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Prayer in Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jewish primary schools for girls in Israel-Teachers Perspectives

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Prayer in Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jewish primary schools for girls in Israel-Teachers Perspectives

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Abstract

This study investigates the experiences of twelve female school teachers in three ultra-orthodox primary schools for girls in Israel, regarding school prayer. It focuses on what they think are the goals of school prayer, what challenges they have in school prayer, and how they think they can be addressed. The qualitative research study explores teachers' perspectives on the purposes and challenges of school prayer and how they may be influenced by their teaching orientations. It utilizes Muszkat-Barkan's (2015) theoretical model, by differentiating between two orientations regarding the goals of teaching prayer in school – the socialization and the spiritual orientations. While socialization has always been a central part of teachers' orientations in the Haredi community, this research shows that there seems to be an increasing emphasis on spiritualization in addition to socialization. While socialization focuses on group identity, spiritualization focuses on the individual and his personal intimate connection with God.

Key words: prayer, Haredi schools, qualitative research, orientations

Introduction

This qualitative research explores the experiences of primary school teachers in the implementation of prayer services in ultra-orthodox (Haredi) primary schools for girls in Israel. Twelve primary school female teachers from three different schools were interviewed during 2020–2021. They teach at the upper primary school level (12-13 year old girl students). This study explores teachers' perspectives on the purposes and challenges of school prayer and how they may be influenced by their teaching orientations. It utilizes Muszkat-Barkan's (2015) theoretical model, by differentiating between two orientations regarding the goals of teaching prayer in school – the socialization and the spiritual orientations.

Knowledge of teachers' experiences of school prayer, in particular in Haredi schools, is largely anecdotal, with no research-based quantitative or qualitative data available. There is little information about what teachers think and experience during these school prayers. This research explores the issue in a systematic way, providing empirical evidence using the tools of qualitative research. Firstly, we examine the

overall issues of prayer in schools and then we explore the context in which these schools operate.

Prayer in schools

Prayer and schools have not always had a comfortable history together. In the USA, prayer in school is seen as constitutionally problematic (Nord, 1995, pp. 114-116), notwithstanding the religiosity of the population and the perceived need for a better understanding of and engagement with spiritual and religious issues (Prothero, 2007; Purpel & McLaurin, 2004). In India and Sweden, boundaries between the religious and secular are drawn in quite different ways, with prayer and other religious practices treated in contrasting ways in the two nominally “secular” states (Niemi, 2018). In Australia, Mountain (2005), in her qualitative research on prayer in schools, found that children valued the act of school prayer and found satisfaction in praying together as a community. She recommended that prayer be included in the curriculum both as a subject of academic study and as an experiential component. Prayer should be considered as part of the religious education program, where the academic study can be of relevance for the student. In the UK, all community schools – not just those of a religious character – have been required since 1944 to start every day with an act of collective worship (Armstrong, 1948). And in Israel, prayer is central to the practice of religious schools, but the school system as a whole reflects a challenging relationship between religious practice and “secularity” (Künkler & Lerner, 2016).

Turning to prayer in Jewish schools, no aspect of the Jewish school curriculum could serve as a better reflection of its core values than the way the school addresses the teaching of and practice of prayer (Wachs, 2009, p. 8). Prayer contains cultural, social, personal, and spiritual components. Studying the educational goals, methods, and challenges of the practice of prayer in schools can enrich our understanding of the role of teachers’ ideologies in Jewish education (Muszkat-Barkan, p. 2015). All syllabi and curriculum materials reflect ideological assumptions (Alpert, 2002). However, not only are written materials loaded with ideological intentions, but almost any interaction between teachers and the Jewish Studies syllabus is replete with ideological choices (Deitcher, 2016). What and how teachers teach in the classroom reflects their pedagogical and cultural ideologies, as well as the approach of the system in which they work (Muszkat-Barkan & Shkedi, 2009). This study focuses on teachers’ practice of prayer in schools and how their teaching ideologies may impact on their teaching.

In Israel, Steinsalz (1996) suggests that schools do a good job in teaching prayer literacy, but do not do enough in developing the spiritual world of young people, leading to a dissonance between the formal act of prayer and the spiritual world of the young person. This idea was evident in the discussions with young people in Israeli school (Kohn, 2018), which were published in this journal. The research involved 20 young people between the ages of 16 and 18. These young people describe prayers in school not in terms of “what I have to say”, but as the opportunity for a spiritual experience in which they strive to connect to God. They feel frustrated when the prayers don’t achieve this aim and talk about situations when they felt close to God.

