Chapter 4

SOCIAL STATUS OF JEWISH WOMEN

This chapter deals with social status of Jewish women in the Israeli society. The social status of women is related to their role in different sphere of society. There are certain factors that make impact on social status of women in a particular society such as tradition of a particular society, women's status within the family. Women's social status is also decided according to how religious texts define gender relations and the measures adopted by the state to enhance women's social status. All these parameters have to be kept in mind while discussing the social status of Jewish women in Israel.

Introduction

Social status of women in a society is determined by several variables like their status in the religion, family, marriage and divorce rate, domestic and social violence, etc. The other significant way to assess the social status of women are the legal measures adopted by the state to enhance status of women at social level in that particular society and the implementation of those legislations. While making assessment of social status of women in a particular society one has to keep one point in mind that there are different sections in a society that benefit different by measures adopted by state to remove certain traditional norms that are against human dignity. To assess their changing status, it is essential to find out their position in the Judaism, the impact of the ongoing Jewish tradition and the legislation adopted by the state to improve the overall status of women in the society.

There are certain parameters in a society to measure the social status of women. After the creation of United Nations it adopted Human Rights Deceleration in 1948 that considered women rights as human rights. Not only this it also adopted Women's Right Declaration in 1995 and Israel is the signatory of both of these Charters (The United Nations and the Advancement of Women, (1945-96), 1996: 456). All these factors are mentioned over here because the thesis is more or less based on eclectic approach.
Women have inferior status in most religious scriptures whether it is Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism\(^1\) (Sharma 1994: 148). The group of people in a particular society that have upper hand in social echelons mostly interpret the religious scriptures. It is religion that defines which particular section of society is more significant than the other. Most of religious scriptures provide women special status as a mother, wife and daughter but not as a human being. In fact, religious scriptures, development and state adopted measures play noteworthy role to define womens social status.

When dealing with Israel, it is a pluralist society and the status of women is affected by the composed diversity of different communities like Jewish, Arabs, Christian and Druze. Jews are further divided into several ethnic branches in Israeli society as West’s Jews (Ashkenazi), East’s Jews (Mizrahi), Moroccan, Russian Jews and the most important ultra Orthodox Jews who are officially appointed by the state to control the personal life of Jewish people. In Israeli context Orthodox Jews called themselves the protectors of Moses’ commandments and waiting for the final day (Smooha 1978: 90).

**Women’s Space in Jewish Religion**

Judaism is the parent religion of Christianity and Islam. It is a monolithic religion. Abraham is their God. Judaism is, however, not only a religion but also it is a nation for Israeli Jews. For Israeli Jews, Jewish identity develops between two severe constraints: affiliation with Jews as a nation and conformity to certain religious prescriptions. Eveline Goodman-Thau pointed out this in these words:

“We (Jewish people) are witnessing the most severe confrontation between religious Jews in its entire history. Religion, which more than any institution provides symbols for ultimate meaning, is a main topic in the *Kulturkampf* over the Jewish nature of society, a touchstone of its test for survival” (Rachel 1998: 66-67).

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\(^1\) It is noted by Odim & Sorebell in a study “The traditions of Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism all legitimate male authority, particularly patriarchal familial authority, over women: Christianity through exhortation to wifely obedience, Confucianism in the three obediences, Hinduism in the Laws of Manu, Islam in the Quran’s injunction regarding wifely obedience, and Judaism in the Halakhah Laws”.

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In Judaism Torah\(^2\) and Talmud\(^3\) are the two most sacred books. Halacha is the Jewish law related to religious life as well as private life of Jewish people. In fact halacha is that interpretation of Torah that is done by various rabbis. There are two major streams of Judaism at present namely Orthodox or Traditional Judaism and Reform Judaism. In Israel Orthodox Judaism is having state protection.

Traditional Judaism denies several religious duties to women for example it does not allow women to participate in public prayers. It does not allow them to study the religious book Torah. The study of halacha has remained close to women. As is said by an Israeli feminist scholar “Women are objects of the law but neither its creator nor agents: disabled marginalized Passover” (Plsakow 1986: 3). (It means women life has always been controlled by halacha although women scholar do not have right to interpret it). All this is happening even if there are stories about certain matriarch in Talmud. The words of daily prayer (Shama) in Judaism are translated “you should teach Torah to your sons”. Judaism also exempts women from time-bound duties. There are, in all 613 mitzvot (or commandments). Of these commandments well over half are negative (thou shalt not), on which obligations to obey rests equally on men and women (thou shalt). The vast majority of these commandments are not time-bound: they do not undertake at the specific times of the day. These duties are obligatory for men and women. There are certain religious duties that are time-bound not applicable to women with slaves and minors. The traditional explanation of exemption of Jewish women from these duties is that they are tied to their children and it would be wrong to force them to have to fulfill commandments at specific times when their duties are elsewhere. It is also pointed out that Jewish women are exempted to save friction in the home from these time-bound duties because if they devote their time towards religious duties they will get less time for their husbands. As it is said “women cannot serve God and men, and should therefore devote their energies to men”. All these points are still relevant. There are certain groups in Israeli society in which women stick to halacha, especially Orthodox Jewish women (Jackson 1996: 132). According to Orthodox Judaism it is still an assumption that Jewish women have to take care of men and male children. As it is pointed out “Women could

\(^2\) Torah is religious guidance or law for Jewish people.

\(^3\) There are some oral laws in each society. These oral law redacted in a book known as Talmud.
...get into Heaven because they were wives and daughters of men..... only if they cooked for men and did not nag or curse the men out of their houses: only if they let the men study *Torah* in peace then, maybe, they could push themselves into Heaven with the men to wait on them there” (Yezierska 1975).

In spite of all these things there are certain matriarchs in Judaism such as Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel. All these women showed independence of spirit work within the constraints of their time to bring change in the future of the Jewish people. The other matriarchs of the Judaism are Miriam, sister of Moses, Judith and Michael, wife of king David of Israel. In fact from the earliest biblical periods Jewish women were involved in a wide variety of cultic activities, from participation at communal festivals, to bringing sacrifices, to serving an official and semiofficial function in the ritual surrounding the cult (Grossman & Rivka 1992: 17). But according to Jewish feminists the presence of these women does nothing to change the status of women in Jewish law and custom.

Israel is having Religious Courts & women are denied to be a part of these courts. It is specified that Israel is a Jewish state. It is a state that created various tiers of judicial system and even the personal status law (that decides matter of marriage and divorce) come under the Religious Courts. There are more than 129 Religious Courts called *danyim* in Israel (Meri Books 1988). The Rabbis who serve in these courts always come from Orthodox Jewish section of society. In 1980s Leah Shakedel became the first woman who was appointed in religious municipality. There are two chief Rabbis in Israel that are appointed by the state, the one from *Ashkenazi* community and other from *Mizrahi* community. In Israel Rabbi are having strong control over personal status of Jewish population. This office is never held by a woman. Women are not allowed to do public prayers on the sacred places of Judaism especially the Wailing Wall, most sacred place of Judaism. This shows that Jewish women are living certain constrains but to find out their real picture it is essential to discuss laws that are adopted by Israeli state to enhance their status.
Legal Regime and Gender Equality in Israel

Civilian laws are basic conditions to enhance women's social status if they are implemented in a strict manner. But laws are more or less conceived as a cultural product; like such other products, law embodies and expresses specific social ideologies through its assumptions about society and its various members (Davis 1985: 16). At the same time, law also plays an active role. Through its discourse it reproduces and constitutes both the societal subjects and their interrelations. In that sense, law is more than an "external phenomena that enables us to study the latter in the light of the former" as Durkheim contended (Durkheim 1947: 7). In Israeli case there are certain laws that are adopted by state to enhance women's social status but having shadow Zionist ideology as well as Judaism. There are certain laws adopted by Israeli state namely; the Law of Marriage Age – 1950 which establishes that the bride has to be at least 17 years old at marriage or betrothal (with exceptions in special cases); the Law of Penalties – 1937 established the sweeping prohibition of multiple marriage (bigamy/polygany) and the penalties for its violation. These laws are having Zionist ideology behind them. There are laws that deal with the financial arrangements between the couple in the course of their marriage – obligation of food for the wife imposed on the husband, inability of imposing debts or rights of a person on his/her partner, and legal presumption (relevant in case of divorce or death) that their property is shared unless other arrangements have been made (Women in Israel 1996: 22-23). In the case of Ethiopian Jews women are still victims of mismatched marriages. These men marry with those girls who are 20 or 30 years younger than them. Polygamy is another ghastly feature of this community (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html). The state adopted Defense Service Law in 1949, which encompasses all matters concerning the draft and military service. It is important to mention about this law because it discriminates on the bases of gender. The law specifies categories of persons who will be exempted from service: Individuals who do not intend to remain in Israel, married or pregnant women, women with children (Berkovitch 1997: 624). The state adopted Women's Equal Right in 1951 that did a lot to enhance Jewish women's social status as it abolished several Ottoman and Jewish religious law such as, the father is natural guardian and that a
woman loses all her property rights upon marriage. This law bears criticism for retaining the religious courts' exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce (Ibid). The state also adopted several laws to enhance women social status in 1990s.

In 1991, the country adopted the Prevention of Violence in Family that was further amended in 1997 that has added two new grounds. (1) To issue a protective injunction. (2) To allow appeal of decision pursuant to prevention of violence in the Family Law, to be heard by a single judge of the district court instead of previously required panel of three. In 1992 the Single Parent Family Law was adopted by the state but it did not talk about the welfare benefits that are essential for a single parent to bring up their child. In fact to enhance the principle of gender equality Israeli state established the Authority for the Advancement of Law in 1998 (a body that propagates laws related to gender equality). The recommendation for the establishment of this authority was given by Convention of Elimination Discrimination Against Women Committee of United Nations in 1998. The Committee urged to adopt it in 1997 when the Israeli state submitted its report regarding women status in 1997.

