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Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews

The Guttman Institute Report

SHLOMIT LEVY,
HANNA LEVINSOHN,
AND ELIHU KATZ

This is a study of religious observance, social interaction, and beliefs and values of Jews in Israel. Specifically, it explores the actual observance of mitzvot,¹ social and demographic differences in religious behavior, the role of religion in public life, Jewish identification, Jewish beliefs and values as well as general social values, and issues of interaction among social groups that differ in the character of their religious observance and ethnic origin.

The present research is the most comprehensive that has been conducted on the topic of religious behavior of Jews in Israel, with respect both to the representativeness of the sample population and the range of topics covered.

The Samples and Fieldwork

The research population consists of Jewish adults² twenty years of age and over, residing in all types of communities in Israel.³ Two samples, each of which comprised about 1,200 respondents (1,195 and 1,204), were selected to ensure proper representation of the population and coverage of a broad range of issues. Different questionnaires were designed for the two samples, one focusing primarily on Jewish religious behavior and social values, and the other focusing primarily on social interaction among Jews. There were eighty-five common questions asked of both samples.

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Fieldwork was conducted between October 20 and December 16, 1991. The respondents were interviewed in their homes by interviewers of the Louis Guttman Institute of Applied Social Research, who were especially trained for this purpose, under the supervision of the institute's field supervisors.

In addition, certain supplementary questions were asked of respondents in fieldwork from February 14 to March 22, 1993. These questions were designed to examine prevailing images of religious beliefs and behaviors so that they might be contrasted with the actual beliefs and behaviors revealed in the main study.

The following are selected findings described in the various chapters of the monograph, which is available upon request.⁴ These Highlights, naturally, are not a substitute for the full monograph of 145 pages of analysis, plus bibliography and appendices, which include the complete text of the questionnaires and 149 pages of cross-tabulations. Like the monograph, these Highlights divide into: Observances, Social Interaction, Religion in Public Life, and Beliefs and Values.

OBSERVANCES

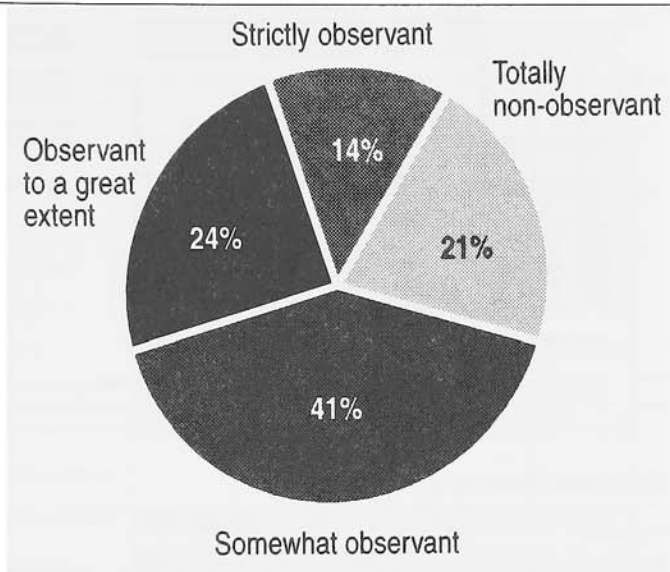
Fourteen percent of Israeli Jews define themselves as strictly observant, and 24 percent more say they are observant to a great extent. Approximately 40 percent report themselves somewhat observant, and about 20 percent totally nonobservant [Figure 1.1].

This distribution of religious observance has remained essentially unchanged over the past twenty-five years. It extends also to specific observances; for example, the proportion of synagogue attendance corresponds, by and large, to Guttman Institute observations since 1969.⁵

Nevertheless, when asked to estimate the proportion of Israelis that observe the religious tradition in the same way that you do, respondents at each level of religiosity overestimate the number of others who behave as they do. The majority are not well acquainted with the facts regarding religious observance of the Israeli public and at each level of religiosity overestimate the proportion of Israelis that observe the religious tradition in the same way that they do. In other words, regardless of the extent of their observance, Israelis feel well supported in their positions. This sense of support rises with the decline in observance; that is, the less observant feel that there are even more of them.

When asked about affiliation with a particular religious trend, nearly half reported no affiliation. Only in recent years has the Israeli public become aware of the existence of denominations in religious affiliation.⁶

Fig. 1.1. Self-Defined Religiosity (percent of respondents)



Observance By Background Traits

Self-defined religious observance does not vary much among different age groups, between men and women, and between old-time residents and newcomers [Figure 1.2].

Ethnic origin makes a difference, both in observance and in some attitudes. Those from Eastern ethnic backgrounds (Asian-African, known as Sephardim) are, in general, more sympathetic to religious tradition, while those from Western ethnic backgrounds (Ashkenazim) are, in general, less sympathetic. There is a high concentration (70%) of Jews of Eastern origin in the category, "observant to a great extent," just as there is a high concentration of Western Jews among the "totally nonobservant." Israelis born to Eastern parents are generally less observant than their Eastern-born parents, while the Western-born and their Israeli offspring do not differ with respect to religious observance [Figure 1.3].

Religious observance varies with levels of education, both general and religious. Respondents with low levels of general education are the most observant, while the nonobservant concentrate among the better educated, especially those with full university education [Figure 1.4].

