

# The Effect of Hebrew on Worship Satisfaction & Congregational Membership

Dr. Cynthia L. Conley  
Rabbi Dr. Nadia Siritsky  
Rabbi Dr. Devon Lerner

# Sampling Frame

- Biennial Conference 2015- Orlando Florida
- SCRJ Newsletter
- Advertisement - Interfaith.com, SCRJ Board members, Social Media (e.g. Keshet, URJ etc.)
- Electronic Data Collection - Questionpro

## Sample Demographics (n=222)

Item	Descriptor	Percentage		
Gender	Female (n=117)	53.2%		
	Male (n=103)	46.8%		
Religious Identity	Jewish (n = 197)	90.4%		
	Non-Jewish (n = 14)	6.4%		
	Half or Part (n=7)	3.2%		
Sex Orientation	Heterosexual (n=183)	83.9%		
	Non-Heterosexual (n=39)	16.1%		
Race	Caucasian (n=209)	94.6%		
	Minority (n=12)	5.4%		
	Mean	Min-Max	Range	SD
Age	59.2	22-92	70	15.71
Income	155,838	10,000 - 1,000,000	990,000	126,452

# Frequencies

## Sample

- 37% Identify as Interfaith Couples (married or partnered) (n=66)
- 63% Identify as Inner married (n=114)
- 79.2% are a congregational members
  - 17.2% are non-members

# Frequencies

## Sample

- 58.7% are Lay people (n=101)
- 16.9% are Jewish Professionals (n=29)
- 24.4% are Members of Leadership (n=42)  
e.g. Board members or Committee Members

# Hebrew Comprehension (All)

- How would you describe your ability to read Hebrew?  
(n=219)

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

67.6% Poor/Fair (n=148) (m=2.02)

- How would you describe your ability to comprehend or understand Hebrew? (n=222)

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

81.1% Poor/Fair (n=180) (m=1.65)

# Hebrew Comprehension (w/o Jewish Professionals)

- How would you describe your ability to read Hebrew?

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

71.1% Poor/Fair (n=142) (m=1.89)

- How would you describe your ability to comprehend or understand Hebrew?

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

88.8% Poor/Fair (n=143) (m=1.48)

# Hebrew Comprehension (Members vs. Nonmembers)

Group Statistics					
	syngmembrec	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I had difficulty following along because worship services were in Hebrew	1.00	173	<b>2.22</b>	1.342	.102
	2.00	43	<b>3.14</b>	1.424	.217
I felt connected and inspired	1.00	172	<b>3.70</b>	1.271	.097
	2.00	45	<b>3.29</b>	1.440	.215
My mind strayed because I could not understand all of the Hebrew	1.00	174	<b>2.34</b>	1.496	.113
	2.00	46	<b>3.20</b>	1.558	.230
I would attend worship services more if additional English was used	1.00	173	<b>2.65</b>	1.354	.103
	2.00	46	<b>3.26</b>	1.452	.214
Prayers are more meaningful if I understand what I am saying	1.00	173	<b>4.25</b>	1.143	.087
	2.00	46	<b>4.37</b>	.997	.147
I came mainly to see friends and acquaintances	1.00	172	<b>2.41</b>	1.218	.093
	2.00	46	<b>2.09</b>	1.170	.173
I mainly came out of a sense of obligation	1.00	173	<b>2.40</b>	1.376	.105
	2.00	45	<b>2.49</b>	1.456	.217
I lack the Hebrew language skills to participat	1.00	171	<b>2.16</b>	1.321	.101
	2.00	46	<b>2.65</b>	1.464	.216

1=SD, 5=SA

# Hebrew Comprehension (Members vs. Nonmembers)

## Statistical Significance

Item	Sig.
I had difficulty following along because worship services were in Hebrew	$t(214) = -3.97, p = .000$
My Mind strayed because I could not understand all of the Hebrew	$t(218) = -3.42, p = .001$
I would attend worship services more if additional English was used	$t(217) = -2.69, p = .008$
I lack the Hebrew Skills to participate in Jewish Life	$t(215) = -2.20, p = .029$
I felt connected and inspired	$t(215) = 1.87, p = .063^*$

