodox [haredi] [SHAS] tries to blur the condition of class-consciousness of it supporters and constantly suppress it into the world of religion" (Chetrit 2001:35).

Arguments that rationalize the success of SHAS as a direct product of the basic welfare benefits that the movement provides to its voters should be labeled as an example of pseudo-Marxist thinking, although proponents of this approach refrain from presenting any clear critical or theoretical doctrine to support their thesis. Such explanations, concentrated in commentary and media analysis, portray SHAS as simply 'buying' the voting public through minimal benefits, while negating the relevance of the movement in the context of shared values, ethnicity and religious affinity.

The Ethnic Cleavage

The ethnic cleavage is the third focal point used to analyze and understand the phenomenon. Here SHAS is perceived as the expression of crystallization of ethnic identity, whether authentic or the product of manipulation. The radical Mizrahi stream, which links ethnicity with class status, identifies SHAS as a unique case of the success of ethnic politics in Israel, and examines its course through the prism of crystallization of Mizrahi identity (see Chetrit 2000). In this context special attention is given to the aforementioned fact that SHAS is the first ethnic-Mizrahi party to have considerable success in election to the Israeli parliament. A parallel course examines the construction of Mizrahi identity that SHAS represents as the function of a manipulative service of a system of values and power upon which the Jewish nation-state is based (see Levi and Emrich 2001).

Despite the contribution of these single-focused explanations to understanding isolated components within the SHAS phenomena, none offer a comprehensive framework that allows a multi-focused and complex view for understanding the phenomenon under study. To do so, it is necessary to rise above the 'cleavage discourse' as a whole, while calling into assistance social theories that recognize the conflictual/adversarial power-oriented context of the arena under study. This paper argues that Bourdieu's theory is among the outstanding frameworks that can fulfill this role.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND —
PIERRE BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF FIELDS[1]

Bourdieu's research ideology is based on two guiding principles — the first being that theory for theory's sake is useless; a situation where the theoretical product is derived from learning singular cases and even cases special in-and-of-themselves is preferable. Secondly, Bourdieu champions a multi-disciplinary approach as an avenue for preventing stereotypical classification, and encourages reconstruction of the object under research in light of these inter-disciplinary views.

In keeping with these principles — and although Bourdieu does acknowledge the existence of agency,[2] — Bourdieu's theory emphasizes the fact that the individual does not act in a void, but rather within specific social situations and contexts, dominated by a rather rigid system of objective social relationships. These are conditions of context. At the same time, Bourdieu treats this social context without falling into the trap of objectivist determinism. He does this through the idea of the 'field.'

A field is a social sphere defined by its specialized practices, and therefore enjoys a certain measure of autonomy. A field is an arena of relationships that is both structured and at the same time a dynamic competitive sphere. This arena is the locus of "production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital" (Swartz 1997:117).

An underlying theme in Bourdieu's view of fields, and thus of society as a whole, is that all fields have the same "chiastic" structure. The foundation for this structure are the economic and cultural principles of domination. At the same time, each field has its own distinctive logic and "rules." In any given field, the players occupy a list of possible positions (and at times even create new positions for themselves), and at the same time they are in competition with one another over control of the special interests or resources within their field. In the words of Bourdieu himself,

> [A field is] a network, or configuration, of collective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determination they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in

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[1] The following discussion does not pretend to be a comprehensive presentation of Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu himself presented his field theory in various places, including: 1990; 1993; 1994. My discussion here is based on these works, as well as discussions of Bourdieu's work by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1993), Johnson (1993); Swartz (1997, 1996); Dubois (2000); and Kauppi (2000).

[2] Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" is a core expression of this acknowledgment. The habitus are social and cultural conventions instilled in the individual, representing the dispositions emanating from the position that the individual occupies in his or her social world. The habitus creates coherent 'life styles' and dictates the meaning that the individual assigns to his/her behavior (see in particular Bourdieu 1990).

the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possessions commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97).

The fact that competition among agents takes place in a structured arena creates an 'ensemble' of positions that are characterized by mutual dependence. At the same time, each position within the field is different from the others, for internal competition leads to stratification and dominance-subordinate relationships within the field. At any given moment, the structure of the field is dictated by the relations among the positions occupied by the various players within the field. This fact is what endows the concept of the 'field' with its dynamism, for any change in the positions of the agents inevitably brings with it a change in the structure of the field.

Different fields are characterized by different kinds of capital, and control of capital is subject to struggles within the field. Other than economic capital, one can speak about symbolic capital, cultural capital, prestige capital, political capital, religious capital, and so forth, where for each form of capital, the field serves as an arena where agents compete for domination over it. One should emphasize that competition among the players to accumulate capital — competition that Bourdieu views as a universal and enduring fixture of all fields — is not always based on conscious and rational calculations.

It is here that Bourdieu's complex view of the place or role of the agency in social games ties in: The heart of individual social behavior is the action of the individual to accommodate him- or herself to the field — its special rules, its particular capital, and the positions inside the field. Individuals each organize, change and adapt their own positions and personal dispositions to their position in the field, until each reaches a state of equilibrium, a sense of personal satisfaction emanating from such correlation. To successfully achieve such accommodation, the player must recognize the special 'rules of the game' of a given field, to exhibit sensitivity for various strategies within the field and know how to utilize the field's structure and capital to one's advantage.