Fig. 1.2. Religious Observance by Age (percent of respondents)

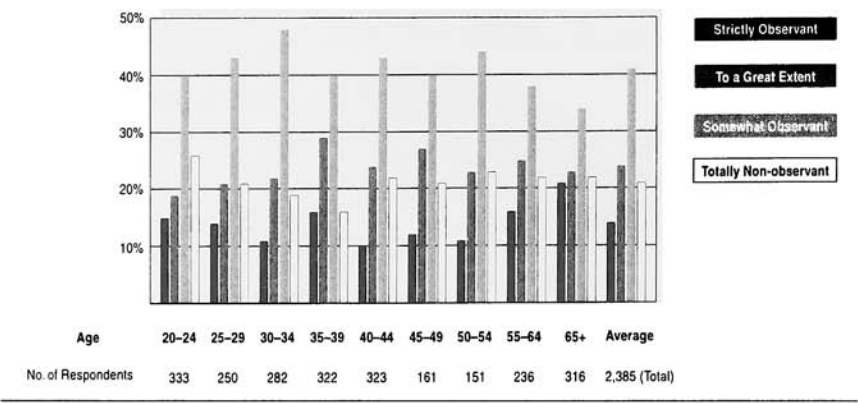
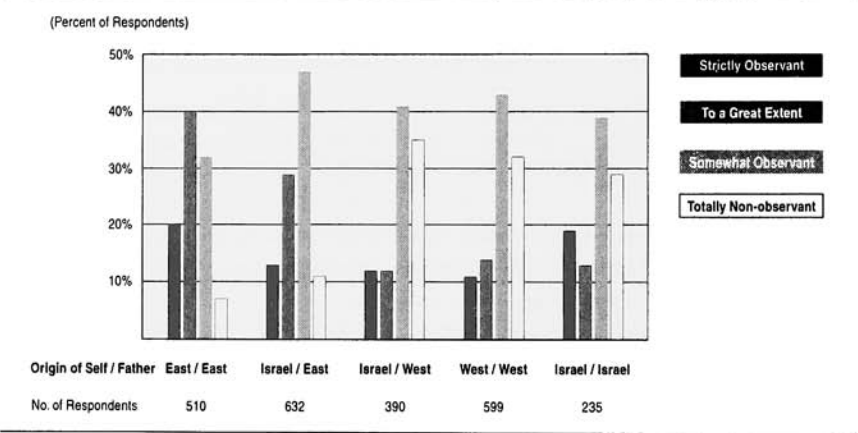


Fig. 1.3. Religious Observance by Ethnicity

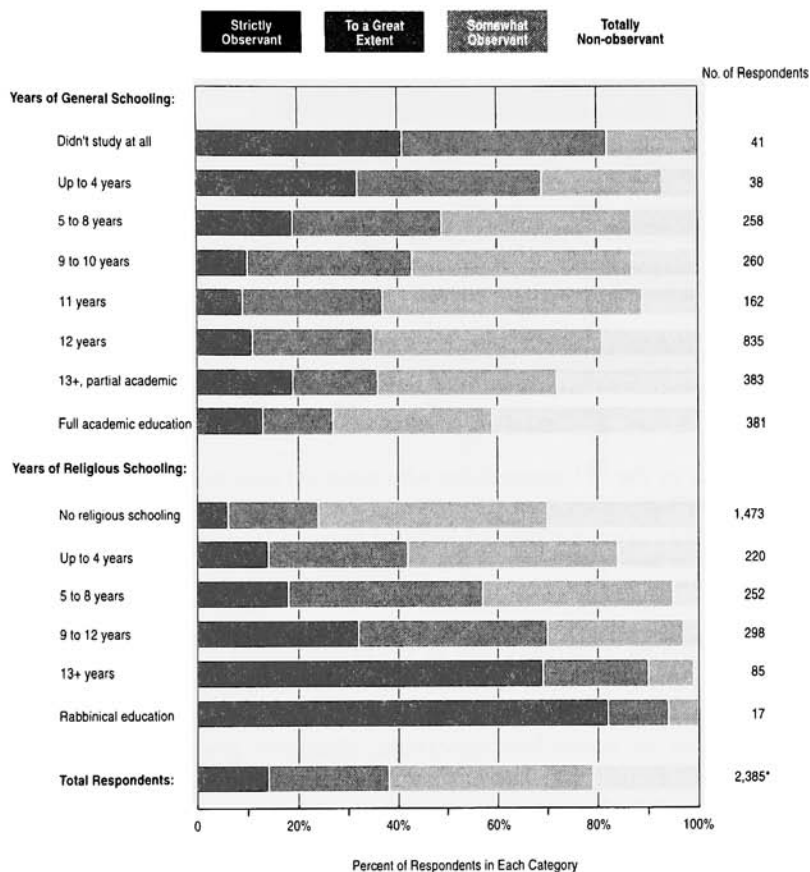


In a religious school setting, however, increased levels of education lead to increased observance. It should be noted that religious schooling refers to only 37 percent of the population, since 63 percent reported that they had no religious schooling.

