PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE OF ORTHODOX JEWISH BOYS

DURING A POST-HIGH SCHOOL YEAR OF STUDY IN AN ISRAELI YESHIVA

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

OF

RUTGERS

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BY

DANIEL B. JACOBSON

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ABSTRACT

American Orthodox Jewish teens commonly spend time studying in Israeli yeshivas prior to beginning college. In a qualitative study, in depth interviews were conducted with eighteen students who reported experiencing religious change during study in Israel. Areas studied included content and process of change, and the interaction of religious change with mental health and parental relationships. Students reported changes in behavior and weltanschauung. While subjects reported spiritual experiences prior to study in Israel, frequency and depth of experiences increased in Israel. Most students experienced a distinct turning point during the year, usually marked by a meaningful conversation rather than a moment of spiritual inspiration. Yeshiva rabbis significantly influenced most students, but the degree of rabbinic influence as well as the closeness of rabbi-student relationships varied widely. Subjects' experiences of visits home varied, sometimes facilitating and sometimes impeding change. Subjects reported adjustment difficulties early in the year, but change did not cause subsequent psychopathology. While almost all students identified as Modern Orthodox prior to yeshiva, change yielded shifts in denominational affiliation. The majority, however, did not affiliate with a discrete group, identifying themselves as between the Modern Orthodox and Yeshivish communities; phenomenologically for these students the change was similar to Christian denominational switching. The phenomenological experience for students affiliating as Yeshivish post-Israel was akin to religious conversion, while those remaining Modern Orthodox labeled it a personal growth experience.   Most subjects described themselves as near identity formation from an Eriksonian perspective, but had not completed the process. Relationships with parents remained relatively stable

through the process of change. Two prototypes of change profiles tentatively emerged: one group described the drive to change as a sense of personal dissatisfaction; these subjects were more likely to have suffered premorbid psychopathology and conflict with parents. Others described the drive positively as an inspiration to become something greater; these subjects were generally euthymic during high school and had better parental relationships. "Dissatisfied changers" generally changed significantly earlier in the year of study, described becoming euthymic after undergoing change. Conversely, "inspired changers," changed less quickly and more moderately, and experienced more distress during study in Israel.

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hope that they found the experience rewarding, and find that my presentation does justice

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past 25 years, a trend has developed for Orthodox Jewish American

adolescents to study in Israel after high school. Many students spend one to two years

studying in an Israeli yeshiva prior to starting college. Although the percentage of young

adults doing so varies depending upon the community, many high schools send 50-100%

of their graduates for study in Israel before college. Thus, the year of study has become

an integral part of adolescent development within the Orthodox community.

The stated goals of study in Israel are multifold and vary from community to

community. Within the Modern Orthodox community, Zionist ideology is a major

component. Study in Israel is intended to deepen the connection of the student with the

land of Israel and the State of Israel. Intellectual growth is an additional goal. Students

spend vast numbers of hours studying Jewish texts in partner study and classes.

Although some will continue their Jewish education in college, for others study in Israel

is the completion of their Jewish education. Spiritual and religious growth is also a goal

of Israel study. Although Orthodox children receive intensive religious instruction in

school and home, time spent in an Israeli yeshiva often deepens commitment and

intensity.

The students' time studying in Israel is often enjoyable and fulfilling, but also

psychologically difficult. It is a time of geographical separation from their parents,

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during which students also make significant strides in their emotional and philosophical individuation. This process is also influenced by the normal development and individuation typical of the late adolescent period.

While the programs are academically focused, time spent in the yeshivas often effects serious changes in the students. These changes encompass lifestyle and weltanschauung, as many students become "more religious" during their stays. More specifically, students often become more philosophically conservative, more spiritual, and more careful in their observance of Jewish Law.

Although religious and intellectual growth is a goal of parents and students alike, there is often parental concern regarding the degree of change (Tobin, 1998). Many children studying in Israel undergo religious changes beyond what either they or their parents originally envisioned. These religious changes have had a serious impact on the Orthodox community on many levels. On the communal plane, the Modern Orthodox community has become more religiously conservative than it was a generation ago. On the family level, parents and children have had to maneuver the dynamics of the changed relationship after the Israel experience. Finally, on the individual level, changed students have had to psychologically reintegrate their changes upon returning to their American communities.

An organization named the Orthodox Caucus has recently attempted to address some of these issues by compiling the Israel School Guide. The guide provides descriptive information about a wide array of boys and girls yeshivas in Israel, general information about study in Israel, and a synopsis of relevant studies from the Academy

for Torah Initiatives and Directives (ATID) fellowship for educators, which will be discussed below.

Although there are many popular theories in the Orthodox community, there is little clarity as to why and how changes take place. Specifically, are there some children who are more likely to change than others? Are there predictive factors? Do these lie in the behavioral, dynamic, family, or religious domain?

What is the nature of the change process? Is the change driven primarily by intellectual, emotional, or experiential factors? What role do yeshiva rabbis play in the change process? What role do older students play in influencing younger students?

Is the process of change psychologically healthy? Are troubled students more likely to change? Do changes cause emotional instability? Is the speed of change a critical factor?

Is change a permanent phenomenon? Do many students change back upon returning to the United States? What determines the stability of change?

How does change impact students' relationships with their parents?

It is these questions concerning the interface of religious changes and psychology that this dissertation seeks to clarify. There is presently a dearth of research in this immediate area. Jacob Halpern (1993) wrote a dissertation on the topic of adjustment difficulties of American students in Israel, which he adapted for publication in Ten Daat, a Jewish educational journal. Halpern's study had a large number of subjects and also broke important ground in the area, but its application is limited by his mixing of two distinct populations, Orthodox students studying in yeshiva and non-Orthodox students studying in university. A number of other short articles focusing on educational issues

were also published in Ten Daat in the early 1990's. Subsequently, Shalom Berger

(1997) wrote his doctoral dissertation on the topic of religious change during study in

Israel, and also adapted it for publication in Ten Daat. Most recently, Israeli educators

have published studies under the auspices of the aforementioned ATID fellowship.

While interest in the subject is clearly growing, there are several limitations of the

extant literature. Most of the articles in Ten Daat, along with articles in popular Jewish

magazines, are based on the educators' experience rather than systematic research.

Halpern's and Berger's research and the ATID studies are groundbreaking and extensive.

Nonetheless, many of them focus on educational rather than psychological aspects of the

change process. Only two of the ATID studies focus on psychological issues pertinent to

this study: Dodi Tobin (2003) studied the interplay of study in Israel and parental

relationships. Her extensive review of the literature informs the parental relationship

section of this review. The second relevant study is Ari Shames' (2001) discussion of the

counseling of American students in Israeli yeshivas.

Other than these few studies, this area remains untouched by research. The

results of this study will, therefore, be particularly useful to at least three very different

audiences. First, the American Modern Orthodox lay audience will benefit from a clearer

understanding of the change process. This study will add to the minimal literature on the

topic, and serve as a prod to further qualitative and quantitative research. Second, this

study will be of use to researchers. It will broaden the scope of study in adolescent

identity development. Additionally, it will add to the literature on the interaction of

religious change and psychological functioning. Most of that literature has addressed

issues relating to Christianity. This study will, in its small way, clarify some of the cross-

religion common denominators, as well as areas more particular to Jewish change. Third, yeshiva programs in Israel may benefit from a conceptualized, phenomenological understanding of the students' processes of change. Rabbi Aharon Bina, dean of Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh has informed me that, as of late, yeshivas in Israel are becoming more attuned to the psychological needs and processes of the students (Personal Communication, April 2002). In his yeshiva, where I studied for three years, they now have a psychologist on the premises for about fifteen hours each week.

Programs for study in Israel are generally single-sex, and the experiences of boys and girls are somewhat different. Although similarities far outweigh distinctions, differences in curriculum and structure create varied processes of change. Thus, the phenomena of change are best studied separately for each sex, at least in the initial stages of research in the area. This dissertation will focus on the experience of boys.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has recently found a widespread phenomenon of return to religion in the Western World at large, and in the Jewish community specifically. One would expect the field of psychology to have been long involved in understanding the psychological causes and implications of religious change processes. Historically, however, psychology and religion have shown insufficient trust of each other to jointly study their points of intersection. More recent cooperation has yielded important findings, demonstrating that psychopathology is predictive of religious change, but neither religion nor religious change creates psychopathology. Recent literature has also worked to provide models of religious change, and has just begun to draw distinctions between religious conversion and lower levels of religious change.

Although little has been written directly regarding the religious change of American students studying in Israeli yeshivas, the phenomenon is related to three extant bodies of research: the process of religious conversion, the experience of American college students spending a year in a foreign university, and the late adolescent developmental trajectory.

This chapter will discuss the relevant research in the following areas: (a) Patterns of Religious Change in the Western World; (b) The Interaction of Psychology and Religion; (c) Psychological Perspectives on Different Types of Religious Change; (d) The Mental Health Implications of Religion and Religious Change; (e) The Psychological Goals of Religious Change; (f) The Psychological and Identity Implications of Study Abroad; (g) Developmental Aspects of Late Adolescence; (h) The Role of Parents, Clergy and Community in Religious Identification and Change.

Patterns of Religious Change in the Western World:

The phenomenon of adolescent religious change in the Orthodox Jewish community takes place within the greater framework of American society. During the 1960's and 1970's, religion retreated in American public life and the numbers of religious devotees was on the decline. This phenomenon occurred throughout the Western world. A Swedish longitudinal study looked at the religiosity of subjects aged 16-55 in 1955 and again in 1970 (Hamburg, 1991). There was moderate religious decline among the older cohort (36-55), and significant decline among the younger cohort (16-35).

In recent decades, however, many individuals have turned to religion. There has been a paradigmatic shift of religious change and specifically of attachment to formal religion (Aagaard, 1992). There is evidence of increased strength among a wide range of religious groups, including Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Amish, and Jewish (Thomas, 1988), as well as Muslim (Berman, 2001). Within the Jewish world, a Baal Teshuva (returnee to Orthodox Judaism) movement began in the late 1960's and continues with strength today (Wikpedia, 2003). In addition to movement from secular to religious,

there has been a great deal of movement within religions. For instance, in the African-American community, there are reports of widespread denominational switching (Sherkat, 1992). Although religious change and increased religiousness have varying definitions in different religions, it is nonetheless useful to understand the Orthodox Jewish phenomenon as part of a greater trend. One of the goals of this dissertation is to clarify the nature of religious change in Orthodox students, and to understand it better through comparison to other phenomena of religious change.

The Interaction of Psychology and Religion:

Although trends of religious change are a sociological event, the religious changes of the individual are bound up with the psychology of human development. The interaction of religion and psychology in the process of human development is multifaceted and complex. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi has argued that religion and psychology have long improperly ignored each other (in Malony & Newton, 1992). Academic psychologists have distanced themselves from the study of psychology and religion, and religionists and theologians have seen psychology as something to tame, rather than utilize.

In reality, however, there are many levels on which religious and psychological development overlap. Relationships with G-d meet the defining criteria for attachment relationships (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Similarly, life events can often be described independently utilizing psychoanalytic or religious conceptualization (Schlauch, 1999). Religious perspectives also overlap with cognitive psychology. For religious

individuals, the religious perspective of life events is deeply woven into the fabric of their

schemas (McIntosh, 1997).

Psychological change is often clarified by religious perspectives. Several

contemporary movements in psychology, dialogical and contextual therapies, make use

of religious perspectives in treating psychological problems (Friedman, 1992). Victor

Frankl (1963) has described how a search for meaning can resolve angst of the psyche.

Psychological Conceptualizations of Religious Change:

Conversely, religious change can be better understood through the lens of

psychology. In understanding religious change psychologically, it is critical to note that

there is a spectrum of types and degrees of religious change. Pargament (1997) has

differentiated between "conservational" religious change and "reconstructive" religious

change. In the former, the goal is to change in order to maintain and solidify the

individual's present identity, while in the latter the goal is a replacement of the former

self with a new sense of being. Similarly, Pargament (1997) avers that the practice of

referring to individuals who switch religious denominations as converts is misleading. In

the process of conversion, there is a change in the goals of living. In denominational

switching the end remains more or less the same, while the path to the goal changes

(Travisano, 1970).

In addition to differences in the goals of change, there are also differences in the

content of change. Many note the distinction between spiritual change and religious

change. Contemporary writings generally term the experience focused internally as

"spirituality," while labeling as "religiousness" the feeling of connection to a community

of members (Pargament, 1997).

In his classic study of converts, James (1902, p. 250) presented the following

individual's conversion experience as typical:

> The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me,
>
> body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going
>
> through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid
>
> love; for I could not express it in any other way. I can recollect distinctly that it
>
> seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

While this experience may have been common for Christian converts of his time, it is not

clear whether this is the case for other religions or even for most Christians a century

later.

The Mental Health Implications of Religion and Religious Change:

There is also extensive debate regarding the psychological implications of

religious living and religious change. Traditionally, psychology has seen religiousness as

driven by pathological traits. Sigmund Freud (1928) understood the need for religion as a

neurotic manner of separating from one's father. Albert Ellis (1980), while coming from

a very different psychological perspective, has agreed with Freud that religiousness is

associated with emotional disturbance. He has explained that psychological health

requires flexibility, tolerance, and open-mindedness, while the religious individual

believes in "shoulds" and "musts" that create irrational thinking and mental illness.

Research, however, does not seem to bear out Ellis' view of religiousness. A

meta-analysis of 24 studies of the interplay of religiousness and pathology failed to find

support for this outlook (Bergin, 1981). Another study assessed the "religion as

pathology" thesis in the age group of this dissertation. The study used the Minnesota

Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the Mayo Religious Authoritarianism Scale and the

Broen Religious Attitude Inventory to assess the interplay of religiousness and mental

health. Research on college students aged 18-20 found no relationship between religious

authoritarianism and psychopathology (Richek & Reid, 1972).

Others suggest that it is not religion, but religious change that is associated with

psychopathology. The conception that conversion creates mental illness has long been

popular among secular mental health professionals and in society at large (Nicholi, 1974).

Indeed, a more recent study, conducted in Sweden, found that it is not religiousness but

religious change, in either direction, that is associated with emotional insecurity

(Granqvist, 1998). Religious children of irreligious parents and irreligious children of

religious parents showed higher insecurity than children who shared the beliefs of their

parents. Similar results have been found in an Orthodox Jewish population. A study in a

Jerusalem neighborhood replete with returnees to the faith found that returnees seemed

more likely to suffer from mental illness than native Orthodox Jews (Witztum, Greenberg

& Dasberg, 1990). Thirteen percent of the patients referred to their clinic were returnees,

while returnees were estimated to be well under 5 percent of the local population. The

correlation of religious change and psychopathology do not demonstrate, however, whether insecurity breeds change or change breeds insecurity.

An American study of Orthodox Jewish returnees found that change does not seem to create pathology (Trappler, Endicott, & Friedman, 1995). The study looked at a group of returnees to the Lubavitch Hasidic sect in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The results demonstrated that the mental health of returnees after change is similar to their prior historical experience. In a Crown Heights clinic, they found that there were two groups of patients. Those with severe psychopathologies had histories of such prior to conversion. The rest of the clientele was comprised of people with adjustment disorders who soon returned to normal functioning.

Long-term correlations of religious change and pathology, therefore, may result from the inclination of more troubled individuals to change. An American study yielded such results using a four-category attachment-style measure and several religiousness measures (Kirkpatrick, 1998). Longitudinal analysis revealed that increased religiousness over time was predicted by negative models of self before change.

Ullman (1982) assessed this notion of religious change in Jewish, Catholic, Bahai, and Hare Krishna converts. Interestingly, her Jewish subjects were actually not converts but Jews who had grown up irreligious and had become Orthodox. In Ullman's study, converts had more negative perceptions of their parents, and were more likely to have absent fathers. They also described their childhood as more traumatic and were very unhappy during both childhood and adolescence. Pargament (1997) summarized the relevance of emotional disturbance to religious change. "Radical change does not come easy. Some type of stressor, tension, conflict, or uneasiness seems to be a prerequisite."

Although there may be a trend toward psychopathology in those who change, individual circumstances of such individuals vary widely. Christensen (1963) noted, from his clinical experience, that the conversion process is an attempt to reintegrate a troubled ego, and could end in a number of ways. The reintegration could take place at a higher level of functioning than before, at the same level, or at a lower level. He also suggested that there is sometimes no reintegration at all.

While religious change does not seem to create long-term pathology, the process itself can be stressful. In a study of converts, Kox, Meeus, and Hart (1991) noted that some form of emotional distress was involved in the change process of 67% of their subjects compared to 20% of the controls.

Some research has suggested that the nature of the change process may predict the psychological outcome. One of the questions regarding psychopathology in converts is whether the type of conversion process is correlated with the type of pathology more commonly suffered. The most common distinction made is between sudden converts and those who undergo a slower process of change. Thus, Clark (1929) noted a disparity in the sense of guilt between these groups with 55 percent of sudden converts versus 8.5 percent of his total sample suffering from guilt feelings. There is no clear demonstration, however, whether the guilt is the cause or the result of the sudden conversion, or even due to some outside third variable. On the other hand, Roberts (1965) found no difference in levels of guilt based on the type of conversion process. Sargant (1957), meanwhile, suggested that sudden conversions are associated with simple extroverts. Here it is presumably the personality style that influences the process of change rather than the reverse, as personality is more stable than emotion.

The issue of styles of change is an important one in the Jewish community. It is known, for instance, that students in certain yeshivas change at a quicker pace than others. It would be important to understand the implications of this phenomenon.

The Psychological Goals of Religious Change:

Beyond the issue of psychopathological drives toward religious change, psychological research has tried to clarify the goal of religious change. A number of theoretical models have been proposed to conceptualize religious change teleologically. Freud described conversions as an attempt to resolve oedipal issues. As a reaction formation to an oedipal aggression toward the father, the individual submits to the father figure of G-d.

More recent studies have focused on the cognitive goals of conversion. These explanations focused on positive and negative aspects of cognition. One study described conversion as a result of a cognitive search for clarity and understanding (Loveland, 2003). Similarly, but in a negative light, another suggested that conversion results from an inability to live with ambiguity (Ullman, 1982). In other words, for better or worse, conversion attempts to reduce cognitive ambiguity.

A study analyzing both emotional and cognitive factors found the former to be more influential (Ullman, 1982). It is worth noting, however, that with the size of Ullman's study, power was quite low and it is, therefore, highly possible that she committed a type 2 error, missing the extant effects of cognitive variables (Stevens, 1996).

Other researchers have framed the drives behind religious change more spiritually. Pargament (1997) defined religious conversion as "an effort to re-create life, the individual experiences a dramatic change of the self, a change in which the self becomes identified with the sacred."

The Psychological and Identity Implications of College Study Abroad:

In addition to the literature on the adolescent religious change process, there has been study of change in young adults studying abroad in non-religious contexts. Researchers have written of a U-curve in which the visitor enters the foreign culture with a strong sense of well-being (Nash, 1991). As the outsider attempts to connect with the foreign culture, this sense of well being begins to dip. Finally, as they become adjusted to the culture their well being rises again.

Other studies have expanded this model, speaking of a W curve, noting that the same phenomenon of adjustment occurs upon reentry to one's home society. Often upon returning home, travelers find that their families and old friends are not very receptive to their experiences and perspectives. They often have the need to find friends with similar experiences to find support and validation (Raschio, 1997).

The expectations of the traveler upon returning home appear to be critical to the individual's well being. Those students who are unprepared for an adjustment period upon returning home experience added pressure. (Koester, 1984). Moreover, "the sojourners who experience the greatest difficulty in the home adjustment may be those who were most successful in adapting to the foreign culture (Brislin and Van Buren in Koester, p. 252).

Developmental Aspects of Late Adolescence:

Late adolescence is also a time of change regardless of one's venue. The change in this study's subjects must, therefore, also be seen through the prism of normal adolescent development. Erikson (1950) expanded Freud's model of developmental stages to later periods of life. Of most relevance to this study, he explained that the late adolescent years are marked by the task of solidifying an identity independent of one's parents. The individual undergoes this process, eventually reaching a point of identity confusion or identity integration. Both Erikson (1950) and Rogers (1961) have explained that the adolescent period, in particular, demonstrates that people's prime drive is a search for meaning rather than pleasure.

An essential element of identity development in this stage is the task of differentiating from parents (Schultheis & Blustein, 1995). Traditionally, psychologists viewed lower levels of conflict as demonstrating more successful separation. More recently, however, studies have found that conflictual independence is the healthiest form of separation (Rice, 1992). In fact, some have found an angry relationship with one's parents during this phase to be the strongest predictor of adjustment in college.

Adolescence is generally one of the most stressful periods of life, and times of academic transition are especially psychologically trying for these young adults. Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan (1996) found younger adolescents to undergo temporary dips in self-esteem at the beginnings of both junior high and high school. Similarly, Koester (1984) found the beginning of study abroad to be an emotionally difficult time for American college students.

During these challenging years, peers play several important roles in the lives of adolescents. Friends provide the emotional support that adolescents are no longer willing to receive from their parents (Kanner et al., 1987). Moreover, interaction with varied peers allows for the exploration that eventually allows the individual to solidify an integrated identity (Berk, 2001).

The Role of Parents, Clergy and Peers in Religious Development:

Studies have demonstrated that both the home and the external environment play a role in the creation of an individual's religious identity. There are many aspects of early childhood, including parenting and emotional development, that contribute to later adolescent religious development. Myers (1996) found that parental religiousness is the most reliable predictor of a child's degree of religious commitment. The likelihood of a parent being able to pass on their perspective to his child, meanwhile, is dependent upon the quality of the parent-child relationship. Thus, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found that subjects describing their mother as cold and unresponsive were more likely to undergo a process of religious change, rather than retain their parent's religious values.

Nonetheless, when adolescents undergo religious change, their interaction with religious practitioners may be just as important in their identity formation. Indeed, other studies have found denominational membership to be an even greater predictor than parental religiousness (Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith, 1982). A focal aspect of the process should, therefore, entail the interaction with clergy. Nonetheless, there is a surprising absence of research on the involvement of clergy in the process of religious change. Rather, discussion of the role of clergy has focused more on their role in pastoral

counseling (Boisen, 1948; Taylor & Chatters, 1988; Sandoz, C., 2001) than on their

involvement in the change process. There has, on the other hand, been extensive

documentation across many religions of the power of the peer group or congregation in

the religious change process (Pargament, 1997).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

<u>Study Methodology:</u>

This study was conducted qualitatively, utilizing the "grounded theory"

technique. There are several advantages to studying this phenomenon qualitatively rather

than quantitatively. In areas that have been little studied, the first step in analysis is

determining the issues that need to be understood. Thus, importing a quantitative scale

and construct from other arenas of identity development and religious change might

obscure factors that are unique or more profoundly relevant in the Orthodox Jewish

community. A qualitative study lays the groundwork for later quantitative study, which

will more validly and reliably assess the relevant factors.

There is also a more fundamental advantage to qualitative research. The

positivistic nature of quantitative analysis reduces rich, nuanced human experiences to

simplified variables. For instance, the tone and flavor of relationship struggles with one's

parents become degrees of various relationship variables. Religious change is

operationalized in accord with discrete behaviors. A qualitative description of these

elements gives greater expression to the phenomenology of life in yeshiva. This will

provide layperson, researcher, and clinician with greater empathy for the yeshiva student.

The more interactive nature of qualitative interviewing also allows for feedback from interviewees regarding the accuracy of the results. Although such a process compromises scientific validity, it increases the richness and phenomenological accuracy of the study (Kazdin, 1998).

Qualitative research stems from at least two separate, time-tested traditions (Kazdin, 1998). The first source is the philosophical school of phenomenology, which emphasizes the need to understand the individual's experience from within. That is, a critical element of understanding human emotion and behavior is relating to the person's subjective experience of the world rather than objectivizing the experience.

Second, sociological and anthropological investigators have conveyed the importance of becoming involved in the context of the subject of study. From a positivistic perspective, such a technique lessens the researcher's ability to clearly conceptualize the phenomenon. This tradition suggests, however, that it is the quantitative researcher who is unable to properly assess the subject because of insufficient personal experience of the phenomenon. While microbes and atoms may require only an objective microscope, the richness of human experience necessitates that the researcher himself enter the world of the subject in order to make sense of it.

There are numerous media used to conduct qualitative research. These include interviews, observation, documents, and audio or videotapes (Kazdin, 1998). Although these media may be used in quantitative studies as well, a qualitative study uses an open approach to allow the subjects to direct the formulation rather than applying a pre-constructed code or scale to the phenomenon.

There are several methods to ensure that the more subjective approach does not render the data invalid or no more conceptualized than a piece of literature. First, the investigator must make explicit his perspective and biases regarding the area of study. Generally, one researches an area that bears some interest and hence relevance to one's own life experience. Openness regarding this connection allows oneself as well as the reader to fairly assess the conclusions.

Second, the investigator uses several sources to check his conclusions. The subjects themselves provide feedback regarding the researchers themes and conclusions. Although subjects are also biased, inasmuch as the goal is to capture their experience, subject feedback can be invaluable. Additionally, other individuals knowledgeable in the area of study are used to corroborate or question the results.

There are also a number of different ways to analyze the generated raw data. These include grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, life history, and conversational analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study utilizes the grounded theory technique, which entails a three-step data analysis. The first stage is a very general sweep of the material, "open coding." The interviews are combed for discrete incidents, phenomena, or events that hint at common themes in the subjects' experiences. Each type of phenomenon is coded so that similar phenomena can be gathered across subjects. Analysis also assesses the dimensions of each category. For instance, there is a description of the frequency of the appearance of each variable.

In the second stage, the researcher performs "axial coding." The goal of this stage is to identify possible connections between the separate categories of phenomena.

Finally, the researcher performs "selective coding." This process entails the conceptualization of the categories and their interrelations. A central theory is developed along with corollary explanations of the pattern of relationships among the phenomena. The results can be found in the coding manual in Appendix C.

Subjects:

The subjects in this study were eighteen Orthodox Jewish male students between the ages of 19-23 presently studying in the United States. The criteria for inclusion in the study were that the individual had studied in a post-high school yeshiva program in Israel and felt that he had undergone "meaningful change."

The duration of stay in Israel ranged from one to two years. Five subjects studied in Israel for one year, ten subjects for eighteen months, and three subjects for two years. Subjects had completed their yeshiva study in Israel between ½ year and 2½ years ago. Three of the subjects had been back for six months, three for twelve months, seven for eighteen months, one for two years, and two for thirty months. The minimum ensured that the subjects had an opportunity to reassess and concretize their process of change as they integrated back into life in America. The maximum ensured that the experience was still fresh in the subject's mind.

The large majority of the subjects attended high school in the New York Metropolitan area, but they came from a number of different Modern Orthodox institutions. Seven subjects attended high school on Long Island, four in Brooklyn, three in Manhattan two in Bergen County, New Jersey, and two in east coast urban areas several hours from New York.

The subjects attended an array of Israeli yeshiva programs for post-high school Americans. There were five alumni of Yeshivat HaKotel in Jerusalem, four from Yeshivat Shaalvim located around the midpoint between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, three from Yeshivat Ohr Yerushalayim in Beit Meir, three from Yeshivat Har Etzion around twenty minutes south of Jerusalem, and one each from Yeshivat Mevasseret Tzion in a Jerusalem suburb, Beit Medrash L'Torah in Jerusalem, and Yeshivat Ner Ya'akov in Jerusalem.

Most of the subjects, eleven, were attending Yeshiva University at the time of the interview. Four were studying at New York City area universities, and three were splitting their time between a New York City area university and a yeshiva.

The subjects came from a spectrum of home environments. Eleven grew up in modern orthodox homes, three in traditional homes, and three in secular ones. Upon interview, three interviews considered themselves Modern Orthodox, three were yeshivish, nine were in between Modern Orthodox and yeshivish, one was traditional, and two were unsure.