Due to establishment of Authority for the Advancement of Law Israel revised several laws to meet the emerging demands of the society. It revised Israeli Penal Law of 1977 that is related to crime against women such as rape, pornography and prostitution in 1998. This revision brought pornography and prostitution together in the form of publication of advertising of sex-services. In fact in the last decade of 20th century Israeli legal system adopted several laws that were gender sensitive. But what is the de facto role of these laws to enhance the social status of Jewish women is discussed wherever, the data is available (CEDAW/C/ISR3, 2001: 18).

**Israeli State and Familism**

Despite the "mutations" of the family in post-industrial societies, familism is still the marker of Israeli society. Familism is defined here as the centrality of "the family" at the

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4 However, It is pointed out by some Israeli scholar that the state does little to enforce the payment to women of alimony and child support that have been agreed by the courts, in the case of divorce. Women almost always get to keep the children but often they are left with inadequate payments to take care of those children.
individual and collective level and is measured by demographic indicators such as marriage and divorce rates, age at first marriage, total fertility rates, out-of-wedlock births, etc. On the other hand, National Family policies and Family law vary across nations and constitute important conditions for the organization of daily routine in the family members position and rights. Family policy is very vague term, because it often refer to formal policies and programmes and does not always include indirect ways state shapes families (for example laws concerning with birth control and abortion, mandating minimum wages and regulatory health care (Hagglond & Hakvort 2001: 903).

Familism in Israel, and its different forms among different groups of Israeli citizens, is to be understood according to two parameters and according to the way these parameters intermingle: (1) Family laws, which are mostly religious laws; and (2) Women's/mothers' participation in the labour market, taking into account the gender, class and ethno-religious stratification that characterizes Israeli society and the structural opportunities women/mothers have for joining the labour market, due to this stratification (Swirski, & Marlyin 1991: 57-58).

Familism is such a dominant value in Israel because it has been institutionalized through the establishment of religious laws as family laws for each ethno-religious group of Israeli society that are part of Israeli social structure namely: the Israeli Jews (80 percent), and the Israeli Palestinians (20 percent), which include Muslims (15 percent), Christians (3 percent) and Druze (2 percent). Religious laws may be conceived of as "national assets," functioning as borderlines between the different ethno-religious groups and as a basis for their "normative-collective memory" and their "normative collective identity" in a country where two national collectivities are sometimes in latent, sometimes in open conflict. However, Israel is also a capitalist, postindustrial society undergoing capitalistic processes of individualization which work the opposite way: Capitalist industrialization is the main factor linked to women's/mothers' massive entry

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5 According to Mishpaha Hadasha, for a family to exist as such, three elements are necessary: Firstly, there must be an emotional element that encompasses the concept of free choice whereby a person chooses a mate of his own free will; secondly, there must be a technical element where the couple maintain a shared household; and the third element is that the couple resides under one roof. The family unit exists on the basis of these three elements.
into the paid labour-market and to major transformations of the family institution. At the cultural level, capitalism fosters individualistic discourses and practices, thus promoting the individualization of institutions, including the family. As a consequence, different forms of families exist in Israel reflecting and perpetuating the gender, class and ethnorenligious stratification of Israeli society (Bijaoui 2003: 203-204). Ethnicity and class make an impact on Jewish women egalitarian status within the family. Ashkenazi women are having better status within the family than Mizrahi women. Asian African Jewish men disapprove of women working outside the home and having high expectations on women's working role in the home6. In fact education makes great impact on the status of Jewish women within the family. Those women who are educated working into a larger degree in the labour force and practice more equitable division of labour at home than do less educated women (means Ashkenazi women) (Ibid). All the above-mentioned variables would be discussed one by one as per the availability of data.

Jewish Women and Family

Israelis consider their country developed westernized democracy that happens to be located in the West Asia; historical patriarchal influences have produced a traditional family-oriented society in which family stability is the rule in all sectors of society. Not only the historical patriarchal influence is the cause of family oriented society security threat also played an important role in it. In fact many religious holidays are considered family occasions and cannot be properly celebrated without family: Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), Succoth, Chanukah, Purim, Passover and of course, the Sabbath (from Friday evening to Saturday evening). Each of these family functions involves traditional meals and customs in the family context. Being with the family is so important that the Israeli Army makes every effort to release soldiers so that that they will be able

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6 Even if women play important role in the family but their labour is free of cost in Israeli societies like in many developed as well as developing societies because house wife are still dependant on their husband's insurance policies in the case of mishapenning or for their old age security. There are certain conditions to get the benefit of a husband policy. In the case of Israel Tziona Koenig-Yair finds out in her study "A married woman who does not work outside her household, whose spouse is insured and entitled to National Insurance payments, is entitled to receive an old-age allowance from the age of 65 under the following conditions: 1) She was a resident of Israel for at least five years before the age of 65. 2) She was born after December 31, 1930".
to spend Sabbath and holidays in the bosom of their family (Safir 1993). Family is also an epic centre in Israeli society because of national security. Due to national security militarization of Israeli society has created a male oriented culture in which women are expected to nurture their men who are called up to serve their country and who give their lives if necessary. The metaphor of the “crowded nest” has been used to describe the typical Israeli family where “the female hovers over the males, preoccupied with combating real and imaginary enemies and attending to their needs” (Yishai & et.al 1997:1243).

In fact, the family remains at the centre of the Israeli women’s life even when her children leave home to serve in the army. During this period, the family is seen as an important source of support for its soldier. The woman is expected to nurture her soldier son or daughter by laundering and ironing uniforms, preparing meals during family visits, and baking cakes for the children to take back to the army (Herzog 1998: 74). All these points make clear that “family” is having a very significant place in Jewish context (Safir 1991: 57).

In all sections of Israeli society (means without any distinction on the bases of ethnicity) social life revolves around the children. Childcare has been and continues to be primarily the mother’s responsibility. In fact, in Israel even though early labour laws were based on the socialist idea that all women should work, the assumption was that women would work part-time. This stemmed from the fact that women were perceived as the natural caretakers of both children and the household. After the creation of Israeli state certain legislations were passed to protect women in their multiple roles as workers, wives and mothers. They were allowed to work an hour less without pay deductions and to take days off to care for sick children without being docked; women were granted mandatory maternity leave for three months and an additional nine month leave without pay. This represented very advanced legislation for its time. However, in 1970s these protective labour laws began to be perceived as discriminatory because the laws legislated the

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7 It is pointed by Deborah Brenstein “In Israel an ideology is concerning the primacy of men’s role as chief provider and women role as family tender has been strongly reinforced by the powerful religious establishment and is embodied in the social policy of both the welfare service and National Insurance.
mother's responsibility for childcare. In 1988 women from across the entire political spectrum banded together for the first time to fight to change these laws in order to enable either parent, at the couple's discretion, to take responsibility for childcare (See, Swirski 59).

**Equality within Household**

At present most studies related to gender relations mainly deal with equality on the domestic front (means whether men and women are equally participating in daily-routine chores that are related to private sphere of human-beings). Research points to changes in women's orientation toward work in many Western countries. An integrative summary of research findings from the United States, Australia, and Portugal indicates that women express more commitment than men not only to the home but also to work (Kulik 2002: 87).

Even if, various appliances are available to reduce domestic burden like cooking, cleaning and washing, women are still responsible for a growing number of tasks which link the family to services outside the home in Israeli society. These include certain work such as shopping for food, accompanying children to doctors, private teachers and hobby groups, taking in cars and appliances for repairs, paying bills, and being present at occasion such as school parties and school trips. Moreover, mother is expected to prepare and serve the major meal of the day, in accordance with the schedule of the children and spouse, who return home between 1 and 4 p.m. Despite the fact that the majority of young women are part of labour force, most social arrangements are organized on the assumption that women are still full-time homemakers (Safir 1993: 63).

When dealing with the satisfaction, in Israeli context regarding division of household tasks, carrying out masculine tasks were found satisfactory in males (means to do the work like driving, to call the mechanic for the repairing work). With respect to general tasks, also males find satisfaction. But when dealing with the feminine tasks and the measures of satisfaction Jewish males are not comfortable (See, Kulik). Changes are also evident in men's roles, as they have become more involved in raising and educating their
children. In the area of parenting, for example, the "new father" model has become increasingly prevalent in Western-oriented countries, including Israel. As a result of these changes, more emphasis is placed on negotiating the division of household tasks between spouses, as well as on reevaluation of home-work priorities (Ibid: 24). Regarding gender-based differences, the findings revealed that women have a greater tendency than men to link equality in family with marital satisfaction. Israeli society is unique in integrating traditional and modern trends, gender difference in family is a significant issue in this society. The other cause of importance of the family in Israeli society is that family ties provide security and support, because of anxieties that accompany military unrest (Ibid). 8

Orthodox Jews and Family

Religion is having strong control especially on Orthodox and ultra Orthodox communities. In Israel where modern Orthodox Rabbis may permit women to employ family planning techniques, birth control is being often interpreted as being contrary to Jewish law. The ultra-Orthodox population does not use birth control methods. All women receive a special birth allowance from the National Insurance Institute, which also pays families a monthly children allowance according to the number of children in the family, regardless of the family's income. There are special discounts for large families (as those with four or more children). To save and protect the rights of these families an organization and political lobby named Zehavil exist in Israel. It has 49 chapters around the country and 30,000 families were having its membership in 1990s (See, Safir 1993). In fact it is noted by Rhoda Kanaaneh in her study "Israel has used the strategy, since its founding is actively encouraging Jewish Women to have as many babies as possible. Starting in 1949, a "heroine mother" award was given to women having ten or more children. However, the program was discontinued when it was ascertained that the majority of award recipients were Arabs. Subsequently, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion recommended that the Jewish Agency, rather than the

8 In 1996 Golda Scheider pointed out "Ashkenazi Jews more closely conform to the European patterns of smaller family size, nuclear family, independent living for young people and freedom of marital choice. With the Orthodox Jews and Jews of West Asian and North African origin there is closer approximation to the fertility and family pattern like other countries of the region".
Government of Israel, handle the award because the Jewish Agency could more easily restrict the award to Jews and exclude Israel's Arab citizens. In 1967, a demographic center was established in the Prime Minister's office with the "explicit goal of increasing the reproduction of Jewish Women exclusively." Further, the Israeli Government established a 'Fund for Encouraging Birth' in 1968, which gave special allowances to Israeli Jewish families having three or more children.