Stability of Religious Observance and Attitudes Over Time

In addition to the relative stability of religious observance over time and the striking similarity in the distribution of observance across age groups,

Fig. 1.4. Observance by Years of Schooling (general and religious)

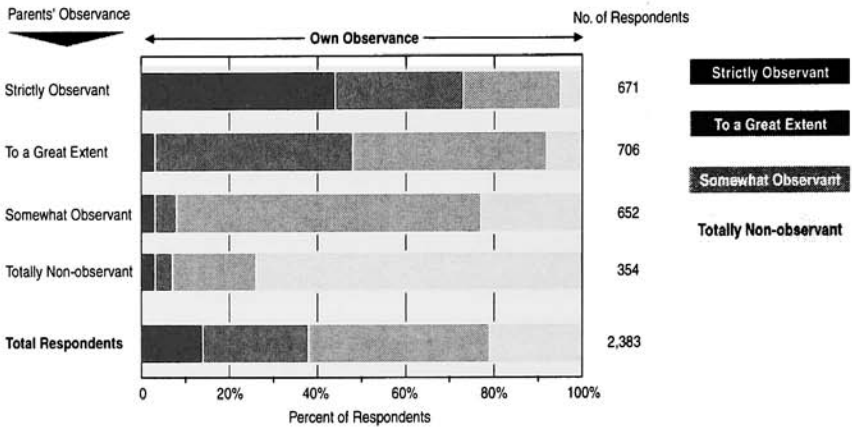


Note: "Total Respondents" do not sum to the separate categories, since there is some overlap.

respondents also report high correlations between own and parents' observance. Only 20 percent report themselves to be radically different from their parents in this respect [Figure 1.5].

Behaviorally speaking, then, it is fair to conclude that intergenerational continuity outweighs change, to which one should add that there is somewhat more movement toward lesser rather than greater observance. Thus, fewer respondents from strictly observant homes follow their parents as closely as those from totally nonobservant homes.

Fig. 1.5. Own Observance Relative to Parents' Observance*



*For example, of the 671 respondents who reported their parents as “strictly observant,” 44% reported themselves as equally observant, 29% consider themselves observant “to a great extent,” 22% say they are “somewhat observant,” and 6% say they are “totally observant.”

Nevertheless, there appears to be an attraction toward increased religious observance. A third say that they would like to be somewhat more or much more observant, while only 5 percent say that they would want to be a little less or much less observant. Sixty-two percent say that they would want to remain the same. The more observant the respondent, the greater the wish to be even more observant. Interestingly, 10 percent of the totally nonobservant also express a wish to be somewhat more observant, and one half of the nonobservant would prefer their children to be somewhat observant rather than totally nonobservant.

Observing Shabbat

Until very recently, the Seventh Day—the Shabbat—was the whole of the Israeli weekend and had to double as a religious holiday replete with mitzvot, as well as to serve as a day off in the Western sense. For the past few years, Friday has been added to the weekend, and the five-day work week now encompasses about half the work force. As a day off, Friday also carries a burden of traditional duties having to do with preparation for the Sabbath. Public observance of Shabbat begins at sundown on Friday, when shops, most public transportation, and most places of entertainment are closed until after sundown on Saturday.

Table 1.1. Observance of Shabbat

	<i>(Percent of Respondents)*</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Always</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>	
Prescriptive Mitzvot				
<i>(Self or Others in Home)</i>				
Light Shabbat candles	56	24	20	100
Have a special meal on Friday night	54	26	20	100
Light Shabbat candles with blessing	51	21	28	100
Recite Kiddush on Friday night	46	21	32	100
Recite Kiddush on Shabbat morning	28	16	56	100
Pray at synagogue on Friday night	24	22	53	100
Pray for the welfare of Israel	23	24	53	100
Pray at a synagogue on Shabbat morning	23	22	56	100
Recite Havdalah	23	17	60	100
Conduct Seuda Shlishit	21	17	62	100
Proscriptive Mitzvot				
Refrain from working in public	42	19	39	100
Refrain from working inside the home	37	21	43	100
Refrain from lighting fire	37	14	50	100
Refrain from going out to paid entertainment	28	14	59	100
Refrain from traveling	26	16	57	100
Refrain from turning on electricity/phone	22	14	64	100
Refrain from hosting persons who must travel in order to reach you	18	11	70	100
Refrain from being a guest at a nonobservant home	18	14	67	100

*May not total exactly, due to rounding.

Two thirds of the population mark the Shabbat as a special day by observing some mitzvot "always" or "occasionally," such as lighting candles or participating in a special meal on Friday night; almost half recite Kiddush [Table 1.1]. It should be noted that more households mark Shabbat by lighting candles than is generally perceived to be the case. Overall, 77 percent say that marking Shabbat in some way is a very important or important principle in their lives, including 39 percent of those who consider themselves "totally nonobservant."

Most Israelis desire that Friday night remain a quiet, home-centered evening (68%), and Friday-night rituals have far more adherents than

Shabbat-day observances. Only a minority (20–30%) never observe mitzvot such as candle-lighting, Kiddush, or a festive meal. Even some of the nonobservant mark Shabbat eve in a traditional manner (especially by lighting candles and having a special meal).