For example, when seeing a sunrise or climbing to the top of a mountain on a school trip.

But this study was done with high school students in Israeli modern-orthodox schools. Little research, however, has been done on prayer experiences with teachers of primary school children in Israeli ultra-orthodox (Haredi) schools. This is the purpose of this study. Firstly, an understanding of the context of the Haredi community and Haredi education system is discussed.

Contextual background: Haredi education in Israel

The Israeli Haredi community

The Haredi community in Israel is composed of diverse groups and subgroups, which are subject to the guidance of various spiritual and political leaders (Leon, 2016; Malach & Cahaner, 2017; Perry-Hazan, 2013). The ideological principles shared by the various Haredi groups include, inter alia, the subjection to the authority of spiritual leaders; a belief that Torah study guarantees Jewish continuity; rejection of modernization; and insulation from the outside world (Brown, 2007). The Haredi ideology is also associated with non-acceptance of the secular Jewish State, attempts to distance itself from society's main spheres of life, and limited pragmatic cooperation with the State's institutions (Katzir & Perry-Hazan, 2019; Leon, 2016).

However, the growth of the Haredi community, which now comprises around 11% of the Israeli population (Malach, Hoshen & Cahaner 2016, p. 21), has produced new modes of Haredi participation in national politics, characterized by a fusion of opposition and cooperation (Finkelman, 2014). Moreover, for several decades, the Haredi national parties have comprised a balance pivot in Israeli politics, compelling the largest parties to secure their support in order to establish governing coalitions (Leon, 2015). These developments also relate to other recent social processes in the Haredi community, manifesting themselves, inter alia, in greater participation in higher education, in the army, and in the digital world (see e.g., Malach & Cahaner, 2017; Novis-Deutsch & Lifshitz, 2016).

Haredi life, like Orthodox Jewish life in general, is very family-centered and ordered. Boys and girls attend separate schools, and proceed to higher Torah study, in a yeshiva or seminary, respectively, starting anywhere between the ages of 13 and 18. A significant proportion of young men remain in yeshiva until their marriage (which is usually arranged through facilitated dating). After marriage, many Haredi men continue their Torah studies in a kollel. Studying in secular institutions is often discouraged, although educational facilities for vocational training in a Haredi framework do exist. In the United States and Europe, the majority of Haredi males are active in the workforce. For various reasons, in Israel most (56%) of their male members do work, though some of those are part of the unofficial workforce. Haredi families (and Orthodox Jewish families in general) are usually much larger than non-Orthodox Jewish families, with as many as twelve or more children. The vast majority (70%) of the female members of the Haredi Jews in Israel do work (Stadler, 2009).

The Israeli Haredi school system

Almost all Haredi schools are private schools, which are considered by the law as unofficial schools (Compulsory Schooling Act, 1949, Article 1). The school system begins with chederim for pre-school to primary school ages, to yeshivos for boys from secondary school ages, and in seminaries, often called Bais Yaakovs, for girls of secondary school ages. Only Jewish religiously observant students are admitted, and parents must agree to abide by the rules of the school to keep their children enrolled. Yeshivas are headed by rosh yeshivas (deans) and principals. Many Hasidic schools in Israel, Europe, and North America teach little or no secular subjects, while some of the Litvish (Lithuanian style) schools in Israel follow educational policies to the Hasidic school. In the U.S., most schools teach secular subjects to boys and girls, as part of a dual curriculum of secular subjects (generally called “English”) and Torah subjects. Yeshivas teach mostly Talmud and Rabbinic literature, while the girls’ schools teach Jewish Law, Midrash and Tanach (Hebrew Bible).

Public schools are owned and managed by the State and the municipalities, while unofficial schools are owned and managed by private associations. Public schools and the two largest networks of Haredi unofficial schools – the Independent Education School Association and the Wellspring of Torah Education School Association – are fully funded by the State (Compulsory Schooling Act, 1949, Article 7). The remaining unofficial schools receive funds ranging from 55% to 75% of the level of funding provided to public schools (Compulsory Schooling Act, 1949, Article 10A).