In this manner accommodation is created between the dispositions of individuals and their positions within the field. The individual thinks, desires, and does what his or her position within the special field 'dictates.' Such accommodation between personal dispositions and positions alludes to the element of stability embedded in a field's structure. But as mentioned above, the field is not static, but rather a dynamic sphere of ongoing competition, struggling to seize positions, and accommodating to changing configuration within a power matrix. This dynamism drives historic developments — that is, it enables the creation of gaps between dispositions and positions within the field, a kind of 'lack of accommodation' that gives birth to anomie for those subject to the rules of the game. At the same time, those who use such lack of accommodation to their advantage, profit from historic junctures such as these.

Bourdieu's theory presents a series of fields: the economic field, political field, educational field, cultural field, etc., organized in a hierarchical manner (the economic and political fields being the dominant ones), which together structure all social-political forms. Each field is defined as a structured sphere that functions according to its own laws and that has its own system of power relationships that are not dependent on the power relationship that dominates political and economic fields. This is the relative autonomy of a field. The structure of a field reflects external forces that influence its internal guiding logic; generally, this reflection is the only manner in which external variables can carry any impact on a field internally.

Thus, Bourdieu presents an approach that seeks to combine three levels of social reality: (1.) the place of the field under study within the field of power — in other words, the field's relations with the dominant classes; (2.) the structure of the field — that is, the arrangement of objective positions that competing or rival agents occupy, as well as the objective characteristics of the agents themselves; and (3.) the habitus of the agents — that is, the structured dispositions of agents that shape personal action.

Critics[3] have pointed to several difficulties in Bourdieu's theory of fields. Thus, for example, although the central axis of differentiation and variation among the fields is their degree of autonomy, "Bourdieu is not entirely consistent in his assessment of just what this autonomy is from" (Lash 1993:198). In addition, Bourdieu is seen as unclear in regard to what constitute those "objective relations" that govern the structure of every field, as he inconsistently shifts between materialistic and idealistic considerations (Lash 1993:200-201). On another level, the relational and rationalized foundation of the structure and functioning of fields was questioned (Vandenberghe 1999). On a more "fundamental" level, Bourdieu's theory — and critical sociology as a whole, for that matter — is subject to "pragmatic" criticism, which proposes to shift attention from structure and positions of fields to the "regimes of justification." This line of criticism also stresses the undeveloped character of the historical and comparative dimensions in Bourdieu's field analysis (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; Lamont and Thévenot 2000).

BOURDIEU IN ISRAEL —
MIZRAHI-NESS AS 'SYMBOLIC POVERTY'

One of the ways the social theory suggested by Bourdieu can be applied to the case of Israeli society is to identify the ongoing growth of *Mizrahi* identity as the product of practice and life experiences with 'poverty' or 'subordination' in

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[3] For a comprehensive critical assessment of Bourdieu's work see Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone (1993), and Shusterman (1999).

cultural or symbolic terms. From this perspective, *Mizrahim* are those 'traditionally' found in overlapping positions of subordination in a series of social power matrixes in Israel. In this context, *Mizrahi*-ness constitutes an expression of a new-but-old habitus, crystallizing within the non-Ashkenazi community in Israel. This happens as a reaction to under-representation of non-Ashkenazi culture in the course of protracted attempts by the powers-that-be to 'domesticate' newcomers and construct a uniting collective identity for the Jewish nation-state.[4] The combination of this habitus with subordinate positions in a host of fields is registered in the difficulty *Mizrahim* encounter accumulating cultural and symbolic capital within the context of the dominant culture in Israel. The power matrix in Israel presented *Mizrahim* with the option of assimilation based primarily on adoption of the dominant 'modern' symbolic-cultural system at the expense of the 'traditional' *Mizrahi* system. While it is possible under such conditions for the *Mizrahi* individuals to accumulate capital (material and symbolic) and for the group to build a *Mizrahi* middle class, the point of departure for such development has been the subordinate pole of the cultural field, due to the shortage of inherited cultural capital (in a secular-Ashkenazi dominated context).

SHAS — CREATION OF A NEW FIELD

To understand SHAS as the creation of a new field, two primary channels must be addressed: The first — examination of the place of the SHAS field vis-à-vis other relevant fields; the second — analysis of the inner world of the SHAS field.

THE PLACE OF SHAS WITHIN THE FIELD OF POWER: AN INFERIOR STARTING POINT

Driven by the tremendous importance of autonomy for SHAS' existence as a separate field, the struggle to establish the SHAS field has focused on the ability of SHAS to liberate itself from the 'dictates' of four key fields of relevance for the movement — the political, the economic, the religious and the cultural. Liberation from these four fields is necessary for SHAS to function according to its own inner logic, based on the field's own unique symbolic capital. The issue of relative autonomy must, therefore, be the focus of any discussion regarding the creation of SHAS as a field.

