
Equal Rights Discourse for People with Disabilities in the Haredi Community

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For decades, the discourse of equal rights for people with disabilities has assumed a prominent place in public discourse, both in Israel and around the world. The social model of disability strives to change the perception of disability so it will be seen as a social barrier that must be overcome, not as a personal tragedy of every individual. In this way, society is obligated to provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The discourse of equal rights of the individual is foreign to the Haredi community in Israel, which is dominated by a discourse of collective obligations. Therefore, people with disabilities will not rush to claim rights, although they will enjoy the protection and compassion of the community by virtue of the duty of charity. This compassion may deepen the tragedy that accompanies disability and weaken the limited person who is dependent on the mercy of his surroundings. In order to empower people with disabilities in the Haredi community, it is important to create a discourse that is consistent with the values of the community. The dismodernist approach to disability, developed by Lennard Davis (2013), challenges what he calls the politics of identities. Davis sees the entire human population as somehow or other limited and dependent on each other, so a person with disabilities, like any other person, contributes to and is contributed to by his environment. This model empowers the person with disabilities, bypassing the individual rights discourse, and thus can adapt to and assimilate in the discourse of disabilities in the Haredi community and contribute to the image and position of people with disabilities in it.