Since 1999, a continuing legal and political discourse has transpired regarding the teaching of secular studies in Haredi boys’ schools (Perry-Hazan, 2015a). Unlike the community’s expectations for boys, girls are encouraged to combine secular and religious studies so that they would be able to provide for their families when they grow up (Perry-Hazan, 2013). The legal and political discourse resulted in regulations requiring Haredi primary unofficial schools (grades 1 to 8) to teach certain secular subjects, such as Math, Science, Hebrew, and English. However, due to the Haredi parties’ political power, the accountability mechanisms affecting the Haredi schools were not substantially modified (Perry-Hazan, 2015a). The Haredi establishment’s success in maintaining the conservative approach of the Haredi school system has served to strengthen the conservative Haredi groups and disempower more modern streams within the Haredi community (Perry-Hazan, 2015b).

However, Haredi Education, like all education, does more than just impart information. It is central in the work of cultural transmission, in socializing young people into the ways and norms of a particular community (Finkelman, 2011). Schools teach Haredim how to behave in acceptable ways, how to navigate the community and the outside world, and what roles should they play as either Haredi males or females. While socialization has always been a central part of teachers’ orientations in the Haredi community, this research shows that there seems to be an increasing emphasis on spiritualization in addition to socialization. While socialization focuses on group identity, spiritualization focuses on the individual and his personal intimate connection with God.

Structure, Content and Timetabling of School Prayer in Jewish Ultra-orthodox Schools

Before we share our findings, it is important to understand the context in which school prayer is conducted in these schools. While there are differences between schools, the following description outlines a fairly typical prayer schedule in a centrist orthodox Jewish primary school in the UK.

All schools have a prayer slot for about thirty minutes every morning at the beginning of the school day. During the morning slot, children say their prayers, which consist of the central prayers from the Jewish prayer book or “siddur”. Each class prays with its class teacher. Prayers are often sung by rote, with occasional explanations interspersed and emphasis on key words and key ideas.

While all schools schedule classroom prayer, few have lessons dedicated to learning about the prayers and their meaning. Explanations are given during the recitation of prayers themselves. In one school, an hour per week is time tabled for a prayer learning lesson. In another, half an hour a week is devoted to this activity.

As children move through the school, additional prayers are added to the daily service. Progression in terms of knowledge, skills, and understandings of prayer have not been formalized in the form of any curriculum framework.

Research Methodology

The study conducted utilized qualitative research methods, including interviews and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of research tries to capture what participants experience on the topic in their own words (Shkedi, 2003). We wanted to understand what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 2015), about the purposes and challenges of school prayer and how they may be addressed.

The study aimed at exploring the following two research questions:

1. What, in the teachers’ view, are the goals of prayer in an ultra-orthodox primary school for girls?
2. What are the challenges they experience in the course of school prayer and how do they address them?

School and teacher population

In total, twelve interviews were held with teachers in these schools. In addition, some of the interviews were held in focus groups of between three-four participants. As Hennink (2014) explains, “focus groups enable for group discussion in which participants share their views, hear the views of others and perhaps refine their own views.” This, we felt was a good tool in eliciting rich responses, which may not have been given if these teachers were interviewed individually. We also had the opportunity to observe prayer sessions held in classes and attend assemblies where prayer services were being held.

Four female teachers were interviewed in each of the three schools. The teachers interviewed were all form teachers. In the ultra-orthodox day school for girls the form teacher is responsible for the progress and wellbeing of her class. She also teaches many of the class lessons, particularly Jewish Studies. All form teachers in Haredi girls schools are women. The teachers in this study are all graduates of the ultra-orthodox school system. They are all personally observant and identify with the religious ethos of the school. They each pray personally at least once a day. They range from between 20 to 40 years of age.

In all three schools the entire student population come from ultra-orthodox homes. All schools have a very clearly defined religious ethos, in which Jewish law is to be followed strictly and includes mandatory prayer for the first lesson of the school day.

Teachers were chosen using two types of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). The first was a typical purposeful sampling strategy, which reflected the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The second method utilized was a snowball, chain, or network sampling, a strategy involving locating a few key participants who met the above criteria of typical purposeful sampling for participating in the study, who then referred the interviewer to other participants. Teachers named other teachers, who exemplify the characteristics of interest in the study.