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[4] On the subordinate position of *Mizrahim* in Israel see, for example: Elimelech & Levin-Epstein (1998); Spilerman, Lewin Epstein & Semyonov (1993); Tyari (1981); Mark (1994); Cohen (1998); Ayalon (1994); Shavit (1984); and Avraham (1993).

The Religious Field — The Impact of Homology

The issue of the SHAS field's attitude towards the religious field (Rabbinical leadership, educational networks of yeshivas and schools, communal, social and economic organizations, religious parties, media outlets, etc.) can be understood through study of the homology of the SHAS field. Many of SHAS' leaders, including its political leader, Aryeh Deri, interned in Ashkenazi-run yeshivas, presenting a new hybrid in Israel, the ultra-Orthodox *Mizrahi*. However, *Mizrahim* were never welcomed wholeheartedly in the Ashkenazi yeshivas. They were patronized and treated as second-class citizens. Their rabbis were not afforded the same status as their Ashkenazi counterparts.

The most relevant fact in the history of SHAS in this context is the party's establishment under the patronage of the late Rabbi Eliezer Shach who, at the time, served as the leader of the Lithuanian faction of the religious field. The move to establish SHAS, designed to attract votes among the subordinate strata of the religious field — that is, *haredi Mizrahim*, further illuminates the inferior point of origin from which SHAS emerged later on in its struggle to become an independent field.

The establishment of SHAS' Council of Torah Sages as the supreme *Mizrahi* rabbinical authority and establishment of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef as the spiritual leader of the party and the movement, constituted a necessary condition — but not a sufficient one on its own — for launching a struggle for independence from the religious field. The establishment of an authoritative body in-and-of-itself was not sufficient to create an independent field. Rabbi Shach himself was a party to the choice and appointment of members of the council. Throughout the years 1984-1992, the dominant pole of the religious field (in the person of Eliezer Shach) continued, in practice, to control the leadership of the SHAS party, twice publicly negating the position taken by Ovadia Yosef and emphasizing Yosef's subordination to himself. If one seeks to pinpoint the moment when SHAS became a field of its own, symbolically, at least, it would be the dramatic move taken by SHAS to shake off the external authority and dictates of Rabbi Shach in the wake of the 1992 elections, when SHAS joined the government headed by Yitzhak Rabin despite an explicit ban on doing so issued by Rabbi Shach.

One of the central moves in the course of this struggle deals directly with the practice of individuals within the field. Achieving independent authority for the heads of the SHAS field was translated into a broad-scoped endeavor — primarily the reshaping of religious practices (within the context of Jewish religion and daily practice). Under the banner of "Restoring the Crown to Its Ancient Glory", Rabbi Ovadia Yosef took upon himself as a mission to rewrite the codex of *halachic* laws, fueled by a watershed decision that constituted a declaration of independence of SHAS as a field in its own right: a *halachic* ruling, made by Ovadia Yosef, according to which the binding religious practice

in *Eretz-Israel* is the Sephardic practice as formulated by Yosef Karo in the *Shulchan Aruch*[5] (Lau 2000a, 2000b, 1989; Zohar 2001). In this spirit, the 'formula' of the rewriting project is to 'cleanse' existing religious practice of 'external' influences (whether Ashkenazi or *Mizrahi*).

Another prominent expression of independence vis-à-vis the religious field relates to what Max Weber identified as 'religious labor:' the point at which SHAS launched its struggle to occupy key positions of religious labor within Israeli religion-state framework — city and town rabbinates, religious councils and the Chief Rabbinate. Parallel to this, SHAS functions within its own field as a 'religious producer' that seeks to create new religious 'work posts' in response to the needs of the dominant strata of the field. Thus, SHAS established an alternative *kashrut* network of its own. This move, beyond creating a host of places of employment for its cadres as *kashrut* supervisors, also impacts on daily practice by making the eating of *Halak*-kashered meat one of the signs of recognition among individuals within the SHAS field.

Establishment of the movement's educational network (yeshivot, *talmud torahs*, schools and kindergartens) was one of SHAS' core moves to establish itself as an independent field and consolidate the movement as a force vis-à-vis both the religious field and the political field. This move bears special importance due to the potential embodied in it for determining the unique symbolic capital within the SHAS field, disseminating it and accumulating this capital. As for SHAS' position within the religious field as a whole, foundation of the religious (*torani*) branch of the SHAS educational network established SHAS as a rival or competitor of the Ashkenazi religious leadership who for decades held a monopoly on the education and training of rabbis, teachers and *halachic* judges.

The Political Field — A Struggle for Independence from the State

Distinction between the SHAS field and the political party bearing its name, even if somewhat artificial, is relevant here. One can make such a distinction by defining the party and its representatives in the Knesset and the government as 'emissaries of the field' whose mission is to ensure the SHAS field's independence. The SHAS field 'sends' the party to represent it within the political field and amongst Zionist state institutions in order to secure the flow of resources necessary to ensure the independence of SHAS as a field from the government — such as controlling supervision of SHAS' educational system within the Ministry of Education through a party appointee.