On the other hand, only a minority attend synagogue on Shabbat morning, and this fact is, by and large, more accurately perceived by the public than the more widespread Shabbat-eve practices.

Prescriptive mitzvot ('ase) have more adherents than proscriptive ones (lo ta'ase). Only 20–40 percent always observe Shabbat proscriptions against work, lighting fire, travel, paid entertainment, electricity, and telephone, while regular observance of prescriptive mitzvot ranges from 20–60 percent. Only about one-fourth (22–26%) always observe the prohibitions against turning electricity on or off and traveling on the Sabbath.

Scale analysis of the prescriptive mitzvot for Shabbat suggests that synagogue attendance on Shabbat morning is probably the first precept to be dropped en route to nonobservance, while lighting Shabbat candles is the durable commandment (last to go) [Table 1.2]. As for Shabbat proscriptions, the first departure from strict observance is using electricity. The next step is travel, followed in turn by paid entertainment, lighting a fire, and working inside the home, while the last to go is performing work in public.⁷ Thus, working in public on Shabbat best defines nonobservance of proscriptive mitzvot [Table 1.3].

In short, the Israeli Shabbat is best characterized in terms of (1) in-home rituals of welcoming Shabbat, (2) refraining from work in public, and (3) relaxing and spending time with the family on a free day (not necessarily at home, except for the strictly observant).

With respect to Shabbat observance, the Western groups, both first and second generation, are more consistent than the Eastern groups in the sense of performing all or nothing.

However, nonobservant Western groups are more likely to perform certain rituals symbolically (e.g., by lighting candles without a blessing or eating a festive meal) rather than in the manner prescribed. Most of these are Westerners who define themselves as “somewhat observant.” In the long run such symbolic patterns may be indicative of those who see themselves as traditional (*masorti*) in Israeli society. Compared to the Western groups, the less observant of Eastern origin tend to augment the symbolic candles or special meal with Kiddush.

A generational change is evident between Eastern-born respondents and their Israeli offspring. The latter are less observant and more similar in their religious behavior to other Israeli-born respondents. This applies especially to proscriptive mitzvot of Shabbat, such as refraining from travel, using electricity, and so on. Nevertheless, Israeli-born of Eastern origin are far more observant than their Western counterparts [Figure 1.3].

Table 1.2. Scale of Observance of Shabbat Prescriptive Mitzvot*
(For each mitzvah, 1 = always 2 = occasionally or never)

	<i>Most</i> <i>Observant</i>					<i>PROFILE</i>				<i>Least</i> <i>Observant</i>		
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9			
Light Shabbat candles	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2			
Shabbat candles with blessing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2			
Special meal on Friday night	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2			
Recite Kiddush on Shabbat eve	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2			
Recite Havdalah	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2			
Pray on Shabbat eve	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Pray on Shabbat morning	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Pray for the State	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Number of Respondents	365	57	14	56	264	72	140	51	785			
Percent of Sample	15%	2%	1%	2%	11%	3%	6%	2%	33%			

Total Number of Scalable Respondents: 1,804 (75% of sample)

*Profile #1, for example, refers to 15% of the sample, who "always" adhere to all eight mitzvot of which the scale consists. The scalogram encompasses 75% of all respondents; the remaining 25% have "deviant" profiles that do not fit the scale. Note that the predominant types are #1 (all), #9 (none), and #5 which consists of adherence to Shabbat eve practices only.

Table 1.3. Scale of Observance of Shabbat Proscriptive Mitzvot*
 (For each mitzvah, 1 = always 2 = occasionally or never)

	PROFILE						
	Most Observant			Least Observant			
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Refrain from working in public	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Refrain from working inside the home	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Refrain from lighting fire	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Refrain from paid entertainment	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Refrain from traveling	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Refrain from turning on electricity	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Number of Respondents	446	54	58	104	73	105	1,189
Percent of Sample	19%	2%	2%	6%	3%	4%	50%
Total Number of Scalable Respondents: 2,029 (86% of sample)							

*Profile #1, for example, refers to 19% of the sample, who "always" adhere to all six mitzvot of which the scale consists. The scalogram encompasses 86% of all respondents; the remaining 14% have "deviant" profiles that do not fit the scale. Comparing Table 2 and Table 3, note that 33% of respondents fall into the least observant Profile #9 in the Prescriptive scale, whereas 50% of respondents fall into the least observant Profile #7, in the Proscriptive Scale.

Keeping Kosher

Two-thirds report that they always eat kosher food at home. However, since kosher food is predominant in Israel, a more stringent indicator of kashrut is having separate utensils for meat and dairy foods. This practice is maintained by approximately one half of the population, who also wait an interval between eating meat and dairy foods. Even when abroad, half report observing kashrut always, but a higher proportion of respondents never observe kashrut abroad compared to never observing kashrut in Israel [Figure 1.6]. About 40 percent strictly observe all of the kashrut behaviors studied. Public perception of the observance of kashrut, however, underestimates the extent of its prevalence.

Scale analysis of kashrut practices confirms that the most vulnerable practice (first to go) is keeping separate utensils for meat and dairy foods, and most tenacious (last to go) is avoidance of explicitly nonkosher food [Table 1.4].

Quality of food (healthy, clean) is considered by the respondents no less important a reason for observing kashrut than observing the mitzvah for its own sake.

Celebrating Holidays

Holidays are more widely observed than Shabbat and most aspects of kashrut. Indeed, more than the other domains of observance, major holidays are a consensual domain, embracing both observant and non-observant. This may be because holidays are special events that occur only once a year, compared to everyday or even weekly routines. Moreover, many of the holidays have a unifying power, national or existential, in addition to their more strictly religious definition. The public is well aware of the pervasive observance of major holidays.

Indeed, a wide consensus prevails with respect to the celebration of the major holidays, both religious/national (Passover, Hanukkah) and religious/existential (Yom Kippur): 78 percent always participate in a Passover Seder mostly of the traditional type [Figure 1.7]; 72 percent always light Hanukkah candles; on Yom Kippur 71 percent always fast and 69 percent join in at least some of the prayers.

Passover observance is very widespread. Even most (78%) of the totally nonobservant always or frequently participate in a Seder of some kind. Beyond celebration of the Seder, about 70 percent of Israeli Jews, including more than one fifth of the nonobservant, refrain from hametz on Passover.

Fewer respondents (36–38%) always observe Sukkot (having a kosher sukkah) or Purim (listening to the Megillah of Esther). Customs

Fig. 1.6. Kashrut Observance

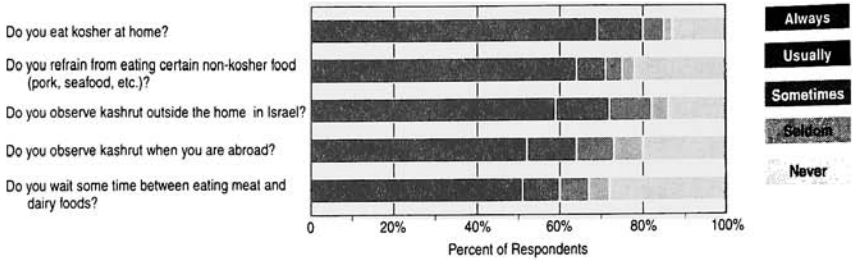
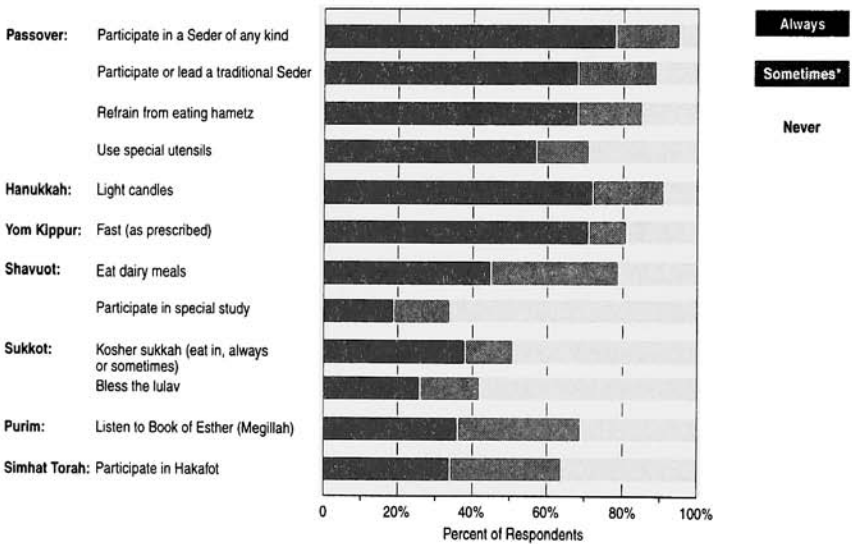


Fig. 1.7. Observance of Holidays



*Combines "Often," "Sometimes," and "Seldom."

relating to holidays, such as eating dairy foods on Shavuot, are often more widely observed than particular mitzvot, such as blessing the lulav on Sukkot.

Those of Eastern origin, whether born abroad or in Israel, tend to be more observant of the holidays than those of Western background. Noteworthy is the fact that lighting Hanukkah candles, participating in a Seder, and building a sukkah (not necessarily a kosher one) are more

Table 1.4. Scale of Kashrut Observance*
 (For each item, 1 = always 2 = usually or sometimes 3 = seldom or never)

	<i>PROFILE</i>									
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
Kosher food at home	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Kosher food outside the home in Israel	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
Observe interval between meat and dairy foods	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Refrain from nonkosher food (pork, seafood, etc.)	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3
Separate utensils**	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Number of Respondents	849	199	94	14	13	66	60	117	22	260
Percent of Sample	37%	8%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%	5%	1%	11%
Total Number of Respondents: 1,694 (74% of sample)										

*Profile #1, for example, refers to 37% of respondents in the sample, who "always" perform the five kashrut observances of which the scale consists. The scalogram encompasses 74% of all respondents; the remaining 26% have "deviant" profiles that do not fit the scale.

**Note that all items are scored at three levels, except "separate utensils" which is scored dichotomously (yes or no).

prevalent among Israeli-born respondents of Western origin than among their foreign-born parents. This is apparently a function of age and the presence of small children in the family, as well as an expression of the desire for Jewish continuity even among this relatively nonobservant sector of Israeli society.

