

Pandemic was the promo. The complete film will destroy Israel

by

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I have no doubt that most people are inherently good, and that the share of good persons does not vary from one population group to another – irrespective of religion or ethnicity. The problems begin when good people are denied information and are brainwashed from birth. Few are able to withstand the ensuing psychological, social and economic steamroller.

We don't know everything, and faith definitely has a role to play. But as science advances and knowledge grows, faith's place needs to end where the facts begin. This is the basic foundation underlying the modern era. When faith replaces facts from kindergarten on up, it should not surprise anyone when there's no one to talk to after these children become adults.

In the case of Israel's Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews), the problem is not with the believers but with their leaders who prevent information from entering their own community, and with our leaders who regard them as "natural partners" – enabling them to mortgage their future along with ours. How is it possible that those who extinguish the light provided by science and knowledge could be considered guardians of the faith for a People with more Nobel laureates per capita in science, and a start-up nation unparalleled (relative to its size) in innovation and technological breakthroughs? What kind of Judaism is being preached by those who do not even agree to a basic tenet of our faith, *pikuach nefesh* (biblical Hebrew expression for placing the sanctity of life above all else), abandoning not only their own community, but everyone else whom their community infects – bringing Israel's entire health system and economy to its knees along the way?

When 40% of those infected come from a group comprising only 12% of the population, then the only possible explanation for this is unadulterated lawlessness. And if you enjoyed the promo provided by the pandemic, then you'll really love the complete film – the one that will eventually do to the entire country what Haredi society is doing to itself today. Their lawlessness is not only killing them and us in this terrible plague, it's increasingly destroying Israel's future.

Aside from a few geniuses, there are no shortcuts for the rest who need to study a full and significant core curriculum as children. It's no coincidence that over half of the Haredi women (53%) and over three-quarters of the Haredi men (76%) who even dare embark on the academic track (which is usually at a relatively low level to begin with) drop out before receiving a degree.

For those who have not yet internalized the power of exponential functions from the Covid-19 infection experience, here is another lesson with regard to this function and its existential implications. As shown in the graph, the Haredi share of Israel's population has risen sharply from generation to generation. They are 3% of the first generation in the graph, 6% of the second generation, 13% of the third generation and almost a quarter (23%) of the fourth generation. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics' forecast, Haredi children ages 0-14 will comprise 49% of Israel's children in 44 years – less than two generations from today.

As if the pace of demographic change in Israel were not enough, there is a multiplier that's hurtling Israel even more rapidly toward the demographic-democratic point of no return. The Haredi leadership's fabricated status as keepers of the faith – instead of what they really are – yielded the Haredi parties 30% more votes in the last election than the sum total of all Israel's Haredim aged 18 and up.

A population that does not receive a first-world education will not be capable of maintaining a first-world economy. Without that, there can be no first-world health, education and welfare systems – nor a first-world army in the planet’s most dangerous region. This is the future that’s approaching at an exponential speed if we don’t get our act together before it’s too late.

Despite the deafening and misleading clamor by politicians and in much of the media, the real story in Israel is no longer one of left-right, religious-secular or Arabs-Jews. Anyone who still believes that it’s possible to implement a core

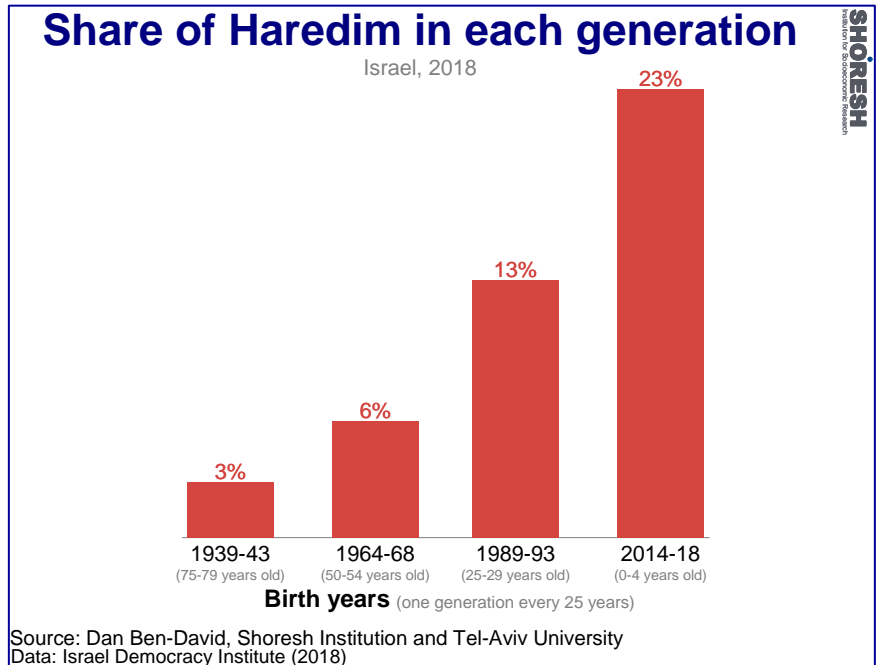
curriculum in Haredi schools as part of a cooperative agreement with the Haredi leadership – a coterie willing to sacrifice the lives of its own community during a terrible epidemic, just to maintain its hold on power – has no idea about the kind of people with whom we are dealing. Keeping their followers in the dark with regard to facts, evidence and a serious education is the cornerstone of their hold on power.

Saving Israel’s future apparently rests on the shoulders of the rest of us, on all those determined to preserve the future of the only home that the Jewish people have. We receive such opportunities only once every 2,000 years – so we need to wake up while we can still do something about it. There is no reason why a still-large majority should continue to finance a minority insisting on a lifestyle jeopardizing its own future as well as ours. Period.

All schools need to study a full core curriculum and all public funding must be completely stopped from reaching any schools that do not do so. But that’s not enough. Public funding must be completely terminated to any downstream yeshivas and organizations accepting graduates of schools that do not provide a full core curriculum. We’ve seen what happens to Haredi fertility and employment rates when funding is even partially reduced to a very poor community unable to sustain itself without the public dole.

After decades of trying to reach agreement with the Haredim, their exponentially changing demographics leave us no option other than the cold turkey approach – a complete termination of funding a lifestyle that deprives children of a sufficient education. It’s the only way to stimulate significant internal soul-searching within the community for which the concept of accountability and responsibility has been foreign until now.

The upcoming elections need to yield cooperation between all remaining sectors who understand what kind of a trajectory we’re on and for whom Israel’s future is important. Each of us must demand that the leaders of the parties that receive our votes work together in as broad a coalition as possible, one that is founded upon three basic tenets: (1) comprehensive, structural reform of the education system (which is currently the worst in the developed world, even



without the Haredim); (2) reforming Israel's system of government to facilitate governance, accountability and enforcement of policies, alongside a strong array of checks and balances; and (3) legislating a constitution that will set in stone Israel's underlying tenets and make it difficult for anyone who may one day try to move us backwards.