Orthodox women are meant to dedicate their lives to bearing and raising children, and indeed, many if not most women spend their lives in this way, though many wives in ultra-Orthodox families also work outside the home. Financial support for these families, either in the form of yeshiva stipends for the men or in the form of generous government subsidies for dependent children help to support these families. Nevertheless, many ultra-Orthodox families in Israel live well below the poverty line. According to Berman and Klinov's 1998 study, ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities are the fastest growing segment of the Israeli Jewish population and are increasing annually by 4-5 percent, or doubling every 18 years (Berman and Klinov 1998: 67). By 1993, the number of live births projected for the average ultra-Orthodox woman increased to 6.9, up from 5.8 in 1980.

The Orthodox Judaism delegates activity in the public spheres to male only. The Orthodox family is not complete until a male child is born (only a male can pray to honor his departed parents). All male infants are circumcised a week after are born, and a large party is held in honour of the child and his parents, often catered in a hired hall, as hundreds of guest may be invited. This party takes place in secular family as well as religious ones. Religion is also equally important for secular as well as Orthodox family at the birth of male child due to commandment of circumcision. A Bar Mitzvah ceremony takes place when the boy is 13, to symbolize his coming of age. The majority of secular boys, along with their Orthodox peers, prepare for months for this religious ceremony. An elaborate party is held, often with a seven-course meal, at which boy is expected to give a speech. A particular joke about these parties is that the only thing missing is bride. There are no equivalent religious ceremonies for girls. Contemporary families do tend to celebrate a girl’s birthday with a party for her friends and family, but without the fanfare as in the case of boys (Ibid). Navah Butler Por in his study in 1980s
found that parents do not admit a preference for either sex on questionnaire, but reveal a preference for boys over girls in in-depth interviews. This preference cuts across social classes, urban and rural residence, and ethnic origin. (Ashkenazi and Oriental, as well as Arab and Jew) (Gagne & Tarievee 1983: 76-77). This shows that in Israeli society also, like other West Asian societies the preference has to be given to a male child.

**Property Relations between Spouses**

Even if Israel adopted pre-nuptial agreement in the late 1990s but that is not applicable to all the married couples. According to the Spouses (Property Relations) Law 1973, the community property principle will apply to couples married after January 1974 who did not sign a pre-nuptial agreement as specified above. According to this principle, with the dissolution of the marriage the couple must divide their property equally among them, excluding inheritances and presents or property owned by one of the partners prior to the marriage for which they will retain full ownership. In the case of couples married before 1974, as well as common-law spouses, all property accumulated during their life together or beforehand belongs equally to both. Upon dissolution of the marriage or separation the property is divided equally, even if registered under one of the partner’s name or belonged to him/her prior to the marriage, and may be distributed even prior to divorce.

In Israel Religious Courts and Family Courts deal in Jewish women case with property related matters. It is quite difficult for a woman to file suit against her husband related to distribution of property because laws are complicated and most of men file these suits in Religious Courts. (www.jfai.or.il/education/lifecycle/marriage-itim-3.html). Religious women face double discrimination because the pre-nuptial agreement are not popular in this community. As pointed out by Rachel Levmore a Rabbinical Court advocate in a conference related to gender issues in 2000s at Tel Aviv university. She is associated with the Kolech (a NGO, Your Voice) Religious Women’s Forum, discussed the importance to women's financial welfare of encouraging young couples to sign a prenuptial agreement. The need for such an agreement derives from the exclusive jurisdiction of Israel's rabbinic courts over marriage and divorce among Jews. According to Jewish law, a wife’s property is controlled by her husband, and only he can initiate divorce. Thus, if a woman asks for divorce, her husband may refuse her or demand
compensation for his consent. This has led to many cases in which women must accept harsh financial settlements. Levmore, who is herself one of the principal authors of a recently published prenuptial agreement, stressed that such an agreement benefits the husband as well as the wife, since it puts the whole marriage on a firmer basis of mutual trust and dignity (Azam 2003).

**Jewish Women in Kibbutz**

*Kibbutz* which represented as communal agriculture farming, were established in 1924 in *Yishuv*. These were having Zionist as well as socialist ideology behind their creation. During their establishment social and sexual equality were its primary goals even if there was no formal planning to establish the conditions necessary for gender equality. When talking about family in early kibbutz the number of women were very low. In these Kibbutz marriage and family were rejected as reactionary and as threat to communal living. The marriages were happened very rarely. It was made necessary for a couple to behave toward one another as they behave toward any other member.

Later in 1948, the model of *Kibbutz* was changed and they established as military outpost to guard the border. There was no restriction on creating family. Earlier child birth was rare in the *Kibbutz* but in new *Kibbutzim* it took place at very high rate. In fact it was pointed by Marlyin P. Safir that the young idealists who were so concerned with establishing a new society accepted traditional values and beliefs about human beings’ biological nature and abilities and about the mother child relationship. In new *Kibbutzim* women were responsible to communal child rearing functions and service role. Child rearing was considered an exclusively feminine occupation. Untill 1960s it was essential for a mother to work nearby her home so that she could feed her child. Cooking and laundry were not the part of domestic chores but they were considered as feminine work and were done by female members of the *Kibbutz*. There were arrangement of communal sleeping for children and they spent the hours between four o’clock in the afternoon and seven o’clock in the evening with their families and then returned to the children’s house to sleep. This trend deteriorated in the late 1960s when the economic situation of *Kibbutz* was greatly improved, money was invested in improving and increasing the size of
members’ living quarters. This was an impetus for a movement (led by mothers) to bring the children “home” to sleep. The last kibbutz canceled the communal sleeping arrangement in 1997.

Even if communal sleeping arrangement collapsed it was found by Keller in 1983, mothering on the Kibbutz was different from the mothering in the Israeli cities. The child has both his and her biological and social mother—the mitapelet—appointed by the Kibbutz and responsible to it for children’s socialization. When a child begins school, his or her involvement with the teacher is more intensive as well. This enables the child to have less complicated and warmer relation with both the mother and the father, who can be more nurturing than city parents, since the mitapelet, and to lesser extent the teachers are responsible for discipline. This restructuring of family relations results in much lower domestic violence in the Kibbutz than in the city. On the other hand Rosner and Palgi found in 1989, “Kibbutz has made a number of contributions to social equality within the family. Kibbutz couples share roles to a much greater extent than is typical in Israeli society. Wives are economically independent members of the Kibbutz and receive the same economic remuneration”. One point that is important to mention is that divorce and marriage in these communes also fall under religious courts.

In 1994, Palgi found “the economic crisis in the beginning of the 21st century put the Kibbutzim under considerable financial strain. Because every member is worker a Kibbutz can have “hidden unemployment”. In the end of 20th century all of Kibbutzim abolished the communal children sleeping. Communal services (such as doing laundry and providing daily shared meals) are being restored to the family, as unpaid labour. It shows that even if earlier in kibbutzim women segregated in feminine jobs that were paid labour. But in the end of 20th century due to economic crisis Kibbutzim moved towards restructuring and this made impact on women status within the Kibbutz because the measures adopted by them polarized, traditional family life, wiping out the gains that were the part of communal structure.
Marriage and Jewish Women

Marriage is the beginning of a family life in a traditional as well as modern society. Conventionally marriage is defined as a legally recognized relationship between an adult male and an adult woman (Ahmed 2003: 42). There are two ways of marriage, religious as well as civil. Civil marriage has been recognized by several countries such as America, Britain, Russia, and India. But there are certain countries particularly in West Asia that do not recognize civil marriage procedure. Israel is one of them.

Marriages in Israel are tied to the religious status of a couple. Just as Christian residents turn to a priest, Muslims to an Imam, and Druze to a Sheikh, so Jews in Israel turn to the office of the local rabbinate. In Israel Judaism is divided in three streams Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism. There is distinction among these streams of Judaism due to their belief in rituals. Even if Reform Judaism is talking about women’s rights marriage and divorce come under Orthodox Judaism premises. All the Dayanims (Judges in religious courts) in Israeli state are appointed from this section of Jewish population.

The Law of Rabbinical Courts (Marriages and Divorces) - 1953 establishes that matters of marriage of Jews in Israel, whether citizens or residents, are under the exclusive jurisdiction of rabbinical courts and are to be performed ‘in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel’. Weddings performed privately in Israel do not entitle one to a marriage certificate and are ineffective for registration and other economic benefits such as residence, health, education, insurance and taxation (Berkovitch 1997: 629-30). The Orthodox monopoly over marriage and divorce violates Israel’s Declaration of Independence protecting freedom of religion and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Israel is a signatory. Article 23 of the Covenant states: "Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution" (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw). It shows

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9 Israel shares with much of the West Asia and many Muslim countries around the world a religious personal law system, governing (at least) marriage and divorce, with roots in the Ottoman millet system. Each country uses its own variation on the specific balance of religious and secular authority in those laws.
that it's the violation of women's human rights. Due to Orthodox monopoly over marriage men as well as women do not have right to do civil marriage. They do not get married within other community (Israeli Arabs).

Marriages performed for Jews outside Israel that are valid in the foreign country in which they were performed receive retroactive recognition by the State of Israel. This includes civil marriages and non-Orthodox marriages. Citizens of Israel who marry in the course of a visit to a foreign country or travel abroad for this purpose will also receive such recognition. Marriages that cannot take place in Israel (such as the marriage of a Jew and a Muslim) will not be accepted retroactively.