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[5] The *Shulchan Aruch* has been the most authoritative halachic text throughout the Jewish world, since its composition in the 16th century, but was adjusted for local customs and competing traditions.

The educational sphere is one of the key arenas where SHAS competes for resources and independence by seeking to enhance allocation of funding through manipulation of coalition tensions to its advantage.

SHAS has invested most of its resources in the establishment of a broad based educational network of day-care centers, kindergartens, elementary schools, youth clubs, and yeshivas. This network, called *Ma'ayan Hahinuch Hatorani* (The Wellspring of Torah Education), has been growing considerably over the years. Based on a Jewish-religious curriculum, its schools also offer low tuition, free transportation, meals, and a long school day (usually not offered by state schools). These schools attract students from both religious-orthodox and secular-traditionalist backgrounds. Yet to be fully researched, it is widely assumed that these schools nurture a generation of more religiously observant students.

SHAS' educational network has occupied a unique institutional position — situated between the independent *haredi* schooling network (partially funded by the state but not supervised by it) in the religious field and the state-supported 'state-religious' school system.[6] This network is budgeted by the state and under partial supervision — which testifies to SHAS' complex position vis-à-vis the political field. Therefore it is not surprising that the educational sphere is the source of most of the friction and jarring discordance between SHAS and the political field. In contrast with the religious field, which ensured itself a minimal degree of independence (expressed in the regular transfer of monies, without the demand for supervision), in its relationships with the political field the SHAS field is forced to carry out an ongoing struggle against those situated at the apex of the hierarchy, at the positive, dominant pole of the political field. This complex link between dependency for funding on the power field and the struggle for independence has given birth to a complex form of institutional conduct in the SHAS field — primarily, 'formal' accommodation to the political field's demands for supervision, while exercising independent unsupervised activities in an 'informal' level.

During the years 1984-1999, the party gained remarkable power, and SHAS showed steady progress as a field, moving from the subordinate pole to the dominant pole of the political field. The democratic nature of the Israeli government and the structure of the regime that gives a relative advantage to small parties due to the close parity between the two large Right and Left blocs made such progress possible. It gave this clout immediate expression in the form of extraordinary weight in determining the 'sustainability/longevity' of the coalition. Elections in Israel every two-three years ensure a renewal of such power projection and reaffirmation of the rising power of SHAS. The growing strength

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[6] Public schools designed for students from religiously-observant homes that combine regular studies with a larger emphasis on religious studies than other public or 'state schools.'

of SHAS as a party bears witness to the success of the SHAS field as a whole in establishing the independence of the field and the legitimacy of the field's unique symbolic capital, in dissemination of this capital, and in transforming this capital into a relevant 'currency of exchange' within the Israeli power matrix.

The Economic Field — The Fixation

If the political and religious fields demonstrate the relative success of the SHAS field in its struggle to gain independence, then the economic field explains why one should still view SHAS as a field situated at the 'negative' pole, subordinated within the field of power. The inferior economic status of the SHAS field's population illuminates the significant difficulties faced by this field in becoming independent and dominant.

A focus on the issue of reciprocal exchange of various kinds of capital can be illuminating in regard to the special quality of SHAS' struggle vis-à-vis the economic field. The primary and immediate product of the SHAS field — its unique symbolic capital — is more easily exchanged with political capital than with economic capital, through the auspices of the democratic system of governance; frequent voting on the part of masses of citizens who support SHAS successfully reflects the expansion and acceptance of this capital (primarily among the weaker socioeconomic stratum of society), and endows the field's 'political emissary' — the SHAS party — with the necessary power to accumulate political capital. On the other hand, the conservative and relatively closed nature of the economic field raises difficulties in exchanging this capital for economic capital.

One of the primary solutions that the SHAS field found to deal with its economic inferiority is an attempt to 'redeem' its success in the political field (based on gross symbolic enrichment) in terms of economic capital. This two-stage exchange process — from symbolic capital to political capital and from political capital to economic capital — is expressed in the financial dependence of the SHAS field on the State treasury.

This linkage can assist in understanding the 'un-Socialist' voting patterns of SHAS' representatives in the Knesset. Although its political leadership uses social-justice rhetoric, SHAS does not see itself as the representative of any 'class,' in a Marxist "class-consciousness" and "class struggle" sense. The field conducts its 'private' struggle to improve its own standing in the power matrix, and the voting patterns of its representatives are guided accordingly. Their votes constitute an expression of a limited sacrifice of the independence of the SHAS field vis-à-vis the political field — that is, they vote in a way that responds to the needs of the dominant party even when their vote is not 'socially-enlightened' and may be detrimental to the SHAS field's own community. In

exchange for their 'loyalty' they expect to direct the flow of economic capital, through various channels, to the SHAS field.

In a parallel arena, the SHAS field struggles with the economic field by constructing an alternative consumer system. Adopting patterns from the religious field, SHAS has built up a complex comprised of giving *tzdaka* (charity) contributions, and modest *pro bono* aid-as-a-*mitzva* frameworks (*gamachim*), as well as discount stores, as a 'challenge' to the dominant economic laws. The existence of this endeavor is founded, among other things, on the ability of the leaders of SHAS to employ their capital and symbolic power to dictate the economic behavior of individuals *within* the field, for instance the encouragement of contributions, *tzdakah*.