Marking the Life Cycle

Over 80 percent feel it is important to them that life-cycle events be invested with a Jewish religious character: brit milah (92%); bar mitzvah (83%); wedding (87%); burial, shivah and kaddish for parents (88–91%). Only a small minority (4–7%) consider such ceremonies not at all important. Even a majority of the totally nonobservant consider it important to mark these turning points (birth, maturity, marriage, death) with Jewish ceremony.

Attending Synagogue and Prayer

A majority (about 60%) of Israeli Jews go to synagogue on high holidays or on special occasions during the year. About one-quarter attend regularly, most weekly. About one fifth report that they never go to synagogue. Present synagogue attendance of Israelis is very similar to that reported by the Guttman Institute a quarter of a century ago. Those born in the East attend synagogue most regularly.

Almost a fifth (22%) of men and 10 percent of women say that they pray daily. Asked, Do you know how to pray from a prayer book? 46 percent replied “not at all” or “only a little.”

Other Observances: Mezuzah, Kippah, Tefillin, Mikveh

Four perennial observances exemplify the wide range of similarities and differences in religious behavior: mezuzah, kippah, tefillin, mikveh.

There is no difference at all between the strictly observant and the totally nonobservant in affixing a mezuzah. Virtually all respondents (98%) have a mezuzah on their front doors; the great majority have one on each of the required doors. Almost all of the nonobservant (92%) have a mezuzah at least on the entrance door of their homes, with 36 percent of them having a mezuzah on each of the doors traditionally required to have one. Seventy-four percent (46% definitely) believe that the mezuzah protects the home.

Wearing a kippah moves between the extremes of always (22%) and never (37%), with a plurality using a head-covering on a variety of spe-

cial occasions. Among those who do wear a kippah, 62 percent use a knitted kippah, 30 percent a black kippah, and 8 percent use other types of head-covering.

Over half (56%) of married women never use a head-covering, compared to 13 percent who always do so. About a third (30%) use a head-covering occasionally, mainly when lighting Shabbat candles, when praying, and on a variety of special occasions.

Seventy-nine percent of Jewish men own tefillin, and about a quarter use them regularly. About half do not use them at all. For their part, 16 percent of women go to a mikveh regularly, and an additional 8 percent go occasionally. This proportion is unchanged since 1969, as is also noted with respect to certain other practices—synagogue attendance, for example.

Scope of Observance and Reasons for Nonobservance

If performance is taken as the measure of observing mitzvot regardless of intent or frequency, virtually all Israeli Jews are observant in some way. The ubiquitous mezuzah is an example. Additional evidence comes from scalogram analysis of ten observances from three different domains, Shabbat, kashrut, and holidays, which reveals that 93 percent of Israelis observe at least one of the relevant mitzvot from these domains. That is, only a small minority (7%) of respondents are objectively nonobservant in terms of these ten cross-domain precepts, compared to one fifth who describe themselves as “totally nonobservant.” In other words, 93 percent of Israeli Jews perform at least one of these precepts, without necessarily considering themselves religious.

Respondents were asked to accept or reject four different explanations for nonobservance and to rate the importance of each as an explanation. The rank order ranges from 67 percent who said that people lack proper education to 38 percent who said that ethical people don't need mitzvot. In between, the explanations that mitzvot are hard to observe and mitzvot may be observed selectively were supported by about half of the respondents. For the strictly observant, the predominant explanation is that people lack proper education and, perhaps surprisingly, over half of the totally nonobservant agree. The nonobservant give more weight to ethical people don't need mitzvot. In sum, nonobservance in the eyes of both the strictly observant and the totally nonobservant is not so much a matter of difficulty of performance as it is a matter of different outlook, related to education and ethics. In fact, about half of the nonobservant agree with all four of the explanations offered for nonobservance [Table 1.5].

Table 1.5. Reasons for Nonobservance
(Percent of Respondents Replying "Very Important" or "Important")

	<i>Self-Defined Religiosity</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Strictly Observant</i>	<i>Observant to a Great Extent</i>	<i>Somewhat Observant</i>	<i>Not at all Observant</i>	
"People lack proper education"	76	77	66	52	67
"Selective observance is adequate"	48	64	58	42	55
"It is difficult to observe"	45	56	58	46	53
"Ethical people don't need mitzvot"	24	36	39	58	38

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Intergroup Relations: Attitudes

Relations among Jews of different religious backgrounds and commitments to observance are considered much more problematic by Israelis than interethnic relations. Although there are ups and downs in the assessment of the quality of these relations, ethnicity has been judged the less problematic for many years [Figure 1.8].