All interviews were recorded by tape and then transcribed. In order to maximize the validity of the research, observations were conducted during prayer services. In addition, the strategy of member checks was used to ensure internal validity of the data. Respondents validated the interview data, by providing feedback on the emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once the twelve teachers had been interviewed from the various schools, the emerging findings felt saturated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), in that the same phenomenon began to repeat itself and little new information surfaced.

The interview data were analyzed using a method of categorization (Alpert, 2002), which identified the core recurring topics in one interview and then extrapolated and compared them to other interviews. Twelve class observations were made by this author, one observation in each class of the teacher interviewed. He did not take part in the service, but stood at the back of the class, focusing his attention on the behavior of the teacher, students, and the prayer service itself. Most teachers actively participated in the service, whilst others stood by, while the students prayed. In some classes, the prayers were led by one of the students themselves, while, in others, students said the prayers quietly to themselves, with occasional class singing at various points during the service.

Findings

Firstly, we asked teachers, what, in their view, are the goals of prayer in an ultra-orthodox primary school for girls? Most replied that, for them, the core goal was to make their students “prayer literate”, in order to prepare them to function within the community as educated Haredi Jews. We named this view, following Muszkat-Barkan’s (2015) theoretical model, “socialization orientation”. The focus of school prayer should be on teaching students to recite the prayers correctly in Hebrew, as well as understand

their general meaning. Time should also be spent on teaching children the skills of the mechanics of prayer, e.g. when to bow during prayers and how to lead the service. In the words of one teacher:

“My main purpose is to get my pupils proficient in saying the prayers. They need to know how to behave in a synagogue, when to stand and when to sit. Yes, it is important that they know what their prayers mean, but my first priority is to get them to say it right.”

And in the words of another:

“The parents want their children first and foremost to learn how to recite their prayers. It cannot be that after going through a Jewish primary school there are children who are not proficient in the mechanics of Jewish prayer. That’s bread and butter...”

However other teachers emphasized on the affective goal or what we called the “spiritual orientation” of school prayer. In the words of one:

“I don’t believe that knowing the mechanics is what this is all about. Yes, it’s important they are prayer literate but much more importantly I want it to be a meaningful experience for them. They should feel a connection to God that there is something above themselves...”

In the words of another:

“When one starts the day we need to begin with something spiritual... That is prayer. It gives the children the understanding that there is someone who is managing the world, there is an address to turn to when things get difficult and someone to thank when times are good.”

In fact, most teachers in their interviews focused on the spiritual orientation as the major goal of school prayer. Some saw prayer as an opportunity to develop a sense of wonder and develop their students’ character and moral values. In the words of one:

“I want my pupils in their prayer service to see and appreciate the wonder of creation, the beauty of the world and most importantly the art of saying thanks to God and to those who look after us. Our pupils don’t know to say thank you any more... They think they just should have everything because they deserve it...”

It was interesting to note during prayer observations that in those schools where teachers focused on this more spiritual orientation, the prayer service was more experiential in content. Students were asked to think about what it means to thank God every morning, who should we be thanking every day etc., and were encouraged to share their experiences with the class. In some of these schools more opportunities for “private prayer” have been introduced. Students are encouraged to take a few minutes either during or after the public service, to reflect on their own personal needs and get an opportunity to talk to God in the way they wanted.

Even those who focused on the importance of the socialization orientation seem to be

concerned about children's lack of interest in praying, especially as they reach the older year levels. Many teachers recognize that their socialization orientation does not work well for their older students, yet they feel uncomfortable to change their teaching practice. Others simply don't know how to lead a prayer session differently. In the words of one:

“When I was their age I prayed and didn't ask too many questions. Today kids don't want to do anything they don't understand. In some ways they are more honest than we were, but I don't know how to deal with their disinterest. I just try to lead a service like I had when I was young.”

What these teachers seem to indicate is that there has been a change in orientations of their students, as compared to the time these teachers were students themselves. While for the teachers a socialization orientation in which children were inducted to the community was the main purpose of the prayer service, today this is no longer sufficient to ensure their students continuation of their ultra-orthodox traditions including intense prayer services. A spiritual orientation has now come to dominance.

Some teachers suggested that the two orientations were not necessarily in conflict, but saw a continuum between younger and older students. In the words of one:

“It could be that we emphasize those aspects of prayer, like prayer literacy and synagogue behavior, while the students are young, but emphasize the spiritual personal aspects of prayer when they are older.”