When talking about love and arranged marriages both are happening in Israel. In secular community arranged as well as love marriages are popular. For, secular Jews army is an inadvertent matchmaker, bringing together young people who might not have otherwise socially met. Arranged marriages are preferred in secular community only then, when a woman does not get married till 28-29 because the mean age of marriage in Israel is 22.5 for Jewish women in 1990s. There is a popular belief in the country that there are only few eligible bachelors left for those women who prefer late marriages. On the other hand, arranged marriages are popular in Orthodox communities Proposals are mostly made in this community by rabbis (Scheider 1996: 1044). There are certain marriage bureaus also in Israel that offers their services through national newspapers as well as at personal level. An inter-ethnic marriage in the Jewish population is happening, even if the ratio is quite low. Among the Jewish population there is a preference for marriage with a spouse of the same ethnic origin: In 2000, 54 percent of grooms of Asia-Africa origin married brides of the same origin, and 62 percent of brides of Asia-Africa origin married grooms of the same origin. Only 18 percent grooms and 17 percent brides of Asia-Africa origin married a spouse of Europe-America origin, and the rest married a spouse of Israeli origin. In addition, approximately 53 percent of those getting married, of Europe-America origin, married spouses of the same origin. However, there was a marked decline in the rate of marriage with a spouse of the same origin. e.g., in 1972, 80 percent of grooms of Asia-Africa origin married brides of the same origin, compared with 54 percent in 2000 (www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2004/01_04_202e).
For Jews and Arabs, marriage is extremely important, but not enough because a childless marriage is not considered a family, and the couple is pitied. Fertility is a major concern of Israeli society. Adoption is not a real option, because very few children are available for adoption; if a couple wants to adopt a child it adopts from abroad. For those groups for whom continuing the family name (blood line) is very important, adoption is not a solution. Jewish and Moslem both make provisions for the husband to take a second wife if his first wife is “barren”, (i.e. cannot produce sons) (See, Swirski: 59).

Population is a basic organ of a state. Israeli state has always faced the dearth of human resources. In Israel’s Declaration of Independence declared that “demographic problem” is a public issue. At that time high birth rates were seen as a means of perpetuating the Jewish people. In 1950s, Prime Minister Ben Gurion established prizes for families with ten children or more. Media helped to perpetuate the motherhood via publishing reports about those women who have 10-12 children. Though state officially adopted the measures to check the reproduction rate birth control information has not been readily available until recent years. Secular Jews have adopted the sterilization measures to control the birth rate according to their own choice but Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox women still have narrow mindset against this technology. In Orthodox community even if Orthodox rabbis may have permitted women to employ family planning techniques, birth control is often interpreted as being contrary to Jewish law. The ultra-Orthodox women do not use birth control. All these special provision for religious communities make impairment of women’s human right.

State is still providing benefits to these communities. There are a number of facets of Orthodox Judaism that according to most anthropological criteria, are constraints on women and indicate male dominance and female subordination: these include the traditional bride-price, menstrual separation, ritual period of uncleanness following childbirth—and the fact that period of uncleanness is twice as long for the birth of a daughter as for a son (Michael 1973: 371).

In Orthodoxy, religion, honour and authority derive from the religious rituals and from “learning” that is called Talmudic scholarship. Reform Judaism on the other hand is little
concerned with ritual behavior and does not view ritual piety as a basis for authority. In Conservative Judaism the study of Talmud code is not as central as in Orthodoxy, but historical and sociological perspectives are important (Herbert 1989: 112).

As mentioned above marriage comes under religious courts in Israel due to that the current situation results in severe limitations on the right to marry and found a family. Citizens without a religion make a large number of those affected. It is estimated that out of the 800,000 new immigrants from the Former Soviet Union that have come to Israel since 1989, approximately 30 percent are not Jewish by Orthodox standards (according to Chief Rabbinate and Interior Ministry sources). In addition, the Chief Rabbinate does not recognize as Jews those who converted abroad in non-Orthodox conversions and will not marry them. Interfaith couples also cannot marry in Israel, even if one partner has no religion. Others, such as a Cohen and divorcee or a widow wishing to marry who has not received a ritual release from her deceased husband's brother (levirate marriage) are forbidden to marry according to halacha and have no other options. Those wanting a non-Orthodox religious ceremony also are denied this right (See, Rachel 1984: 38-40).

The Law of Penalties -1977 establishes criminal punishment (up to six months imprisonment) for anyone who performs a wedding ceremony without the rabbinate, knowing that the action is against the law. It shows that Israeli state is backing the religious control on the lives of women (Ibid: 49).

10 It is noted by some scholars that some well-known general factors that make for women's subjugation in Western democratic societies, Israeli Jewish women have suffered from specific burdens imposed by two characteristics of Israeli society as a colonial society: the close linkage between civic and military virtue, typical of the republican discourse, which is enhanced by the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the numerical inferiority of Jews in the Middle East that has infused Israeli Jews with demographic anxiety. While military service is mandatory for both men and women, only men are considered to possess military virtue. Women, regardless of their occupational status, are under pressure to excel in the 'battle of the cribs' against Palestinian women. As a result, individually, Jewish Israeli women enjoy fewer rights than male members of their social group in the civil and social spheres and, collectively, they are denied full membership in the republican political community. The emphasis on maternity as women's primary contribution to the common good has had a devastating effect on women's struggle for equality, even in the most egalitarian sector of Jewish society - the kibbutz. The most significant aspect of the non-separation of state and religion in Israel is the fact that religious courts enjoy almost exclusive jurisdiction over all matters of family law. As Jewish (and Muslim) religious law treats women as a subordinate class of persons, Israeli family law has a pronounced pro male bias. This is manifested in marriage and divorce laws that discriminate against women, in a restrictive (though not prohibitive) abortion law, and in an unquestioned acceptance of the traditional patriarchal model of the family as normative (Hecht and Yuval-Davis 1978; Azmon and Izraeli 1993; Berkovitch, 1997).
The rabbi performing the wedding is considered, the official Marriage Registrar according to the Law of Population Registry – 1965 and the Law of the Chief Rabbinate – 1980. The notice of the marriage is transmitted directly from the regional rabbinate to the Interior Ministry. This notice is not sufficient to change the family name of the wife, although in practice the change occurs automatically. The Rabbi performing the wedding is also authorized, according to the Law of Financial Relations between Couples – 1973, to put into effect a financial agreement between the couple, if they have agreed to arrange such a document. After the marriage, such an action will require certification by a court. There is no religious or legal obligation to write such an agreement; in the absence of a document, the usual financial guidelines of the law apply (Safir, et.al 2003).

**Divorce and Jewish Law**

*Halakha* (Jewish law) allows for divorce. The document of divorce is termed a get. The final divorce ceremony involves the husband giving the get document into the hand of the wife or her agent, but the wife may sue in rabbinical court to initiate the divorce. According to Israeli law, judicial authority in matters pertaining to marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel are under the jurisdiction of the rabbinical courts. Under the law, these courts are granted sole jurisdiction with regards to the act of marriage and the act of divorce.

In the rabbinical courts, *Dayanim* (rabbinical court judges) preside as judges and deliberations are conducted according to Jewish law - the *halakha*. According to the *halakha*, for divorce to come into effect the man must give the woman a document, a *Get*, which states that he divorces (banishes) her. The man (or a messenger appointed by him) gives the *Get* of his own free will, and the woman must accept it of her own free will. It is important to note that according to the *halakha* - contrary to other judicial systems, the court may not present the *Get* in place of the man or receive it in place of the woman, in other words the court cannot bring a divorce into effect without the couple itself performing the act of divorce (banishment).
As the consent of both partners is required for divorce, the spouse desiring divorce is dependent on the partner’s agreement. Many take advantage of this situation, forcing the interested party to ‘buy’ his or her freedom with money, by giving up property, child custody, etc. The more steadfast the objector, and the greater the desire of the party desiring the divorce, the higher the ‘price’ which the latter must pay to obtain the Get and dissolve the marriage (Yair & Cohen http://www.iwn.org.il/pdf%5Cch1eng.pdf).

**Jewish Women’s Position in Divorce:** The above-mentioned description does not differentiate between men and women, but rather between the party seeking the divorce and the one that is not interested in dissolving the marriage. In practice, women, in the majority of cases, are the weak party and are therefore exposed to extortion and to Get denial. Several factors account for this situation:

1. The time factor is more important to women than men. A woman’s ‘fertile’ years are limited compared to those of men, and therefore a woman undergoing a prolonged divorce procedure may miss the opportunity to bear a child. Older woman encounter increased difficulties finding a new partner compared to older men, hence in most cases the woman will be interested in dissolving the failed marriage earlier than the man (Ibid).

2. According to the halakha, a married man may cohabit with an unmarried woman, and their joint children will be considered legitimate (Kesherim) for all intents and purposes. By contrast, a married woman cohabiting with a man who is not her husband may lose her entitlement for maintenance and child-support and the children she bears to this man are considered bastards (Mamzerim) and are forbidden to marry Jews for ten generations. Thus, Jewish law enables men in the process of divorce to establish an alternative family, something denied to women in a similar predicament.

3. The Rabbinical Courts protect men from prolonged Get denial by their wives, yet they do not act to protect women from these circumstances. The disparity is rooted in Jewish law, which prohibits a married woman from remarrying as long as she has not received a Get from her husband, while, according to ancient halakha, a man may marry several women. A takana (rabbinical decree) forbidding a man from marrying more than one
woman (*herem de Rabbenu Gresham*) was only issued in the 11th century. As this is only a decree, it may be circumvented by special permit issued by the rabbinical court with the approval of one hundred rabbis (including the two Chief Rabbis of Israel). After issuing the permit, the husband may marry another woman without having divorced his first wife. The Rabbinical Courts issue such marriage permits to men whose wives have disappeared or refuse to give them a *Get* over a long period of time. The *halakha* does not permit women to marry under the same circumstances. The Rabbinical Court may compel a recalcitrant husband to grant a *Get* by imposing imprisonment. Even if there is provision that a party can ask for compulsion order (means to ask the husband/wife to accept the divorce) the procedure is very difficult because there is involvement of not only of Rabbinical Court but also of district court and attorney general (See, Rachel: 66-67).

In fact if Rabbinical Court by final judgment has ordered that a husband be compelled to grant his wife the Bill of Divorce from her husband a district court may upon expiration of six months from the day of making order, on application of attorney General, compel compliance with the order by imprisonment. Only attorney general can ask for compliance order not a wife. The law has these following steps

1. Only when the Rabbinical Court has issued an order distinctly stating that the husband should be compelled to grant a *get* would compulsion become possible.
2. Only the Attorney General can apply to the District Court for an order of imprisonment.
3. Only the Civil Court has power to issue such an order.