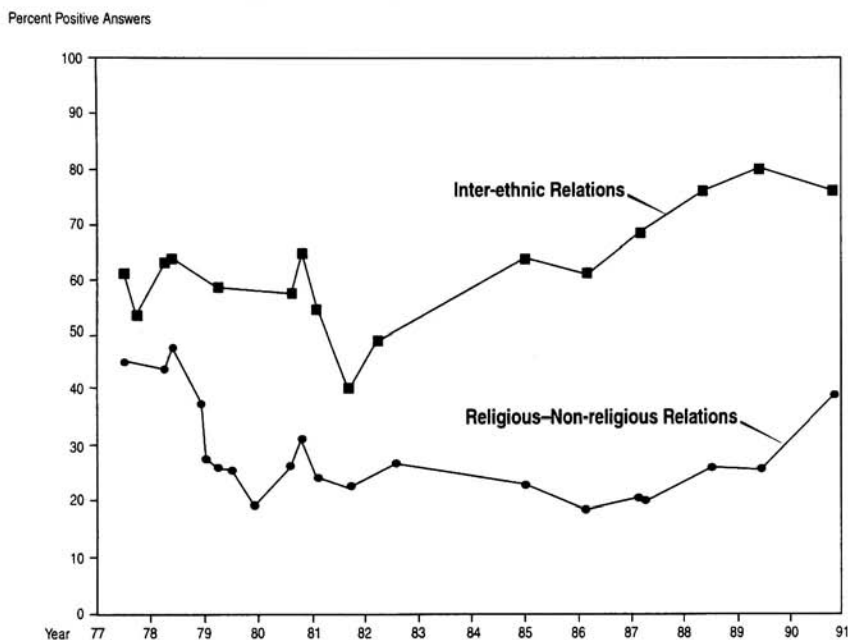
The study substantiates that ethnic background hardly segregates Israeli society today. Two thirds think that relations between Ashkenazim and Sephardim are good. Relations of veteran Israelis with Ethiopian and Russian newcomers are also rated good by two-thirds of the population.

By contrast, less than one third regard relations between religious and nonreligious as good [Figure 1.9]. It is the less observant (with a preponderance of the Western-born and their offspring, and the higher educated) who are least positive in their assessment.

Although respondents place somewhat more blame for poor relations at the door of the religious, the predominant image is that in both groups some do and some don't show respect and acceptance of the other group. The nonobservant accuse the observant of disrespect, more than the other way around.

Stereotypes of the quality of intergroup relations along religious lines are more problematic [Figure 1.10] than the actual attitudes of respondents speaking for themselves. There appears to be high readiness of

Fig. 1.8. Changes Over Time in Feelings of Social Solidarity, 1977–1990



Adapted from: Levy, Shlomit (1992): *Social Problem Indicators for Israel: State and Society*. Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research.

mutual acceptance of both ethnic and religious differences, except that religious differences are perceived to be something of a barrier in the most intimate relationships, especially marriage.

On a personal level, in other words, attitudes of respondents to a variety of groups, including the religious and nonreligious, are reported as largely nonproblematic. Three-fourths of Israelis assert that it would be acceptable for people of different religious perspectives to live in their neighborhoods. But they view with equal antipathy those groups on the extreme ends of the religious spectrum, the Haredim and the antireligious.

When it comes to personal attitudes toward the extreme groups of Haredim and antireligious, the full force of the religiosity variable comes into play: the more observant the respondent, the more he/she appreciates the Haredim and the less he/she appreciates the antireligious. The assessment of the Haredim by the nonobservant, and the antireligious by the observant, is not only negative, it borders on very strong rejection.

Fig. 1.9. Assessment of Intergroup Relations (Percent of Respondents Replying “Very Good” and “Pretty Good”)

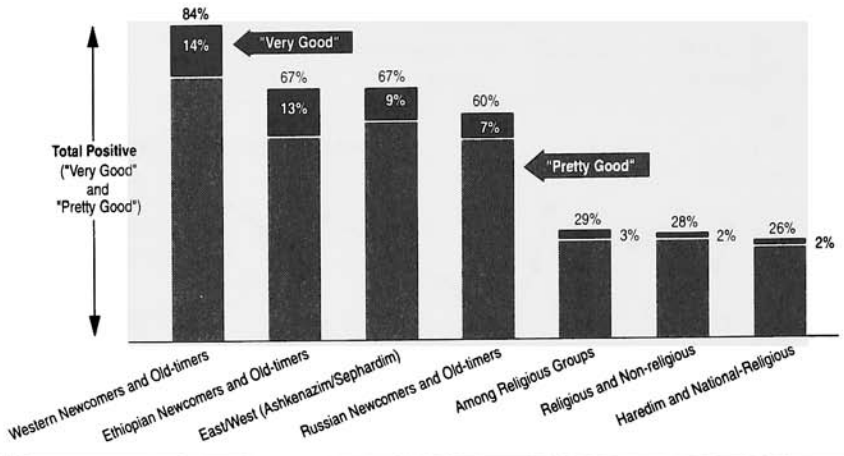


Fig. 1.10. Personal Attitudes toward Various Groups (Percent of Respondents Replying “Very Positive” and “Positive”)