We also asked the teachers what are the challenges they experience in the course of school prayer and how do they address them? Teachers identified three different types of challenges they face during prayer services and discussed how they address them. The first were spiritual challenges. The second, challenges in teaching the understanding of the prayers and the third, distractions children are faced with during prayers. Clearly those teachers with a “spiritual orientation”, regarding the goals of school prayer, were most concerned with the challenges they face in this area. In the words of one teacher:

“Some students, particularly the older ones, feel the prayers are not connected to them and their lives. The message is not relevant. For others it is tiring and boring to get up every morning and say the same words.”

In order to strengthen the validity of the data gleaned from the interviews, prayer services were observed in all of the interviewees' classes. Many of these issues mentioned in the discussions were validated. A good number of students look very tired in the morning prayers, with some leaning their face on their hands and on the table; others are saying the prayers, some clearly with devotion. Another group of students sits quietly, clearly not engaged with the service. Teachers are unsure about how to deal with those disinterested in the services and shared their dilemmas. In the words of one:

“Do I force her to pray, it is after all a religious school and that is what is expected and what Jewish law requires? However if I force her to pray what have I achieved? It is going to lead to resentment. That's worse than if she did not pray at all.”

It is interesting to note that these challenges are faced in all these schools. Even though

students all come from ultra-orthodox homes, it does not mean that the students will automatically accept the norms and practices of prayer services. How do teachers deal with these challenges? Different teachers try a variety of approaches. For one it is important that the student sits with a prayer book, even if she is not going to pray with it. She says:

“That way I do not force her to pray. She can do what she wants quietly but at least she has the prayer book in front of her if she decides to pray.”

Another teacher has a more active personal approach. For her, it is crucial to have individual talks with each student to find out what her difficulty is. For some students, the teacher finds a prayer which the student can relate to and asks her to reflect just on that prayer. For others, reciting any prayer at the moment is not an option, so other approaches are tried. One teacher, for example, suggests:

“I often share my own experiences prayer with a student. For one who does not really want to get involved, I try and create together with her an alternative. We composed a story with a song which she reads during prayer time.”

Teachers also initiate class activities, to make prayer a more meaningful experience. One teacher shares her experiences:

“Last year I had a class where some students were not interested in praying. I decided to invite a guest lecturer who focused on prayer as a form of meditation. Students were asked to express and write their feelings on a page like...

“I am happy when...

I am thankful for...

Did this make a difference? To be honest, not really, the problem was getting back to the routine of prayer. From the prayer book.”

Again we see the teachers' dilemma. On the one hand, many teachers have a desire to make prayer a more meaningful experience, through introducing creative activities, while on the other hand they try keeping to the religious requirement, according to Jewish tradition, of fixed prayer from a prayer book, which does not always speak to the student. They also want to ensure that children are able to pray in a synagogue and have knowledge of the rules of prayer. Balancing these two approaches, sociological and spiritual orientations, so they complement each other is, for many teachers, a very difficult educational pursuit, which does not always work. This leads to frustration.

Another factor, according to the teachers, influencing the success of the prayer service, was the role of the school principal in emphasizing the importance of school prayer. The attitude of the principal has a very big impact on the seriousness of the prayer activity. As one teacher said:

“Before the new principal arrived, prayer was not taken seriously enough in our school. That has all changed. We all know how important it is now. We have workshop on prayers, the principal occasionally goes to prayer sessions and he talks about prayer in assemblies.”

The Role of the Teacher in School Prayer

What does the teacher do when students are praying in class? This is a question which arose during classroom observations and with subsequent informal conversations with students. Does the teacher supervise the prayers or participate in them as a fellow prayer? If it is the former, she often becomes a disciplinarian figure, rather than a religious role model.

However, when the teacher participates in the service and has a more accepting and open attitude, the prayer atmosphere seems to have improved. The teacher becomes a participant not a supervisor.

This non-coercive attitude towards prayer seems to be having a positive impact on students. In the same school, teachers have begun a voluntary “prayer club”, in which students come to an open discussion about prayer and its meaning. In the words of one student:

“For the first time regarding prayers I feel I am being listened too, my teacher is trying to understand where I am coming from, what questions I have both in understanding the text and about God and most importantly she is not forcing me to do anything... That for me means everything.”