The Cultural Field — The Struggle to Define Tastes

As Bourdieu demonstrated in his works, popular and accepted cultural distinctions, formerly accepted as 'natural' or 'taken for granted,' are actually the fruit of power relationships within society. In a similar vein one can identify the manner in which the SHAS field seeks to combat its inferior position in the field of power — by rejecting the 'dictates' emanating from the cultural field (high and popular culture, together), as part of SHAS' attempt to identify, create and accumulate unique symbolic capital.

The SHAS field's struggle vis-à-vis the cultural field is conducted in two parallel arenas. First, in the political realm, where rejection of popular culture as degenerative and void of moral content has been a prominent rhetorical theme in the SHAS election propaganda. At the same time, on an institutional plane, the SHAS field has engaged in establishment of alternative mass communication channels, print and electronic, that challenge popular culture. Such media organs constitute an outstanding exception from the tactics adopted by the religious field, which has chosen to boycott the electronic media. These channels employ the tools of popular culture and 'speak its language' while at the same time broadcasting different symbolic and cultural capital based on an alternative array of understandings and cultural preferences.

As is the case in SHAS' relations with the political and economic field, in the cultural field SHAS has embarked from a subordinate point of origin. However, if in other instances a subordinate position characterized the field as a whole, the situation differs here. These cultural considerations affect first and foremost the mass reservoir of people, not necessarily religious, at the bottom of the power hierarchy, even within the SHAS field. Yet the dominant religious leadership of SHAS, much closer to the religious field, is characterized by marked independence vis-à-vis the cultural field. In contrast to this religious elite, the masses of *Mizrahim* occupy the subordinate pole of the cultural field in Israel.

SHAS AS A FIELD: CAPITAL, POLES AND POSITIONS

Having established SHAS' position as a field striving for independence in the various arenas of power, we can now progress to analyze the inner structure of SHAS itself; that is, discuss the core components of fields as a whole — their capital, poles, hierarchy and the positions — as they appear in the case of SHAS. It should be stressed that division into two separate parts of my analysis — the structure of the fields and its stance vis-à-vis other fields — is somewhat artificial, for the inner structure of the field is closely associated with the struggle for its independence, where the impact is reciprocal, each reflecting the development and shaping of the other.

Capital: Religiosity, Mizrahi-ness and Popularity

Expansion of the concept of 'interests' to encompass non-material commodities is essential for analyzing the SHAS field. The field's success in achieving independence — its ability to introduce the capital it represents and that its community accumulates, as legitimate and relevant currency in the power matrix — means the ability to exchange 'SHAS capital' for other forms of capital (including funding, political power, prestige and respect) and accumulate these other forms of capital.

The struggle for independence of the SHAS field is also a struggle for recognition of new symbolic capital. Determination of who controls or 'owns' such capital *within* the field carries the influence of power. This makes it possible to build authoritative and hierarchic structures while conducting a battle among the players for accumulation of capital within the field. That is, the nature of the capital can change according to the structure of the field and a hierarchy is forged based on ownership of the field's capital.

In the case of the SHAS field, the struggle to accumulate capital takes a unique form since it is being conducted both within and outside the field. It is played out within the field through the struggle to accumulate capital which is closely tied to the types of authority, rabbinical and political; and at the same time outside the field there is a 'parallel struggle' at work for the very definition and recognition of the legitimacy of the capital as a currency by other fields and other players.

The capital that SHAS presents incorporates components of religious, symbolic, and cultural capital, but is not equivalent to any one of them. I believe one can label this capital as 'religious-Mizrahi capital' or simply 'SHAS capital.' SHAS capital is a new version of religious capital that contains a clear emphasis on popular Mizrahi culture. It mixes elements of religious knowledge and behavior together with Mizrahi values, preferences, and cultural tastes.

The establishment of SHAS capital has meant that the dominant cultural capital has undergone a clear change within the SHAS field's sphere, dictating

new rules in preferences and cultural tastes. The SHAS field has its own 'rules' that determine what constitutes 'culture,' in its 'high' sense, in contrast to 'lack of culture.' As well, it has new standards of what is fitting and what is discreditable or vulgar from a cultural standpoint, in the broad sense of the word — as a set of beliefs, values, symbols and worldviews. The system of distinctions that SHAS capital champions rejects the one broadcast by the dominant cultural capital. Criticism focuses on two levels: on the relevance of popular 'low' culture (i.e., presenting western consumer culture as degenerate and void of content), and on the quality and relevance of 'high' secular culture.

The SHAS field strives to 'rewrite' the rules of various kinds of capital in keeping with the special demands of the field. For instance, in terms of language capital, the language of the SHAS field, including syntax, vocabulary and accent, is the same *Mizrahi* Hebrew (a 'unique' product of Israel, it should be stressed). At times this is used defiantly as if to challenge 'Israeli' Hebrew 'dictated' by the Ashkenazi elite and defined as 'standard speech.' *Mizrahi* speech, the subject of satire and even ridicule serving as a label for lower class stereotyping within Israeli televised sitcoms, for instance, has become a legitimate language and style of discourse within the SHAS field. The 'folksy' language and 'common' style employed by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef in his weekly sermons to the rank-and-file within the SHAS field are one of the most telling examples of the way in which the dominant pole of the SHAS field challenges 'high language' and provides legitimacy for the linguistic style common within the field. That is, the dominant pole in the SHAS field consciously chooses to challenge the dominant hierarchic system by turning 'street Hebrew' into a legitimate form of speech, at least within the realm of the SHAS field. The criticism raised regarding the linguistic style adopted by Rabbi Yosef from other fields, for example 'He speaks in street talk,' only emphasizes that linguistic capital is but another arena in which the SHAS field is conducting a battle with its surroundings.

Clothing fashion is another example of capital undergoing change in the SHAS field, which is dictating new dress codes for its community. As in other cases of definition of identity according to external characteristics, a change of apparel — from the *kipa* (Jewish head gear) to the suit — is transformed into an expression of one's membership in the SHAS field. Despite the tremendous influence of the religious field on the shaping of this fashion, a 'SHAS look' is not a carbon copy of Ashkenazi religious dress –Lithuanian or Hassidic. At the same time, the SHAS fashion clearly broadcasts rejection of the Israeli dress code, particularly the fashion popular within the *Mizrahi* community in Israel.

To this point we have considered SHAS capital as one unit. But those attempting to analyze the field must also make some distinctions among the components of this capital, for the balance between them changes as one moves between the poles within the SHAS field. On the positive, "dominant pole of the dominant strata" (where most of the capital is situated) the weight of the

religious component in SHAS capital is greater. This is a consequence of the fact that at the head of the hierarchy within SHAS stand figures who are engaged in religious labor, and therefore produce and accumulate religious capital more than popular *Mizrahi*-cultural capital. On the other hand, one can identify the significant presence of popular-cultural-*Mizrahi* components of the SHAS capital at the subordinate pole of the field's hierarchy — ranging from its politicians (the subordinate pole of the dominant stratum) to the rank-and-file of the SHAS community (who occupy the subordinate stratum). Mapping the poles of the field hierarchy can contribute to our understanding of this distinction.

Poles — Religious and Political

To understand the behavior of SHAS one must note the basic dichotomy within the dominant strata of the SHAS field — between the rabbinic-religious pole on one hand and the political-popular pole on the other. Appreciation of the impact of this dichotomy on the field as a whole is essential for analyzing SHAS.

The rabbinic-religious pole — which in terms of hierarchy is positioned at the apex of the field as a whole — is also the most autonomous vis-à-vis other fields. The inward orientation of this pole towards the SHAS field is based on the religious poles' players (first and foremost, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef) maximizing 'ownership' over the field's unique capital. Moreover, their dominant position at the head of an independent field — relatively speaking, of course — allows those who occupy the rabbinical-religious pole exclusivity in guiding behavior and expression *within* the field, demonstratively ignoring the 'dictates' of other fields.

The political-popular pole — the subordinate pole within the dominant strata — has far less autonomy, and its dependence on other fields is much greater. One of the important characteristics of those who occupy this pole is their relative 'poverty' in religious capital; although most hold the title of 'rabbi,' they are not viewed as religious-*halachic* authorities. They transform their popularity, as celebrities within their field and in some cases beyond it, into the primary capital at their disposal. The lack of autonomy of this subordinate pole resides in its high dependence on other fields and the heightened cognizance of the external limitations on the SHAS field by those who occupy the political-popular pole.

Bourdieu's distinction (1993) between the pole of limited production ('pure' art), and the pole of mass production ('commercialized' art), as the two basic poles of the cultural field, can also serve us in describing the structure of the SHAS field. According to this distinction, the pole labelled 'rabbinical-religious' in this article is the limited production pole. Its relevant capital is religious intellectual capital, that being the *halachic* knowledge that constitutes the

foundation of the new-old code of behavior within the field, a revitalization of the *Shulchan Aruch*. In the same vein, for the religious pole, politics is viewed solely as 'currency' for the pure productive pole in the cultural field. They considered it tainted, foreign, a negative influence and unwanted. At the opposite pole is the political leadership, whose subsistence relies on popularity or populist 'commercialization' of its functioning.