# Classical Principles (Members vs. Nonmembers)

Group Statistics					
	syngmembrec	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I believe that being a good Jew means observing ritual commandments	1.00	169	1.57	1.039	.080
	2.00	46	1.59	.933	.138
I believe that ethical principles are more import	1.00	170	4.45	1.003	.077
	2.00	46	4.67	.634	.094
<b>I believe that rabbis should perform ...</b>	1.00	174	3.34	1.476	.112
	2.00	46	3.87	1.204	.177
I believe Judaism is an ethnicity	1.00	172	2.72	1.411	.108
	2.00	46	2.72	1.486	.219
I believe that Jews are the chosen people	1.00	174	2.79	1.278	.097
	2.00	46	2.76	1.417	.209
I am proud to be Jewish	1.00	172	4.61	.805	.061
	2.00	45	4.67	.674	.101

1=SD, 5=SA

# Hebrew Comprehension (Laypeople vs. Jewish Professionals)

Item	n	Mean
How would you describe your ability to read Hebrew? <sup>**</sup> <i>1= Poor, 4= Excellent</i>	Layperson (100) Member of Leadership (42) Jewish Professional (28)	1.84 2.0 <b>3.04</b>
How would you describe your ability to understand or comprehend Hebrew? <sup>**</sup> <i>1=Poor, 4=Excellent</i>	Layperson (101) Member of Leadership (42) Jewish Professional (29)	1.44 1.57 <b>2.93</b>
I had difficulty following along because worship services were in Hebrew.* <i>1=SD, 5=SA</i>	Layperson (101) Member of Leadership (40) Jewish Professional (29)	2.44 1.95 1.66
My mind strayed because I could not understand all of the Hebrew.* <i>1=SD, 5=SA</i>	Layperson (101) Member of Leadership (41) Jewish Professional (29)	2.57 2.37 1.59

# Hebrew Comprehension (Laypeople vs. Jewish Professionals)

Item	n	Mean
I would attend worship services more if additional English was used* 1=SD, 5=SA	Layperson (100) Member of Leadership (41) Jewish Professional (29)	2.82 2.68 2.14
Prayers are more meaningful if I understand what I am saying. 1=SD, 5=SA	Layperson (99) Member of Leadership (42) Jewish Professional (29)	4.23 4.21 4.55
I Lack the Hebrew language skills to be able to participate in Jewish Life* 1=SD, 5=SA	Layperson (99) Member of Leadership (40) Jewish Professional (29)	2.31 2.20 1.48

## Correlations (All)

- The more difficulty following Hebrew, the more that participants' minds strayed,  $r^2 = .651$ ,  $p = .000$
- Those who had difficulty following along would attend services more if English was used,  $r^2 = .526$ ,  $p = .000$

## Correlations (All)

- The higher the income, the higher the likelihood that participants would attend services more if additional English is used,  $r^2 = .157$ ,  $p = .025$
- The better the ability to read and comprehend Hebrew, the prouder a person feels to be Jewish,  $r^2 = .159$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $r^2 = .189$ ,  $p = .006$

# Worship Satisfaction

- Overall Worship Satisfaction can be predicted by:
    - A person's feeling that they lack the Hebrew language skills to participate in Jewish Life
    - A person's ability to read Hebrew
    - Feeling accepted and welcomed as a member of an interfaith family
    - Musical Style (Classical/Organ)
- $p=.000$ , R square .34

# Synagogue Membership

- *Membership to a synagogue* can be predicted by:
  - Feeling welcomed as a member of an interfaith family
  - (In)Ability to follow along in worship services due to Hebrew language\*
  - Allowing NonJews on the bimah

$p = .000$  model