In fact to get divorce is a very cumbersome procedure in Israel because authorities are overlapping. Rabbinical Court does not have *de facto* power to punish the recalcitrant husband. For this purpose it has to ask Civil Court to apply force. The six months period is seen as unnecessary delay where the husband refused to comply with Rabbinical Court decision. The role of women is negligible in the whole procedure. Consequently, those seeking divorce require strong financial backing enabling them to hire lawyers and lose workdays. As men are, for the most part, financially stronger, they can afford to endure
such prolonged proceedings whereas women are anxious to conclude them. The status of women in the Rabbinical Courts is inferior to that of men, both because women may not serve as Dayanot (female Rabbinical Court judges) and owing to the (male) Rabbinical Court judges’ perception of the status of women and the relations between men and women within and outside the marriage context (Ibid).

In light of the above-mentioned factors, women enter the divorce procedure with much less bargaining power than men and are, for the most part, the party interested in dissolving the marriage. However, as the Rabbinical Courts do not protect them from Get denial and aginut (the status of an ‘anchored’ woman), they are forced to ‘pay’ for the Get with money and property, by forfeiting alimony and child custody, and more. The number of agunot\(^\text{11}\) in Israel in 1998 according to Nammat a Non-governmental organization was 16,000. The Rabbinical Courts currently avoid such solutions, abandoning women to ‘anchored’ status and to coercion by their husbands. Moreover, the courts often encourage coercion, directly or indirectly - instead of applying pressure on recalcitrant men they pressure women to acquiesce to their husbands’ demands. Family Courts operating within Magistrate’s Courts were established in Israel in September 1995. Family Courts hear all matters pertaining to personal status, except for marriage and divorce. An Amendment to the Family Courts Law was passed in October 2000 providing Muslim and Christian women access to civil Family Courts.

All the above mentioned discussion makes it clear that there is a strong relation between state and religion in Israel. This minglement makes a strong impact on all Jewish inhabitants of the state, especially on Jewish women. The following incident in 2000 makes it clear *MK Langental* proposes the establishment of a "Civil Family Registry" open to those unable to marry in the existing religious framework. This registry will not provide a civil marriage ceremony; rather a "Family Registry" will be established by the Interior Ministry. The "Family Registry Authority" will be responsible for administering

\(^{11}\text{Agunot, plural of agunah, a woman who has not been able to get a divorce from her husband. Under current interpretation of halhikic laws in Israel, she may have to wait decades (or, theoretically, forever) for a divorce if her husband so chooses.}\)
the records of "civil family registry" in Israel. The proposal clearly states that this channel will only be available to those unable to marry in the existing framework. The proposal states: "in the Family Registry only couple who are not of the same sex can be registered." (See, Yair & Cohen: http://www.iwn.org.il/pdf%5Cch1eng.pdf). This proposal faced a strong attack by the Sepharadi Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu who was earlier associated with National Religious Party of Israel. He stated:

There are some MKs who have taken up the crusade of disobedience to rabbis. "Some people consider themselves wiser than God. They want to amend the Torah, to enhance God. They are trying to find ways to open cinemas on Shabbat, and to enable a Cohen and a divorcee to marry. If God doesn't want to help those who are not permitted to marry, why should you? That is what happens when the party distances itself from the rabbis, and is even proud to do so. See how far things have gone." It shows the impact of Jewish religion on Women status in Israel. 12

To get divorce is quiet difficult in Israeli state and this fact become clear by below mentioned case study of Jewish woman who got divorce after 18 years. This case-study has been drawn from Moshe Shalve's translated article in "Calling the Equality Bluff"

"I was a young woman in my thirties, a mother of two young children aged 5 and 7, when in December 1968, after 15 years of a miserable marriage, I filed for divorce in the Jerusalem Rabbinic Court. My whole life was before me, and being optimistic, I thought that the worst part-the decision- was behind me. My claim was just, and the divorce would be soon forthcoming. I was naïve.

It was only on January 8, 1986, eighteen years later, that I received a judgment from the Rabbinic High Court in Jerusalem, obliging my husband (but not compelling him) to grant me a divorce. I received this judgment thanks to the tenacity and steadfastness of my attorney Tova Adrum.

My husband has been in New York for fifteen years-since January 1971. The above judgment has been sent to the United States for implementation (based upon legal precedent), and I hope that in the end I will finally

12 Note; MK Langental proposed making civil marriage only available to those who could not be married by the rabbinate - particularly those thousands of immigrants whose Jewishness is questioned. His proposals do nothing to respond to Israelis who want to have Non-Orthodox, egalitarian weddings, nor do they provide real free choice for all. They also fail to deal with any of the issues arising in the case of divorce. They are nevertheless a forward step.
manage to obtain the long hoped for divorce, even though the road still appears very long and paved with many dollars.

During the eighteen years that elapsed between the beginning of the proceedings and the handing down of judgment, I initiated legal actions in every possible court concerning alimony, concerning property division, child custody and various injunctions: Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court, Jerusalem District Court, Supreme Court (Jerusalem) including a number of precedent-setting appeals which law students encounter on examinations, Main Executive Office in Jerusalem, Jerusalem Rabbinic Court, Tel Aviv Rabbinic Court and Rabbinic High Court in Jerusalem.

The deliberations on the divorce began in 1968, were discontinued in 1971, renewed in June 1979 and continued until January 1986, when the above judgment has handed down- nine years of deliberations. Alimony proceedings in Jerusalem District Court, including a famous appeal to the Supreme Court, took over three years.” This case study makes clear that to get divorce in Israel is a thorny procedure for Jewish women. This premise is about other religion women (Israeli Arabs, Druze, and Christian) also even if this thesis is not dealing with their problem. In Israeli society divorce rate among Jewish community has more or less same in last 50 years. Irit Rosenblum, the chair of Mishpaha Hadasha (New Family) criticize the court system of Israel in these words “Despite there being a special court for family affairs, there is no definition of the term "family" in the laws of the State of Israel, "This is typical in the State of Israel," she continues, "a country which doesn't have a definition of its own borders” (Moshe Shalvi 1993: 29-30).

13 An another Scholar Margit Cohn pointed in his study (2004) that it is quite difficult for a woman to get their share in property even if Spouse Property Law was passed in 1974. He also discussed that religious court still supersede civil court decision in the cases of divorce and marriages. “In 1987, after thirty years of marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Bavli, two Jewish Israeli citizens, received a divorce decree from a regional rabbinical court - the only institution authorized to grant divorces to Jewish couples in Israel. The rabbinical court held exclusive jurisdiction with regard to ancillary issues - alimony and division of assets - since the husband was first to apply to that court. His choice of the rabbinical court over civil courts, which have concurrent jurisdiction on monetary matters arising from divorce, was not accidental. In his case, as in others, the religious court applied its own rules, which followed religious edicts, and denied the wife half of the marital property. Instead, a flat sum was awarded. The wife could have gained access to the civil court only if she had preceded her husband and won the jurisdiction race for division of assets. Mrs. Bavli's application against this ruling, lodged before the High Court of Justice at the Supreme Court of Israel, resulted in a remedy - and a clear ruling, after several decades of state independence, that religious courts should follow Israeli civil law in its entirety. This included a 1951 statute that enshrined equality between the sexes, a statute that was not, apparently, applied earlier by the religious courts. But the intrinsic tension between state-authorized religious courts, intent on applying religious law, and the civil legal system is still very much a feature of Israeli society”. 

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Organizations working for these Women’s Right

There are certain civil rights and Women organizations that are raising this issue, Association for Civil Right in Israel is one among them. ACRI’s dual goals in the Campaign for Marriage and Divorce Alternatives consist of expanding the choices in religious marriage and divorce procedures to include non-Orthodox Jewish alternatives, and providing a civil option to those unable or unwilling to undergo religious ceremonies. ACRI pursues several channels simultaneously to demonstrate the crucial need for alternative marriage and divorce models, presenting the issue within the human rights context, couched in the framework of freedom of and from religion and freedom of conscience.

‘International Coalition of Agunah Rights’ - ‘Icar’, a coalition of women’s organizations in Israel, the United States, Canada and England, aims to offer Halakhic and legal solutions to the problem of ‘anchored’ and ‘Get denied’ women in all these countries as well as in Israel. Following joint efforts of Dayanim, rabbis, legal experts, lawyers and Knesset (parliament) members, the Organization submitted its recommendations to the Chief Rabbis and to Dayanim in the Rabbinical Courts. Its demands included more extensive application of measures to compel the granting of a Get and to voiding the marriage, utilization of a conditional Get (a get entrusted with the Rabbinical Court upon marriage which the Court can, under certain conditions, grant the woman instead of the husband) and adoption of a pre-nuptial agreement (an agreement signed by the partners prior to marriage specifying provisions complying with halakhic law to prevent a recalcitrant husband from denying his bound by the divorce proceedings. According to the Law, sanctions may be imposed on both men and women. Rabbinical Courts data indicates that these sanctions are imposed on men at a much higher rate than on women (http://www.acri.org.il/english-acri/engine/story.asp).

“Get Equal Treatment”

In 1980, a group of observant Jewish feminists created an organization entitled G.E.T whose stated aim was to apply pressure upon the Orthodox rabbinate “until women Get
Equal Treatment (G.E.T) in Jewish divorce proceedings. In the fall of 1992, the International Coaliotional for Agunah Rights was established, with members including halakhically committed Jewish feminists in Israel and North America and representatives of major Jewish women’s organization throughout the world. 1993 was declared the year of Agunah by these organizations, it successfully staged a worldwide fast March 9, the traditional fast day of Esther preceding the celebration of Purim, to bring attention to the continuing plight of the Agunah. It is the hope of these women, and their male supporters, that in the words of (Orthodox) rabbi Eliezer Berkovitz “[Orthodox rabbis] who are seriously concerned and troubled by the inadequate regard for the problems of contemporary Jewish religious life” will have the courage to speak out and “will introduce the halakhic changes that are required in recognition of the human dignity of the Jewish women” (www.iwn.org.il).

**Reproductive Health and Women**

According to Caroline O.N. Moser “the reproductive role comprises the child bearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks undertaken for the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. This includes all work and activities involving child bearing and rearing, and the care of other family members and dependents, all household and domestic tasks including preparation and processing of food, collection of fuel, fodder and water, care of animals, kitchen gardening, cleaning of the house etc (Moser 1993: 67).

