

Political Normativity in Israel:

Religious Parties between System Change and Milieu Defense

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The research project analyses ideology and political praxis of religious parties in Israel: United Torah Judaism, Shas and the Union of the National Religious Parties. At the core of the analysis is the question, to which end religious parties employ political means and to what extent their political actions are identical with their ideological *Weltanschauung*. Two questions are especially relevant to the project: *First*, to what extent is it the ambition of the religious parties to enact religious legislation? *Second*, how important is clientele politics? That is to ask, if the actual emphasis of their political activity rests more with supporting their milieu than with changing the political system.

The theoretical framework of the dissertation has two levels. First, the author employs fundamentalist theories, in order to analyze the political conduct of religious parties in Israel in regard to state and society. The assumption of most of these theories that so-called fundamentalist movements try to establish a quasi-totalitarian state according to religious laws will be questioned empirically, as well as theoretically. Accordingly the subtitle of the project speaks of system *change* and not *upheaval*. The second level focuses on milieu theories in order to explain connections between political acts of the respective parties and their socio-moral background. The two theoretical approaches are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary.