

Nishma Research 2019 Survey of the Orthodox Jewish Community Final – July 25, 2019

Survey Introduction **Section titles are not displayed in the online survey**

What are the views of the Orthodox Jewish community? What do you think about the major questions facing Jewish life, your community, your family and yourself? This survey addresses these and related questions, and further explores issues raised in our past surveys of the Orthodox community (available at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>). **Note that there are sections of questions included in this survey which are aimed at baalei teshuvah (those who did not grow up Orthodox); this will be the largest quantitative community survey ever done of this group.**

The survey is conducted by Nishma Research and is sponsored by The Micah Foundation. The study researchers, foundation benefactors and members of its advisory group are members of the Orthodox community; the foundation's mission is to promote and enhance Jewish religious, cultural and communal life.

This survey is for all individuals age 18 and older. Among couples, we encourage spouses to take the survey separately. The survey takes about 18-20 minutes to complete. (Each screen has a "Save and Continue Later" option that you may click at the top if you do not have the time to complete the survey. If you use this option, please return to complete the survey within three days.)

This survey is 100% confidential. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to get the results sent directly to you. Additionally, you'll be able to sign up for a **chance to win one of five \$50 Amazon Gift Cards.**

The survey results will be clearly communicated to synagogue rabbis, leaders, congregants and the Orthodox community, and will be made publicly available and downloadable.

If you have any questions about the survey, please email Mark Trencher of Nishma Research at mark@nishmaresearch.com.

Orthodox Denomination and Background

Ask of All – Response is mandatory

Q1. **Note:** This is the only survey question that requires a response. We do, however, encourage you to respond to all the other questions as well.

Regardless of your synagogue affiliation, which of the following categories best describes your approach to Judaism? Are you:

- Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox
- *Yeshivish / Litvish / Agudah*
- *Chasidic, Chabad*
- Not Orthodox – **Display message "Sorry, you do not qualify to take this survey, as it is aimed at the Orthodox segment of the Jewish population." – Skip to "Sharing of Survey Link."**

Ask of All

Q2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-conforming, Other

Ask of All

Q3. At what stage in your life did you begin to identify yourself as being an observant Orthodox Jew?

- Ask if Q2 = Male From birth, or at a young age (before Bar Mitzvah)
- Ask if Q2 = Female From birth, or at a young age (before Bat Mitzvah)
- Ask if Q2 = Non-conforming From birth, or at a young age (before Bar or Bat Mitzvah)
- Ask if Q2 = Male Between Bar Mitzvah age and 17 *
- Ask if Q2 = Female Between Bat Mitzvah age and 17 *
- Ask if Q2 = Non-conforming Between Bar or Bat Mitzvah age and 17 *
- Between ages 18 and 24 *
- Between ages 25 and 39 *
- Age 40 or older *

* These respondents are, for the purposes of this survey, viewed as *baalei teshuvah*.

Ask of *Baalei Teshuvah* (per Q3)

Q4. How many years ago did you begin to identify yourself as an observant Orthodox Jew?

- Within the past 3 years
- Between 4 and 9 years ago
- Between 10 and 19 years ago
- 20 or more years ago

Perceptions of Modern Orthodoxy and Day-to-Day Religious Life

Section Introduction

In this survey, when we refer to “Modern Orthodox” we are including all those who identify themselves as Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox ... and not *chareidi* (*yeshivish* / *Agudah* / *Litvish* or *Chasidic* / *Chabad*).

Additionally, when we use the term “*baal teshuva*” to refer to someone who made a transition to Orthodoxy, to simplify things we are using the same term for men and women.

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q5. Where do you see yourself within the range of Modern/Centrist Orthodoxy?

- “To the left” ... Liberal Modern Orthodox
- “In the center” ... Centrist Modern Orthodox
- “To the right” ... More stringent (*machmir*) Centrist Orthodox

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q6. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring.
- Modern Orthodoxy lets me think about ideas in an intellectually honest and critical way.
- Modern Orthodox Jews are quite knowledgeable about the fundamental underpinnings of faith.
- Modern Orthodoxy is as “Jewishly authentic” as *chareidi* (*yeshivish* or *chasidic*) Judaism.
- Religious observance within the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don’t Know

Ask of All

Q7. Where do you see yourself in terms of religious practice?

- I am pretty much a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”
- I tend toward being mostly a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”
- I tend toward being a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.”
- I am pretty much a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.”

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q8. You indicated that you became Orthodox at or after Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. How do you view yourself at this time?

- In my mind, I still think of myself mainly as a *baal teshuvah*.
- I think of myself as “just a member of the Orthodox community” but am quite conscious of still being a *baal teshuvah*.
- I think of myself as “just a member of the Orthodox community” and do not really still view myself as a *baal teshuvah*.

Ask if Q8 = Option 2-3

Q9. Was there a particular point in time (an event, milestone, accomplishment, etc.) when you felt that you had “arrived” in Orthodoxy (i.e., you no longer thought of yourself mainly as a *baal teshuva*)? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q10. The goal of Modern Orthodoxy is to meld **religious life** with **participation in society**. How often do you personally experience any positive interactions between your Orthodoxy and your participation in secular society?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Ask if Q10 = Often or Sometimes

Q11a. Can you give an example or two of how your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society interact in a positive way? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q10 = Seldom or Never

Q11b. Why do you think your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society do not more often interact in a positive way? **Open-Ended**

Ask of All

Q12. Do you ever experience conflict between your Orthodoxy and your participation in society? If so, how do you generally resolve it?

- I have not experienced any such conflict
- I have experienced such conflict but stand firm in my religious practice.
- I lean toward standing firm in my religious practice, but I sometimes need to compromise.
- I have a flexible attitude toward compromising.

Ask if Q12 = Response Options #3-4 ... I lean toward standing firm ... or I have a flexible attitude ...

Q13. Can you give an example or two of a time that you needed to compromise your religious practice? **Open-Ended**

Ask of All

Q14. How religiously comfortable are you with:

- Davening
- Jewish learning

- Day-to-day Orthodox living

Scale:

- Fully or Mostly Comfortable
- Somewhat Comfortable
- Somewhat Uncomfortable
- Fully or Mostly Uncomfortable

Ask of All

Q15. There has been some discussion about people using smartphones on Shabbat, e.g., for texting (not in a professional capacity, such as physicians, but for social reasons). Do you ever do this?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Ask of All

Q16. How do you rate your Orthodox community in terms of its acceptance of *baalei teshuvah* in general?

- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Somewhat not accepting
- Not accepting
- Don't Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q17. As a *baal teshuvah*, what advice would you give to your Orthodox community in terms of what they need to better understand and appreciate about *baalei teshuvah*? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q18. Because Modern Orthodoxy interacts with society, it needs to deal with change. Which of the following statements best reflects your views on this?

- Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” to prevent change ... and not focused enough on making changes that I feel are needed.
- The current balance between making changes and “drawing lines” is appropriate.
- Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes that I feel are not desirable ... and does not preserve tradition enough.

Ask if Q18 = “Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on ‘drawing lines’ ...”

Q18a. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” ... and not focused enough on making changes. What changes do you feel are needed? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q18 = “Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes ...”

Q18b. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes and does not preserve tradition enough. What changes do you feel are not desirable? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q19. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its liberal wing.
- Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its right wing and by *chareidi* Judaism.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree

- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Baalei Teshuvah and the Journey Toward Orthodoxy

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q20. You indicated that you became Orthodox at or after Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. Which of the following best describes how you viewed yourself Jewishly before becoming Orthodox?

- Conservative or Orthoprax
- Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, or other denomination
- Traditional, cultural, ethnic Jewish (or "just Jewish")
- Secular/Humanist Jewish
- Not Jewish
- Other – Please describe **Open-Ended**

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q21. What sparked your transition to Orthodoxy? **Please check up to five factors** that were most important in your decision to become Orthodox. **[Up to 5 responses]**

- I was Influenced by a friend.
- I was influenced by my spouse or other partner relationship (fiancé, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.).
- I was influenced by my child(ren).
- I was influenced by my parent(s).
- I was influenced by other relative(s).
- I was Influenced by *kiruv* (outreach) professional(s) or organization(s).
- I was intellectually attracted to or curious about Orthodoxy; or interested because of religious knowledge that I had acquired.
- I saw Orthodoxy and the Torah as more truthful.
- I saw Orthodoxy as a more authentic kind of Judaism than existed in my prior Jewish community.
- I wanted to better connect to my Jewish roots and heritage.
- I was generally dissatisfied with my life.
- I disliked the type of morality I saw in secular society/culture.
- I was searching for more meaning in my life.
- I wanted more structure in my life.
- I felt isolated and had a desire for community.
- I was influenced by society's and Orthodoxy's views relating to the role of women. – Please briefly explain **Open-Ended**
- Other – Please identify **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q21 = "I was Influenced by a kiruv (outreach) ..."

Q22. Which *kiruv* (outreach) professional(s) or organization(s) influenced you to become Orthodox? Please check up to three. **[Up to 3 responses]**

- NCSY
- Other Orthodox youth program (Bnei Akiva, etc.)
- Other youth program (BBYO, USY, etc.)
- Chabad Lubavitch
- Hillel or other college / campus program (excluding Chabad)
- Neve Yerushalayim
- Aish HaTorah
- Ohr Somayach

- Oorah
- NJOP (National Jewish Outreach Program)
- MJE (Manhattan Jewish Experience)
- JWRP (Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project – Momentum)
- Gateways
- A synagogue or synagogue program – Please identify **Open-Ended**
- Birthright or other Israel trip
- Summer camp
- A rabbi or other mentor/personality
- Other – Please identify **Open-Ended**

Ask if one or more responses selected in Q22

Q23. Thinking of the kiruv approaches that influenced you, how would you rate them overall in terms of their:

- Effectiveness at the time you moved toward Orthodoxy.
- Effectiveness since that time, i.e., their follow-up and lasting impact.

Scale:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don’t Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q24. What were the main challenges you faced at the time you moved toward Orthodoxy? **Open-ended**

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3

Q25. Are there things you have “held onto” from your pre-Orthodox life, i.e., things of value to you personally, which are not commonly found in the Orthodox world? These could include views – religious, social, political, etc. – beliefs, practices, objects, etc. **Open-Ended**

Communal Organizations and Resources

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q26. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations provide religious leadership that meets the community’s religious needs.
- Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations provide leadership on key issues that meets the community’s needs in areas of internal and societal interactions, and policy advocacy.
- Modern Orthodox communal organizations should take stands on political and/or social issues.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don’t Know

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q27. If you would like to make any suggestions to our Modern Orthodox national communal organizations, what would they be? **Open-Ended**

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q28. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodox shuls and community organizations have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox leaders.
- Modern Orthodox schools have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox educators.
- Too many of our communal leaders (rabbis, teachers, organizations) come from more right-leaning segments of Orthodoxy.
- *Aliyah* (Jews moving to Israel) is having a significant negative impact on American Modern Orthodoxy (i.e., what has sometimes been called a “brain drain”).
- **Ask if Q2 = Female** I often find my talents valued more by the non-Orthodox world or even the non-Jewish world, and I therefore direct more of my energies towards those communities.
- **Ask if Q3 = Baal Teshuvah** As a *baal teshuvah*, my Orthodox community sometimes asks me for advice that I might be in a position to offer, given my background.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Marital Status and Children

Ask of All

Q29. What is your current marital/relationship status?

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Living with a partner or in a long-term relationship

Ask if Q29 = Married

Q30. Would you say that your spouse is:

- At about the same level of religious observance as you are
- More religious (observant) than you are
- Less religious (observant) than you are
- Don't Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuva per Q3 and Q29 = Married

Q31. Is your spouse also a *baal teshuvah*?

- Yes, my spouse is a *baal teshuvah* (or a convert)
- No

Ask of All

Q32. Do you have any children? If so, how many?

- None
- One
- Two

- Three
- Four
- Five or More

Ask if Q32 = Has One or More Children

Q33. Are any of your children in grades K to 8 (the just-completed school year)?