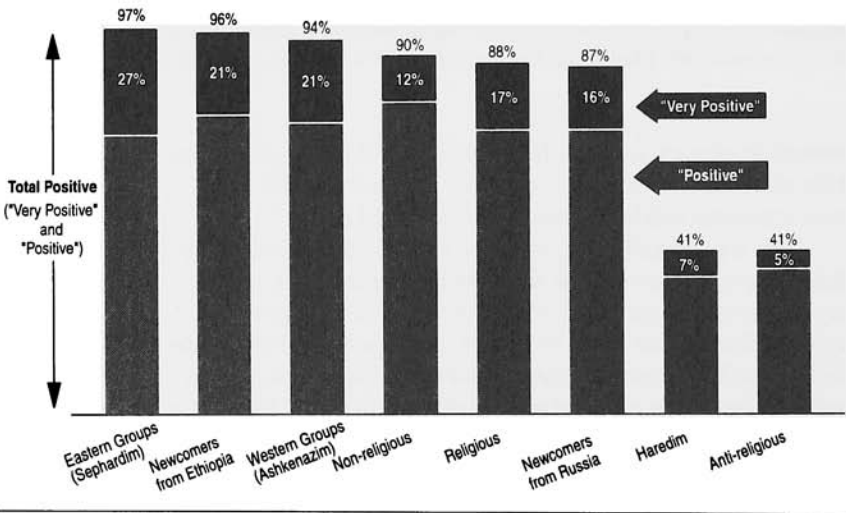
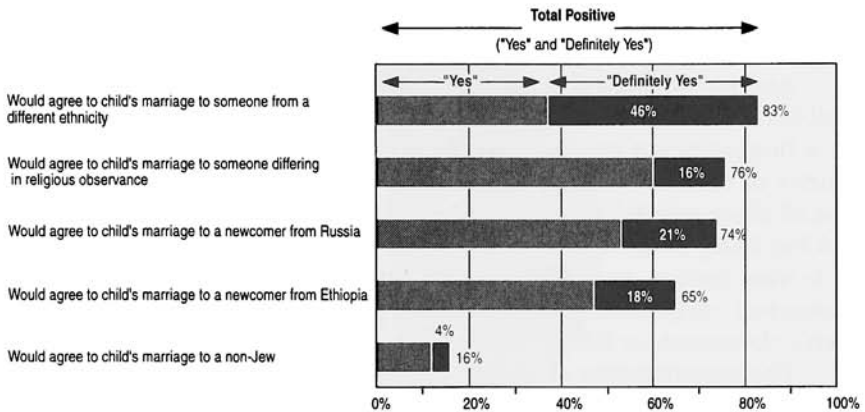


Fig. 1.11. Acceptance of Child's Marriage to "Other" (Percent of Respondents Replying Positively*)



*Percentages based on 90% of the respondents who answered the question.

The more impersonal the social setting, the greater is the acceptance and the actual presence of people who differ in religious observance.

Even when close family is considered, only a minority are opposed to the marriage of their children to someone different in ethnicity (17%) or religious observance (24%). (In contrast, there is virtual unanimity in opposition to a child's marriage to a non-Jew.) However, the proportion who definitely agree to interethnic marriage is far higher (46%) than in the case of marriage involving difference in the degree of religious observance (16%) [Figure 1.11]. The likelihood of success of a marriage in which one spouse is religious and the other is not is judged to be considerably lower than the likelihood of success attributed to interethnic marriage.

Intergroup Relations: Interaction

In the course of their daily lives, three quarters of the population report that they occasionally or frequently interact with people who differ from them in terms of religious observance.

In general, it is the *less* religious respondents, those who describe themselves as "totally nonobservant" or "somewhat observant," who have least contact with people who differ from themselves in observance. The ostensible closure of the strictly observant is expressed only in those social settings that specify continuity of religious identity, namely, children's education and close family. In this sense, the strictly observant are similar

to the totally nonobservant. Thus, the more observant prefer more homogeneous environments but actually have less homogeneous environments. Or, to put it otherwise, the more observant say they are less ready for interaction with religiously different others but actually have more contact with them.

Among the more observant, the most self-segregated group is the Israeli-born generation of Western parentage, whose expressed preference for a homogeneous environment most closely coincides with the homogeneity of their actual interactions. In other words, the younger generation of observant Ashkenazim are less likely than their observant parents and less likely than the observant in both generations of Eastern ethnicity to want contact, or to have contact, with others who are different from themselves religiously, whether among family, friends, neighbors, children's classmates, or fellow workers.

The nonobservant of Western ethnicity differ from their observant counterparts in that they are more likely to agree to the presence of religiously different others but, in fact, have less contact with them.

On the frequent occasions when persons of different degrees of religiosity do meet, more than half report that they discuss religious issues and lifestyle differences between the observant and the nonobservant. But in response to the question: Does meeting with people who are different from you in religious observance influence your attitude toward them? 84 percent say that it does not, either positively or negatively. Still, when influence does take place, it is judged more positive (11%) than negative (4%).

Helping Others (Man-to-Man Mitzvot)

Extending help to others, in time and money, counts as a mitzvah, and the large majority of Israelis (75%) are aware that Judaism attributes importance to assisting those in need. About a fifth of Israeli Jews report that they engage in voluntary public work on a regular basis; 43 percent say they are not involved at all. Twenty-seven percent visit sick persons who are neither family nor friends in hospitals and other mitzvah situations. Many fewer are systematically helping new immigrants, families in distress, or serving in the Civil Guard, although many express readiness to do so if asked.

Contributing money to charity is much more pervasive than contributing time. A high proportion do so often or sometimes.

Devoting time, as well as contributing money to others, is strongly associated with self-defined religiosity. In general, the higher the level of observance, the greater the level of community service. The more the need is defined in religious terms, the greater the gap between the observant and the nonobservant.