As mentioned above familism is a significant part of Jewish society and it is linked with reproductive health of a woman. Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and process. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not
against the law, and right to access appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant. In line with the above definition of reproductive health, reproductive health care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not mere counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted disease. (ICPD, 1995: 89-90). But at present technology is having positive as well as negative side also. To assess women social status it is essential to find out how state is using this technology.

Reproductive Technology as the Mean of Coercion: The Israeli image of reproductive technology is a positive one: hundreds of happy mothers, Jews and other communities, rich and poor, coupled with cheerful doctors, proud of their, and Israel’s wonderful achievement. Reproductive technology is in great demand in Israel because of these following reasons. (1) There are certain groups in Israeli society for whom continuing the family name (bloodline) is very important. For them adoption is not a solution. On the other hand Jewish and Muslim law both make a provision for the husband to take a second wife if his first wife is barren. (2) In Israel a childless couple is not considered as couple, and the couple is pitied. Fertility is the major concern of the Israeli society (Solomon 1993). It is so important that there are periodic news items in all the media of new breakthrough in fertility treatment. “In 1990s it was stated by a clinical psychologist who does group therapy for infertile couple that there are only 10 percent of all Israeli couple who have fertility problems”. Perhaps the above mentioned reasons are a cause that Israeli reproductive technology is widely employed in Israel. For its population of 6 million, Israel has 16 In-Vitro Fertilization—“test tube baby”- clinics Fourteen of them are public, giving Israel more publicly-funded clinics per captia than any other country in the world. Australia, one of the leaders in reproductive technology, has 17 clinics for a population of 15 million.

There is, however, a growing belief in the international women’s communities as well as in the World Health Organization, that reproductive technology is misused. The Feminist International Network Resisting Reproductive and Genetic Engineering. Finrrage, claims

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that reproductive technology is not a cure of infertility, but a new industry that exploits women’s bodies for raw material: that reproductive technology brings about a new division between women, those worth of being mothers and those who are unworthy (Diana 1994: 335). There are certain evidences that will help to prove this claim. First it should be noted that in Israel those industries concerned with giving and taking life energy, irrigation, arms and reproductive technology are among the most advanced in the world. Second reproduction has always been a national issue; controlling it is seen as one solution to the “demographic problem”—the “danger” of an Arab majority in Israel. There are leaders who believed that the answer to this problem lies in encouraging Jewish women to bear more children, and limiting abortion rights. In 1967 David Ben Gurion stated that “Increasing the Jewish birth rate is vital for the survival of Jewish state” (Hazelton 1977: 63).

In 1987, a foundation worth hundreds of millions dollars was created to encourage Jews to have more children. The statement of Motta Gur, Member of Knesset and former Israeli Defense Force (IDF) Chief of Staff, who stated that although IVF is expensive, it is still cheaper than the cost of bringing in new immigrants, it makes clear that state is propagating the technique to fulfill its demand of population. In 1986, in Israel the Sixth National Conference of the Family Association, the theme of which was infertility, MK Yithzak Artzi opened by saying that “this conference is about those who are unable to fulfill the supreme command given to humanity.”(The supreme command given to (male) Jews is to be fruitful and multiply”, Genesis 1:28). Jewish law entitles a man to take a second wife if his first wife is infertile – there have been cases in Israel where the Rabbinate has indeed permitted bigamy, or recommended divorce, if the first wife was unable to become pregnant or to bear male children, Jewish religious life revolves around the family, and a woman without child may find her a social outcast. Secular women feel the stress of being childless no less than their religious counterparts, whether in the town, the village or the Kibbutz (See, Swirski 1993). Even if Israel is having large number of IVF clinics but these clinics do not inform women about the side effects of it and the success rate of the treatment. In 1986, a survey in Israel showed that the success rate of IVF treatment was only 26 percent (Soloman 1989). In fact in Israel Israel's nationalized
health insurance program, family planning methods have never really been covered well. Israel's new national health insurance package, passed in 1995, does not cover contraceptives or contraceptive counseling, but offers generous support for advanced fertility treatments such as unlimited In Vitro Fertilization. (See, Kanaaneh 2000).

Abortion Rights

Though Israel is largely a secular society inasmuch as most Israeli consider themselves non-religious, religious issues are of far-reaching significance in that they constitute one of the basic determining factors of national sovereignty (Landau 1972: 133-134). The other noteworthy fact is that “an intrinsically secular movement (The Zionist Movement) arrogated to itself the fulfillment of a mission which religious belief alone had kept alive” (Seliger 1968: 472).

The question of abortion is loaded with paradoxes: although universally practiced, it is not universally accepted; (Potts 1977: 44). While ostensibly a medical issue, it involves economic interests and ideological orientations. Abortion is regarded in many countries as a criminal offense due to above mentioned reasons. Abortion is regarded as a criminal offense in many countries due to its bad socio-cultural practices such as in some South Asian countries where most of the people use it as the weapon of pre determination of the sex of unborn child and to kill girl child before their birth. Even if abortion is a private matter, arousing the deepest human feelings that when to have babies, how many to have and the decision to terminate a pregnancy are all personal and gender-neutral choices, yet it is largely an issue of public political bargaining (Ibid). Feminism and international women’s health movement have, since the 1970s made access to safe abortion services a central issue of rights, equity and reproductive health, and support a women’s right to choose an abortion on medical, moral or ethical ground (WIE, 2001). Moreover, despite its ubiquitous practice, “abortion is a dead secret of Israeli society” (Lader 1966: 1).

As mentioned earlier Orthodox Jewish community is having prominent position in Israeli society. The matters of personal life come under the Jurisdiction of religious courts. The orthodox view, permitting an abortion only in the event of a clear and immediate danger
to the mother's life is supported by another tenet which is grounded in national ideologies: "Thou shall be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." This tenet has become a national imperative not confined to religious people. For decades one of the more important aspects of Zionist ideology has been to maximize population growth, both by immigration and increased natality. Politically, population increase has been considered an important issue in determining the Israel's political future since conflicting political ambitions of the two major communities in Israel, Jews and Arabs, deemed it necessary. Since abortion is correlated in Israel with population control and decreased fertility (See, Yishai: 287-86). Due to Israeli feminist's demand the abortion was legalized in Israel in 1978. Thus by law, abortion in Israel is legal within the framework which permits doctors to perform the operation in a recognized hospital upon the approval of a committee, which must find justification in either the mental or physical conditions of mother or expected child, or in social environment factors (Falk 1978: 109-110).

The implementation of the abortion law has been encountering practical problems relating both to the provider of the service and its clients. As to the provision of the abortion services, although a steering committee consisting of member of the Sick Fund and the Ministry of Health, progress has not been impressive. Moreover, since the amendment is expected to go into effect, the Minister of Health has not rushed to gazette regulations, nor to provide the budget or manpower necessary to take care of abortion (See, Yeshai: 309).

Table 4.1

Abortions, Adoption and Actual Termination Pregnancy

(1988-1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Approvals</th>
<th>Terminations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>17,963</td>
<td>15,903</td>
<td>15,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>18,886</td>
<td>16,780</td>
<td>15,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>19,121</td>
<td>17,020</td>
<td>15,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18,772</td>
<td>16,934</td>
<td>15,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>19,099</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>18,558</td>
<td>16,855</td>
<td>16,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>17,958</td>
<td>16,650</td>
<td>15,836</td>
</tr>
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</table>
However, the data shows that abortion rate enhanced in the end of 20th century but the prime cause of the enhanced rate of abortion is either the mental or physical conditions of mother or expected child, or in social environment factors. In fact Israel is not the only country that is having contradictory abortion rights. United Nations Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis pointed out in 1994, that 173 countries permitted abortion at least in the case where women life is in danger. Among them 41 countries, representing 38 percent of world population permitted “abortion on request” although all placed restrictions on the procedure such as length of pregnancy or ability to pay (WIE, 2001).

**Violence against Women**

Violence is an act of human beings that is calculated to intimidate by causing fear of personal injury. Violence is used by a powerful actor in international arena to subjugate a small actor in the form of direct or indirect war. In social arena each powerful person uses it as a means to conquer the person who is weaker than him/her. When dealing with the violence against women it is done not only by their male counterparts but also by those women who are used as organ to circulate the cultural tradition by these men. They use domestic as well as social violence as a common weapon for certain other women. It is only second wave feminism that talked about this issue related to women’s life. The precise scope of the problem is unknown as professional literature lacks an agreed definition. In 1993 United Nations adopted this definition of violence “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (Waldorf: 23-24). It is also pointed out in a review of United Nations that “the violence against women in the family and society is pervasive and cut across the lines of income, class and culture. It is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Abortions</th>
<th>Abortion Rate</th>
<th>Massive Abortions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>18,586</td>
<td>17,211</td>
<td>16,244</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20,408</td>
<td>19,225</td>
<td>17,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>20,472</td>
<td>19,348</td>
<td>18,480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cited in CEDAW / C / ISR / 3, p.141.
must to adopt urgent and effective steps to eliminate it. Violence against women is also a cause of their unequal status in a society. Violence means not only domestic violence but also sexual violence that takes place inside and outside the family, including sexual harassment in the workplace and elsewhere, forced prostitution and trafficking. In 1995 during Beijing Conference on Women’s Right all participants signed the convention related to this issue. After 1995 certain member nations started to establish the “social network” that would help the victim of this violence. Mostly these social networks are in the form of help lines, battered women home etc. But this is the primary step towards change. The real changes are related to “social psychology” of the certain groups in that society.

Violence against Jewish Women in Israel: In Israel Public awareness of violence against women stretches as far back as the beginning of the 1970’s - in politics, research and among the general public. Even if, the issue got recognition in the 70s but a study conducted by Dafna Izraeli in late 1980s pointed out, ‘Israeli young adults do not associate violence against women with gender difference in status and power nor do they connect wife battering and rape with gender inequality. For them that was an act explainable in terms of psychology or circumstances of the individual offender. Israeli media also supported this perception at that time. Latter in 1990s the phenomenon was recognized as a social problem in Israel as well, and resources allocated - albeit limited - to treat the problem and to assist victims and their families. Violence treatment centers and shelters for battered women have been established, some of the most advanced laws in the world have been legislated and public awareness campaigns appear in the media.