We see, once again, how the various perceptions about the purpose of school prayer impacts on the challenges being faced in implementing school services. The above tension lies between the socialization and the spiritual orientations expressed by the various stakeholders.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated the experiences of twelve female school teachers in three ultra-orthodox primary schools for girls in Israel, regarding school prayer. It focused on what they thought were the goals of school prayer, what challenges they had in school prayer, and how they thought they could be addressed.

Regarding the goals of school prayer, there was a range of responses. There were those who emphasized prayer literacy and the need to socialize the children to prayer within the community; while others saw it mainly as an opportunity for students to grow spiritually and come close to God. This lack of goals clarification may be one of the factors that lead to confusion and challenges being faced.

This study has also shown how teachers hold different types of orientations or ideologies, that drive, shape, and impact their educational practice. Inherent in these ideologies are considerations about the purposes of schooling, the teacher’s responsibility and role in pursuing these goals, and understanding what students are capable of achieving (Deitcher, 2016). Teachers are often in tension, trying to balance between competing ideologies. When leading prayer services, teachers need to carefully navigate a path between these ideologies. They adopt a series of mechanisms that reflect the fusion between their intellectual ideas and the educational reality at hand. Each of these ideologies plays a key role and they produce a “lived ideology”, which frequently

includes inconsistencies, intellectual disharmony, and internal contradictions. Allowing teachers to acknowledge and appreciate the competing ideologies, sensitizes them to the multi-tiered educational process at hand and concurrently empowers them to confront the challenges in conscious and constructive ways (Deitcher, 2016).

Many teachers, in their attempt to emphasize on a spiritual approach for student development, follow Steinsaltz's view and the individualization ideology approach. Similar findings emerged in a study on teachers' views, regarding prayer services conducted by Muszkat-Barkan (2015) in a traditional but not orthodox school. Despite the differences in milieu and cultural ideologies, the author claims that most of the teachers, who participated in this study, tend to see prayer education as an opportunity for students' self-actualization: to seek meaning and express spirituality, and therefore they prefer that prayers will include not only the traditional liturgy, but will also provide opportunities for self-expression.

In Muszkat -Barkan's (2015) research, prayer was described as a personal resource of students' empowerment by both traditional secular and orthodox teachers. At the same time, the religious context of prayer was described by both traditional and secular teachers as alienating. Those teachers often examined the words and meaning of prayer in light of their own viewpoint. According to some, prayer has to come from faith, as prayer without faith is irrelevant. The various expressions that teachers use while talking about their own attitude towards prayer, suggests a difference between teachers who have experienced prayer in a personal way and those who look at it as a cultural or human phenomenon. It seems that in both traditional and more orthodox settings, teachers are concerned about how prayer can be made a more meaningful and spiritual experience for their students.

In summary, these research findings seem to have uncovered a dissonance between those teachers wanting a socialization orientation to school worship and those focusing on the spiritual dimension. In addition, we found that there existed no curriculum framework for prayers in ultra-orthodox primary schools, which clearly defined the goals of prayer in schools and how these goals could be achieved across the various year levels. All stakeholders expressed the desire for such a framework, which would somehow combine both socialization and spiritual orientations. The findings seem to indicate that putting greater emphasis on the socialization orientation in younger age year levels, while focusing more on spiritual orientations in older year levels, may offer a route forward.

We have noted that, while for the teachers a socialization orientation, in which they as children were inducted to the community, was for them the main purpose of the prayer service, today this is no longer sufficient to ensure their students continuation of their ultra-orthodox traditions, including intense prayer services. A spiritual orientation has now come to dominance. What is the cause of this change?

Philips (2020) has noted that secularization is a core concept in the sociology of religion. Using the United States as a case study, he demonstrates that one manifestation of secularization in the U.S. is the rising disaffection from organized religion, particularly among the younger generation. Nevertheless, while religious denominations are losing members and influence, beliefs indicating the unmet demand for revitalized religious institutions are widespread among the citizenry.

It is possible that the ultra-orthodox Jewish community discussed in this paper needs to consider how secularization has affected their own community beliefs and how that could impact on prayer services in particular and Jewish education in general in their schools. While the paper focuses on a group within the Jewish community, its findings are relevant to schools of other religious communities that may be facing similar challenges.

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