This dichotomy clearly demonstrates why the tension between the two poles focuses primarily on rivalry in determining which kind of capital will dominate the SHAS field, or, to be more precise: the composition of this capital (i.e. competition over the hierarchy of capital within the field). Thus, while the religious-rabbinic pole prefers the primacy of 'pure' religious capital of *halacha*, rabbinic rulings and authority, the political-popular pole prefers publicity and the support of the masses. This preference of the political pole leads to the 'commercialization' of SHAS capital, in the form of turning towards mysticism. *Kabala*, charms, susurrations and magic are far more popular with their constituency than rigid rulings regarding the daily behavior of an individual or *halachic* hairsplitting. It is this popularity that the subordinate pole of the political leadership seeks to mobilize to its side. The political-popular pole's 'affection' for commercialized mysticism reaches its height in Knesset elections. Thus, Arieh Deri brought the kabbalist Yitzhak Kaduri into the political field, mounting a broad-based campaign to disseminate charms ('blessed by Kaduri') among the SHAS voter population. This move aroused the displeasure of Ovadia Yosef due to the dominant status Kaduri gained as a result. In the framework of our discussion here, Yosef's response was an expression of the opposition of the 'pure' pole of religious capital to a move by the political pole to introduce a new 'commercialized' element into SHAS' capital. This response challenged the existing power balance between the two leading poles, in favor of the political pole at the expense of the religious pole.

Positions within the Field

The dynamics of any given field are expressed in the complex relationship between the positions that the field offers to its players and the behavior and the character of the individuals who occupy these positions or compete to occupy them. That is, changes in 'personnel' within the field impact on the field's structure.

In the case at hand, the most salient change that the SHAS field has undergone in its formative years has been the relative strengthening of positions in the political pole, through the strengthening of its prominent political leader Arieh Deri, relative to positions of the rabbinical-religious pole. At the same time the figure of the field's leader at the head of the rabbinical-religious pole, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, has become one of the primary power components of the field. The changes in personnel and structure that took place in the leadership of the

movement after the 1999 elections — the resignation of Arieh Deri from leadership of the movement and his removal from the inner circles of power within the movement following what was reported as a personal rift between Deri and Rabbi Yosef — only underscore the fact that the structure of the positions and their place within the field is closely tied to the identity of the individuals involved. Thus, this is where the issue of personal charisma comes into significant play. As long as Deri and Yosef — both uniquely charismatic — occupied the two "high posts" of the field — as heads of the rabbinical leadership and the political one, the overall balance of power, or field structure, was shaped by their leadership. The individual who replaced Deri at the head of the political leadership, Eli Yishai, does not possess the same personal appeal of forceful, political-popular capital that Deri enjoyed, thus the position has been weakened considerably as the power pendulum has swung back to the rabbinical-religious pole of the field in his absence.

From a broader perspective, one can identify four basic positions/roles in the SHAS field: rabbis — who occupy the rabbinical-religious pole which enjoys maximum autonomy; politicians — heads of the SHAS party, situated in the political-popular pole; *avrechim* — yeshiva students who are engaged in accumulating capital in terms of religious knowledge and are destined to occupy 'religious labor' posts within the field; and consumers of SHAS' capital, the bulk, *Mizrahi* 'rank-and-file citizens' who do not belong to either pole of the dominant strata discussed above, but who avail themselves of SHAS's services, for example education, and who receive their 'cues' or dictates regarding personal behavior (i.e. consider SHAS' capital relevant for them), and occupy the subordinate strata of the field.

Examination of the origins of SHAS within the religious field can also be instructive in this regard. As previously mentioned, prior to establishment of the SHAS field, those who founded the movement were characterized by the inability to improve their positions within the religious field, for the most part due to their *Mizrahi* origins, and thus were 'doomed' to remain in a subordinate position. The most salient example of this was, of course, Ovadia Yosef. Despite recognition of his exceptional *halachic* knowledge, Yosef was never invited to join *Moetzet G'dolei Hatorah* (The Grand Torah Scholar's Council), the supreme *halachic* authority of the religious field.[7] In this regard, one should note Rabbi Shach's remark on the eve of the 1992 elections that the time was not yet ripe for Sephardic rabbis to fill leadership positions, and on a more general level, a ban on Sephardim from holding positions where they would have control over the Jewish population as a whole. During this formative period, when SHAS as a party and a movement was subordinate to the dictates of the heads of the

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[7] Yosef was invited to attend the Grand Torah Scholars' Council, but as Arieh Dayan (1999:53) described it, after only one session Yosef understood "that he was not wanted there," and withdrew from the Council.

religious field, SHAS' politicians suffered from two-fold inferiority in terms of symbolic capital, as *Mizrahim* lacking religious capital. Therefore SHAS' 'declaration of independence' can be viewed as a move designed to improve the positions of a group who found their advancement within the religious field blocked by a 'glass ceiling' so to speak, and therefore abandoned the religious field and established a separate independent field.

Such a portrayal of the origins of SHAS underscores the special importance assigned *Mizrahi*-ness for its political leadership. The dependence on ethnicity among those who occupy the political pole is maximal, for ethnic affinity is the core around which they build their popularity and through which they accumulate their capital. By comparison, those who occupy the religious-rabbinical pole are much less dependent on the ethnic ingredient due to their recognized ownership of religious capital: If they so desired, they could 'return' to the religious field,even if such a move would entail return to a subordinate position. The political pole lacks the privilege of choice.

The famous call to Restore the Crown to Its Ancient Glory is a telling example of the different uses of the *Mizrahi* issue on the part of the two poles — the political-popular and the rabbinical-religious. For Rabbi Yosef, who authored the expression, the call to Restore the Crown to Its Ancient Glory is a *halachic* matter, touching on daily practice, over and above matters of *Mizrahi* ethnicity, which focuses on making the *Shulchan Aruch* the decisive *halachic* codex of conduct.[8] For politicians, on the other hand, and for the *Mizrahi* 'masses,' who endow them with their popularity, Restoring the Crown to Its Ancient Glory is first and foremost an ethnic matter, raising the status and stature of the *Mizrahi* identity and culture in Israel. Thus the 'output' of the players within the SHAS field reflects their position within the field more than it reflects the needs or the demands of the field's audience. While the audience seeks to Restore the Crown to Its Ancient Glory in its ethnic-popular political and cultural sense — that is, to enhance the status of *Mizrahim* and raise the stature of *Mizrahi*-ness in the field of power, the rabbinic authority that controls the field does not suffice with such 'commodities,' it preaches Sephardic *haredi*-ness (ultra-orthodoxy) based on re-acceptance of a rigid *halachic* code. The positions these rabbinical authorities occupy — the autonomous religious pole where the relevant capital is *halachic* knowledge — also dictates their 'output.' The politicians in the field, on the other hand, built on popular *Mizrahi* capital, provide the audience with what it seeks — popular confirmation of ethnic identity of which religiosity is part, but not the core, of its essence.

I believe one should view the audience of 'traditionalist *Mizrahim*' — those who send their children to the SHAS educational network, and even those who

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[8] Despite the fact that his point of departure is based on recognition of this codex as dominant due to its 'Sephardic-ness', Rabbi Ovadia Yosef does not hesitate to abolish late *Mizrahi* additions to the *Shulchan Aruch*. See Lau (2000a and 2000b).

see themselves as 'SHASniks' even if they do not partake in any of the field's institutions — as part of the SHAS field, primarily because of the *Mizrahi* component of the field's capital. The masses are at the bottom of the ladder in terms of the field's hierarchy and autonomy, but unlike the field of popular culture and the field of power where *Mizrahi* culture is considered a disadvantage, in the SHAS field, *Mizrahi* culture is part of the capital. The masses of *Mizrahim* may be poor in the religious sense (a large percentage of SHAS' voting public do not define themselves as religious), but the *Mizrahi* traditionalism of SHAS' components provide them with the minimal capital they lack in the power matrix outside the aegis of the SHAS field.

CONCLUSION: 'HERESY' AS A DRIVING FORCE?

This analysis omits mention of one of the primary factors that Bourdieu cites as a dynamic factor driving any given field, that is rivalry between orthodoxy and 'heresy.' Indeed, since the 1999 elections, and particularly since the rift between Ovadia Yosef and Arieh Deri became public, the first indications of a brewing 'dynamic of heresy' within SHAS seem to be appearing. These first signs of 'heresy' come from the political side (Arieh Deri and his close cohort) and are directed towards the rabbinical authority, namely Ovadia Yosef and his "court." However, at this stage such heresy is solely an undercurrent not yet registered on the surface and whose clout and influence on the field has yet to be tested. Explanation of the relative unity/stability of the field can be found, in my opinion, in the origins of the SHAS field in an act of heresy against the authority of Ashkenazi rabbinic authority that reached its height in the refusal to accept the dictates of Rabbi Shach on the eve of establishment of the Rabin government in 1992.

The short history of SHAS is, therefore, the history of an institutionalization process, or routinization, following heresy and schism from the Ashkenazi religious field. The 'birth' of a new wave of heretical dynamics can be expected and one can already identify the first indications of such. Analysis of SHAS' structure, its poles and its hierarchy, hint at the kind of heresy one can expect in the future. One can expect that such heresy will come from the subordinate pole within the dominant strata whose autonomy is limited and for whom the 'rules of the game' (the dominance of religious capital) do not always work in their favor — first and foremost, the politicians.

The analysis I have presented here is based on a divergence from the theoretical framework set forth by Bourdieu. In contrast to the broad-scope analysis that Bourdieu presented in his works, this article is based on a relatively narrow focus of the notion of 'field.' Moreover, it is conceivable to view Bourdieu's broad scope as negating the possibility of using his framework for a 'local' analysis of specific religious leaders and communities as a field (see Swartz 1996). Yet, I would argue that such a divergence is justified and germane in the

context of SHAS. Analysis of SHAS as an entity attempting to create a new field, with the necessary ties to other fields and engaged in an ongoing struggle to liberate itself from other fields, helps clarify this complex phenomenon, particularly due to the suitability of Bourdieu's work for advancing a multi-focal approach.

If we will leave Bourdieu's theoretical framework for the moment, the article at hand demonstrates the relevance of a multi-faceted analysis for understanding the SHAS phenomenon. One of the most relevant characteristics of this movement is the series of subordinate positions that the SHAS population occupies in various power contexts, which they seek to challenge and to rewrite. I believe that only a multi-faceted, compound perspective such as this can bring us closer to a cogent and comprehensive explanation of the SHAS enigma and even allow us to forecast the future of this important and fascinating cultural-political-religious phenomenon.

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