The aim of this section is to present data concerning the scope of violence against women according to primary violence categories and how this violence makes impact on social status of women. It is important to note that data presented do not encompass the full range of the issues relating to this subject in Israel because it is quite difficult to get the data related to this issue not only in Israel but in any nation. The issues addressed include: murder of women, violence against women (based on reported cases to the police), sexual violence and sexual harassment (CEDAW/ISR2-3, 2001).
Domestic Violence and Jewish Women: Domestic violence is that violence that makes a woman position vulnerable at home front. There are certain tools of this violence like physical abuse, coercion and threat, intimidation, emotional abuse, male privilege and using children. It is quite difficult to find out the exact data related to domestic violence in any nation.

Similar to other countries, the majority of domestic violence cases in Israel are not reported and a systematic documentation system of the phenomenon is non-existent. It can be estimated that approximately 200,000 battered women live in Israel, and about 600,000 children witness this violence (....., 2005: 8). To deal with domestic violence Israeli state passed a law 1991 Prevention of Violence within the Family Act. According to this law a woman can go to the family court, the Magistrate Court or a Religious Court for protection order. This can be granted for an initial period of three months, renewable up to 6 months, and, if specially recorded reasons are given, it can be given for up to a year. The order can remove a husband from the family home and forbid him from coming within a certain distance of it, or from the wife’s place of work etc. He can have any weapon he possesses removed and be forced to undergo rehabilitation treatment (Borochov 2005: 1). But it is really difficult to predict whether the government has adopted the mechanism to make the women aware about this Act or not.

Several organizations in Israel are involved in treating violence against women: shelters for battered women; sexual assault victims support centers; various centers for domestic violence prevention, including ‘Beit Noam’ treating violent men, various treatment frameworks, and violence treatment programs run by the police. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the State Bequests Committee of the Ministry of Interior, and local municipalities are the main funding sources for treating female violence victims. Funding procedure to several organizations that are dealing with violence issue started in 1990s.

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14 Galia Golan links this problem with Orthodox religious views. According to her “Wife battering by sons as well as husbands is a serious problem. Only a few shelters for battered women, established privately by feminist and usually run on a shoestring, exist in Israel.

15 In fact, the efforts were started earlier to curb the violence against women. In 1976, Marcia Freedman asked Knesset to put violence against women on the agenda. At that time a subcommittee of Police Affairs started to investigate family violence in Israel.
At that time the allocation to these organizations was NIS 643,000 million, there is a significant increase in 2000. It was NIS 21.6 million. Though domestic violence is prevalent in different ethnic Jewish group in Israel but it is quite difficult to get data specifically about this phenomenon in Israel. Table 4.2 presents the picture of domestic violence in Israel

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence Details Pertaining to Files Opened for Violence Among Partners in Selected Years, 1996-2001(Numbers)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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Source: Data and Information from Israel Women's Network website, http://www.iwn.org, 23/05/02

This table presents the type of violent offences for which the police opened files in 1996-2000. The greatest number of violence files was opened for assault and battering. The number of files opened for this offence between 1996-1999 rose consistently, with a slight decline in 2000. Concomitantly, the percentage share of files opened for threats between 1998 and 2000 increased (22.3 percent and 25.7 percent respectively). This trend may suggest a change in victim behaviour and perhaps complaints filed at an earlier stage. It may, however, indicate the use of lesser charges when filing an indictment, which may in turn explain the increasing number of files opened for breach of legal provisions between 1998 and 2000 (9 percent compared to 12.6 percent respectively).

Another aspect reflecting police policy pertains to the number of arrests for violence among domestic partners. Table also indicates stability in the number of arrests in 1995-
1997, more than double the number in 1999, a slight decline in 2000. Nevertheless, a comparison between the number of complaints and the number of arrests in the same year reveals that in 1995 and 1996 only 9 percent of complaints involved arrest compared to 18 percent in 1998-2000. It is important to note that this change also derives from legislature declarations and a change in the Powers of Enforcement - Arrest Law (See, CEDAW/ISR2-3, 2001).

Israel is a multi-ethnic society. The above mentioned table presents a general picture of domestic violence. Hardei Jews who are also known as Ultra-Orthodox Jews are having this problem on a large scale. In hardei community of Israeli society violence is widespread. In this community women are in vulnerable position due to conservative outlook of this community. In this community a woman faces the social boycott by the community if she goes to battered women center and the other agony is that if woman is not educated her children's future is in dark. This would be become clear from this case study:

"Single mothers have no future in haredi society," says a haredi community leader. The principal of the religious school threatened to remove a woman's child from the school in the haredi city if she didn't pay the monthly tuition. When she told him that she had nothing left to do but pray, he replied, "Then pray somewhere else." (Rotem 2004: 8).

Not only domestic but social violence is also a common weapon to control women. It can be in any form such as indecent act towards women, rape or not to allow them to be part of those social institutions that in one way or another play significant role to control human beings life.

Women Of Wall, shortened to WOW, is a group that believes women should be allowed to pray out loud at the Kotel, read Torah and wear tallit, teffilin and kippa. Currently, Israeli law does not permit women this religious freedom, and those who do it anyway are subject to fines and up to six months in jail. WOW is fighting a legal battle in the Knesset, to keep Shas and other religious parties from passing a bill that would make the punishment for these offenses seven years imprisonment. They are also fighting a spiritual battle at the Kotel. Once a month on Rosh Hodesh, WOW makes a minyan.
(meaning 10 persons are needed to do public prayer) and prays at the Kotel. They do the first part of the shacharit service in front of the Wall and then move to an area in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City to do Hallel and read Torah. WOW has thousands of members all over the world dedicated to freedom of prayer at the Kotel. WOW encompasses members from all branches of Judaism, including Orthodoxy. There is also an International Committee for Women of the Wall (ICWOW) that works very closely with WOW and helps gain non-Israeli support for WOW's cause (www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaism.html).

WOW was founded in 1989. This was the same year in which the first International Jewish Feminist Conference in Jerusalem took place. A group of about one hundred women attended the conference and went to pray at the Kotel. They were disrupted by verbal and physical assaults by the ultra-Orthodox men and women at the Kotel, which is how WOW was born. A group of Jerusalem women continued to pray at the Kotel daily after the conference was over, and was continually abused. After a particularly bad incident at the Kotel WOW filed a petition to the government of Israel. The response was negative. It had a list of extreme halachic opinions that ban women from praying in groups, touching a Torah, and wearing religious garments. Most Jews, even many Orthodox Jews, do not agree with these opinions.

In 1991, WOW appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that they should be allowed to express Judaism in safety and security. For several years the issue was debated in court. Finally, in 1994, WOW lost its case, but the Supreme Court decided that a commission should be set up to resolve the issue. In 1996 the commission proposed that WOW move to the southeastern corner of Jerusalem outside the Old City. WOW found this unacceptable and appealed for a new commission. A small victory was won by WOW when the Supreme Court, awarded 5,000 shekels to WOW for attorneys fees as consolation for the enormous amount of time the case took due to the government's slow response addition to the Rabbinic control of personal status issues, rabbinic society over the years has increased its claim over areas of society that once were left to other authorities. ultra-Orthodox circles have become more militant and have used political power to ensure their control. Issue after issue is brought to the High Court of Israel.
concerning the rights of different Jews in Israel to live their lives as they wish and many of the issues have concerned women (Sareed 1996:18-20).

For example, a recent decision by the High Court sided with rabbinic opinion over the traditions and religious rules to be observed at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Women, including Orthodox women, who have for twelve years struggled for the right to conduct a Rosh Chodesh minyan (prayer quorum including the reading of the Torah convened on the first of each new month, a traditionally special time for women) at the Wall, were turned down. The court sided with the Orthodox opinion that, at the Wall, only Orthodox religious customs should be accepted, which does not allow for the public reading of Torah by women, especially not in prayer shawls, and that public order would be threatened if such a thing were to happen. Meanwhile, the Knesset passed a law which would make wearing of tallit and kippah by women in a prayer context at the Wall, a crime punishable by seven years imprisonment. All in all, women have not done well with a narrow-minded exclusively male conservative rabbinic establishment in Israel (Friedman /www.jafi.org.il/education/100/people/women/4.htm). It exposes the shortcomings of Israeli liberal discourse to come to terms with the radical subjectivity of WOW and with the challenge it posited for both secular and religious political bodies. The cultural split between women and nation, as it is conceptualized in the discourse of modern nationality, is brought forth with great force in WOW’s reception both in Israel and in America. Shakediel argues that relegating it to the arena of the chasms between the religious parties demotes the understanding of WOW’s activism, whereas it is actually a thrust at redefining the role and rights of (all) women to participate bodily in the body of the nation on their own terms.

**Women Movements and Association**

In sociological approach a “voluntary organization” is a group of a person organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control for the furtherance of some common interest of its members. These organizations are directed towards the betterment of the society. Most of them are democratic in nature as they originate from felt needs of people and are built around people’s participation.
These organizations are important because being at the grass root level they can have better rapport with the people while functioning with people they can operate with greater flexibility and base their activities on the demand of the people. They can also make aware people about their rights, welfare and involve the people of the community in decision-making. In 1986 Deo, proposed taxonomy of voluntary organizations. According to that organizations have one of three types of charters namely; Pre-modern; relief and charity. Modern, i.e. welfare oriented; Postmodern, promotional and educational oriented. (Bhutia 2000: 45-46).16

In Israel Pre-modern women’s organizations existed before the establishment of Jewish state in 1948. Certain pre-modern women’s organizations worked for Jewish women after the establishment of Israeli state. These women’s organizations changed their nature to fulfill the demand of changing social system. These organizations are WIZO, NAMMAT, IWN, and the role of these organizations in the enhancement of women status is discussed one by one.