- Yes
- No

Ask of All

Q34. Do you agree that:

- The school systems in my Orthodox community are successful at creating committed Orthodox Jews.
- **Ask if Q33 = Yes (Has Children in Grades K-8)** I consider the cost my children’s Jewish education to be money well-spent.
- **Ask if Q33 = Yes (Has Children in Grades K-8)** Eventually, sending my child(ren) to a public school might be an option to consider.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don’t Know

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox and Q32 = Has One or More Children

Q35. How religious, in general, do you want your children to be?

- I prefer that they be typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jews.
- I prefer that they be more observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., right-leaning Modern Orthodox, or *chareidi*.
- I prefer that they be less observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., left-leaning Orthodox, traditional, secular, etc.
- Don’t Know
- This is not so critical or relevant to me – Please explain **Open-Ended**

Religious Trends and What the Future Holds

Ask of All

Q36. Do you agree with the following statements?

- I am very concerned about people leaving Orthodoxy and becoming non-frum (“Off the Derech”).
- I feel our Orthodox communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue of people leaving Orthodoxy.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don’t Know

Ask if became *Baal Teshuva* 10+ years ago (options #3-4 in Q4)

Q37. You indicated that you became Orthodox 10+ years ago. Think about your “early Orthodoxy” (3 or so years after you became Orthodox) and compare it to where you are today. Which of the following is most accurate?

- I am at about the same place religiously now as I was at that time.
- I am more religious/observant now than I was at that time. – Can you briefly explain? Open-Ended
- I am less religious/observant now than I was at that time. – Can you briefly explain? Open-Ended

Ask of All

Q38. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an important part of my life.
- Some positive views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community.
- Some negative views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community.
- Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox There is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Ask if agree (fully or somewhat) with Q38 option #2 (“Some positive views...”)

Q38a. You agreed that some positive societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? Open-Ended

Ask if agree (fully or somewhat) with Q38 option #3 (“Some negative views...”)

Q38b. You agreed that some negative societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? Open-Ended

Ask of All

Q39. What future do you foresee for Modern Orthodoxy over the next few decades, in areas of:

- Religious strength
- Growth in numbers
- Cohesiveness, togetherness

Scale:

- I am very optimistic
- I am somewhat optimistic
- Neither optimistic nor pessimistic
- I am somewhat pessimistic
- I am very pessimistic
- Don't Know

Ask if Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q40. Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself? Open-Ended

Demographics

Ask of All

Q41. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older
- Prefer not to answer

Ask of All

Q42. Are you and/or either of your parents a convert to Judaism (*geirim*)? Please check all that apply.

- I am a convert
- One or both of my parents is a convert

Ask of Converts per Q42

Q43. As a convert, what advice would you give to your Orthodox community in terms of what they need to better understand and appreciate about converts? **Open-Ended**

Ask of All

Q44. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?

- Less than high school graduate
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Two-year associate degree
- Four-year Bachelor's degree
- Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
- Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree

Ask of All

Q45. What is the highest level of formal Jewish studies you have completed?

- None
- Talmud Torah (e.g., a Sunday or weekday evening Jewish studies program run by a synagogue)
- Some Jewish elementary school (did not graduate)
- Jewish elementary school (8th grade)
- Jewish high school
- Jewish post-high school study

Ask of All

Q46. Thinking of the Jewish community in which you currently reside, would you say it is a:

- Large Jewish community of 200,000+ Jews (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Greater DC, Philadelphia.)
- Mid-size Jewish community of 50,000 to 199,999 Jews (e.g., Atlanta, Miami, San Diego, Cleveland, Denver, etc.)
- Smaller Jewish community of under 50,000 Jews (e.g., Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Hartford, Cincinnati, etc.)

Ask of All

Q47. Have you ever moved from one community to another for "religious reasons"?

- Yes – Can you briefly explain? Open-Ended
- No

Fun

Ask of All

Q48. For our final question, let's have a little fun. What is your favorite “Jewish book”? It could be a *sefer* (religious book), Jewish study, commentary, biography, fiction, etc., and you can define “Jewish book” any way you like. Tell us the first one that comes to mind. Open-Ended

Thank You Screen

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts. Your response is very important to us.

END OF SURVEY