“The Women International Zionist Organization”

WIZO, the Women’s International Zionist Organization, is a non-partisan international movement dedicated to the advancement of the status of women, welfare of all sectors of Israeli society and encouragement of Jewish education in Israel and the Diaspora. WIZO was founded in Great Britain in 1920, following the transfer of mainstream Zionist activism from Central Europe to England in the period following the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Under the guidance of Rebecca Sieff, Vera Weizmann and other close confidants of Zionist Movement President Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a group of Jewish women volunteers formed WIZO with the goal of serving the needs of women and children in Eretz Israel. It

16 Marsha A. Freeman called these organization nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate external to government. Their role is to provide services, discussion forums, and communication channels that are neither provided nor controlled by government. Some of them receive funding from their own or other governments, and most are regulated in some way by registration requirement and the law. Many have close connections to one or more government ministries or political parties which are necessary for obtaining information and planning effective program strategies.
was then decided to open the main WIZO office in Palestine. In 1933 it was recognized as the official headquarters of World WIZO.

Today, WIZO has 250,000 volunteer members in 50 Federations all over the world. It is recognized by the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization and has consultative status in ECOSOC and UNICEF. WIZO is also represented in organizations such as the World Zionist Organization, World Jewish Congress the International Alliance of Women and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. WIZO has been a pioneer in advancing the status of women in Israel and defending women's rights in the family and society. In 1951, Rachel Kagan, Chairperson of WIZO Israel and a Member of Knesset at the time, successfully proposed the 'Equal Rights for Women Law'. This was the first law in Israel pertaining to the status of women.

WIZO has established a vast network of day care centers, schools and youth villages in Israel. With its finger on the pulse of a developing society, WIZO has added to its significant network some unique services such as: multi-purpose day care centers, therapeutic clubs, and a shelter and rehabilitation program for teenage girls in distress and more. Furthermore, WIZO has constantly developed diverse services for women, including: legal advice bureaus, shelters for battered women, centers for the prevention and treatment of violence in the family, emergency hot-lines for battered women and services for single parent families.

This organization is having international character. In Israel it is the oldest women organization that is working for the benefits of Jewish women since the very beginning. It is the second largest organization, which operates 107 chapters throughout the country. This organization focuses on helping the individual woman. It also runs health classes for women after childbirth and support groups’ for single women.

"Israeli Women Network"

IWN (Israel Women's Network) founded in 1984. Israeli women form this organization to work across political lines. Issues include 1) improving public image of women in the media and advertising which is sexist and offensive; 2) "humanization of the workforce"
with emphasis on equal opportunities for employment; also promotion of legislation making it easier for wives and mothers to remain in the work force or return after leave; 3) pressuring the rabbinic courts to become more sensitive to the problems women face in areas of personal status, marriage and divorce. After its establishment, the organization is publishing material related to women status, and helping them to file suits against discrimination (See, Reinharz 1999). In fact it was IWN's Legal Committee, had advocated for Alice Miller before the Supreme Court in her case against the Israel Air Force. It had also represented the women’s case against the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, which enabled women to join boards of directors.

“Nammat”

It is the largest women’s organization of Israel with 400,000 members. It is operating 30 chapters in the country. It is working for the advancement of Israeli women (not exclusively Jewish women) since the establishment of Israeli state; Naamat has used the tools of political advocacy to further women causes.

In 1949, Naamat, then known as Moetzet Hapoalot (the Working Women’s Council) pushed the government for more generous maternity leave laws and the creation of nurseries near places of employment. As early as the 1940s, the group called on the government to guarantee "equal pay for equal work," a law that finally passed in 1964 (and is still not fully implemented.) Naamat actively promotes and supports legislation in Israel that would improve the status of women, children and families. Naamat is lobbying for legislation mandating that working mothers be reimbursed for childcare costs through the National Insurance system. Under the proposal, families in which both parents work full-time would receive specific payments for each child under the age of six. Although the payments would not equal the actual cost of childcare, the legislation is important symbolically, and to pave the way for higher reimbursements.

In recent years, Naamat has taken stands on personal status laws (laws relating to marriage and divorce) and on the issue of economic equality for working women. The organization was instrumental in the passage of at least two major laws affecting
women’s lives in Israel, the 1988 Equal Opportunities Law, which prohibits gender
discrimination in employment, and the 1992 Single-Parent Family Law, which extends to
single mothers (and fathers) the same benefits as enjoyed by two-parent families.

*Naamat* has demonstrated its ability to affect the legislative process by spearheading
successful efforts to block government cuts in financial benefits for workingwomen with
children. Through its legal and counseling services, *Naamat* is at the forefront of efforts
to empower battered Israeli women to end their victimization and build healthy, abuse-
free lives for themselves and their children. In March 1983, *Naamat* established the
Center for the Treatment and Prevention of Violence in the Family in Tel Aviv. Since
then more than 40,000 women have turned to *Naamat* for help. Together with the
Ministry of Labor & Welfare, *Naamat* has also opened centers in Jerusalem and in Haifa.

In 1994, *Naamat*, along with the city of Tel Aviv/Jaffa and the Ministry of Labor and
Welfare, established the Glickman Center, which combines an outpatient clinic and
secured housing. The center aids women from all over Israel and functions as an
emergency haven for residents of Tel Aviv/Jaffa. About 15 women and their children
reside at the Glickman Center shelter at one time. Residents include Jews and Arabs,
secular and observant individuals, long-time residents and new immigrants. *Naamat* also
was instrumental in supporting the passage of the 1998 Prevention of Sexual Harassment
Law, one of the most progressive among such laws in the world. The law prohibits sexual
harassment in every area of the public domain: the workplace, military, educational and
health systems and the street. It also provides clear channels through which women can
file complaints, allows civil suits for damages and obligates employers to prevent sexual
harassment in the workplace. Since the law was passed, the number of sexual harassment
complaints handled by *Naamat* has doubled. The center offers immediate assistance to
victims and provides long-term counseling to male perpetrators. Since research shows
abused boys tend to become abusing men, support groups are offered to men. The center
also works to prevent domestic violence through the educational system, in the
community and in the Army.
Glickman Center staff members include social workers, psychologists, criminologists and lawyers. Among the services Naamat provides an open "hot line" for emergencies, individual and group counseling, and legal advice. The center helps the parties reach conciliation agreements, if both the husband and wife attend therapeutic counseling sessions. It also helps prepare divorce agreements, which clearly defines arrangements for child custody and division of assets. The shelter's goal is for the residents to re-enter the mainstream as independent individuals. By providing treatment for both victims and perpetrators, Naamat works to break the cycle of violence for women and their families (www.nammat.org).

“Emmunah”

Emmunah is a Hebrew word and the literal meaning of this word is “faith”. Its members identify with Orthodox Judaism. While other organizations in Israel may include religious women, Emmunah seeks specifically to address the needs of religious women within the bounds of halakha and tradition, i.e., exploring the complex issues that Orthodox women face. Hence, women’s equality is not a declared goal. Emmunah is concerned with working women rights, the advancement of laws protecting women, the prevention of family violence and similar issues. When considered appropriate, Emmunah takes part in coalition efforts with the other major women’s organizations.

Emmunah has 100,000 members and 100 chapters throughout Israel. Although, officially non-political, Emmunah has close ties with the National Religious Party, Emmunah operates 100 daycare centers throughout the country, five youth villages for disadvantaged children, and six vocational and high schools. It also runs activities for women through local chapters, including exercise and health classes, Torah study for women, family guidance counseling, and assistance for poor.

Emmunah’s innovative contributions include an arts and drama high school for Orthodox girls—something that previously was not considered relevant for Orthodox community in Israel. The organization has also developed several high -level vocational training programs for Orthodox high school girls, offering studies such as computer education,
accounting, and bookkeeping. On occasion Emunnah is also able to provide some services to members of the Ultra-Orthodox community, assisting them in issues of family relations as well as providing poverty relief.

Emunnah is also struggling with modern issues of family and couple relations as it seeks to provide guidance that is consonant with religious beliefs. Emunnah has also addressed the subject of international adoptions, including conversion to Judaism and registration of the children as Jews in the Interior Ministry, their efforts take the form negotiating with the authorities, rather than trying to change government policy or legislation.

But the most important fact about this organization is that Emunnah supports the traditional women’s role of bringing children into the world and building a home for them to grow up in. Within this framework, Emunnah seeks to be creative and provide ways to advance women. This organization’s contribution to the women’s movement is significant within the Orthodox population it represents and it has made subtle contribution to the status of orthodox women in Israel. (www.Schusterman.org/Women/20in/20israel.html). It is also struggling with modern issue of family and couple relations as it seeks to provide guidance that is contact with religious belief. The important fact about this group is that it supports the traditional role of women to bring children into the world and building a home for them to grow up in. Hence women equality is not a declared goal Emunnah is concerned with the rights of working women.

Conclusion

In Israel Jewish women have got certain economic and political rights after the establishment of Israeli state. But when we are talking about social status of Jewish women government is now more concerned about their social status. Jewish women are responsible for child rearing and it is still a primary responsibility of a woman. A male child is more important than a girl child due to militaristic culture. This saying “a girl child is the sign of many boys” is popular in Israel. Jewish women are facing discriminatory behaviour in certain religious activities. But that is true in almost all
religions of the world. They do not have right to civil marriage because marriage and
divorce in Israel fall under religious courts. Women are not only denied the right to sit as
judges in these courts but also as witness. It is quite difficult for a woman to get divorce.
Domestic violence exists in Israel. Non-governmental organization are throwing light on
these difficulties that come in the way of women to enhance their social status such as
religious code of marriage, divorce, and domestic violence. Government has adopted
Domestic Violence Law as a measure to enhance women social status due to their efforts.
If talking about reproduction rights, Israel is having highest number of In-Vitro-
Fertilization clinics in the world and state sponsors treatment in these clinics but there is
non-availability of contraceptives. In fact state always supported large families that are
the cause Jewish families that are having more than two children get financial assistance
from the state. Abortion rights became legal in Israel in 1976 but a woman who wants to
have abortion has to go for approval through a state appointed committee. Even if the
state has adopted certain legal measures but it does not have written constitution that
deals with equality. The chapter is based on the hypotheses that tradition comes in the
way of Jewish women’s equal status despite legal measure and there is contract between
state and church that becomes the cause of their secondary social status.