Procedure:

Prospective subjects were contacted by telephone for an initial screening to ascertain that they were appropriate for and comfortable with the nature of the study. Subjects were found through several networking channels. First, the researcher contacted synagogue rabbis and high school teachers in the New York City metropolitan area, Boston, and Denver. He asked them for referrals to students who had returned home recently after study in Israel, and appeared to have gone through religious change.

Second, the researcher contacted teachers and program directors of Israeli yeshiva programs in Jerusalem, Shaalvim, Beit Shemesh, and Beit Meir, inquiring regarding recent yeshiva attendees, who appeared to have undergone religious change. Finally, the researcher contacted 19-20 year old acquaintances at Yeshiva University and Columbia University, in search of referrals to appropriate candidates for the study.

After the referring party received permission from the prospective subject, the researcher contacted him by phone and explained the study to him. If the prospective subject was not interested in participating in the study, the researcher thanked him and terminated contact. If the prospective subject was interested in participating in the study, the researcher arranged a meeting at a location that was convenient for the subject. Eight of the interviews took place in a secluded corner of the Yeshiva University Mendel Gottesman library. Seven interviews were held in the subject's home; one was held in the Young Israel of Woodmere synagogue; one was held in a small Brooklyn yeshiva; and one was held in the researcher's home.

Before commencing the interview protocol, the participant was given the opportunity to ask questions, and the consent forms were reviewed (Appendix A). The participant was reminded that his responses were confidential and that he could cease the audiotaping or note-taking, or discontinue the interview completely, at any time. The interviews lasted approximately 70-90 minutes, and were audiotaped. Written notes were also recorded during the interviews. Quotations in the results and discussion sections were transcribed verbatim in order to preserve the integrity and flavor of the material. A glossary of Hebrew terms can be found in Appendix D.

After the completion of each interview, the participant was debriefed and given the investigator's contact information for follow-up concerns. The audiotapes, consent forms and interview notes were kept in a locked file and only handled by the investigator. All identifying information was deleted from each record. This includes information that identified either the individual or the yeshiva in which he studied or members of its staff. For ethical reasons as well as for communal acceptance, it is important that the study be a review of common denominators of yeshivas, not a comparison of individual yeshivas.

Instrument:

The Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Psychological and Religious Change During Study in Israel is an instrument developed by the researcher to study the processes of religious and psychological change in post-high school modern orthodox male students that occur while studying in Israeli yeshivas (see Appendix B).

The instrument consists of 41 questions with several follow-up questions to be used, contingent upon the nature of the responses. The questions examine issues relating to the religious and psychological state of the subject before and after study in Israel, as well as the nature of the process of change.

These topic areas were selected for investigation based upon previous research conducted in the areas of psychology and religion, developmental psychology, and the process of religious change. The research, which was described in detail above, indicates that the process of religious change is intimately connected with psychological development. The questions in the current protocol were designed to assess the nature of

psychological and religious change, as well as the importance of separation and individuation from parents in the process of religious change.

The majority of the questions asked of subjects were semi-structured. These questions provided direction for the response, but left sufficient room for the subject to describe his experience freely and shape the researcher's understanding. For instance, Subjects were asked to describe several of their most spiritual moments in yeshiva. Such an open-ended question allowed the subject to describe the phenomenological experience, as well as to address the importance of spirituality and of discrete moments in the process of change. At the same time, a smaller number of structured questions were included in order to provide some basis for more direct comparison of subjects' responses. For example, subjects were asked the number of hours that they devoted each day to extra-curricular Torah study before and after study in Israel. This type of concrete data could provide information regarding the importance of Torah study in the change process, as well as the predictive value of dedication to Torah study prior to study in Israel.

Interviewer Background:

The interviewer was a 30-year-old Orthodox Jewish male who possesses a Masters of Psychology degree from Rutgers University, and is a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University.

In a qualitative study where the researcher gleans information by immersing himself in the subjects' experiences, it is important to clarify the perspectives and biases

of the researcher regarding the subject at hand. After growing up an Orthodox Jew while attending a public high school in Urbana, Illinois, I spent two years studying in Israel before returning to study at Princeton University. My experience in Israel was life-changing, as a time of emotional growth and religious change. During my time in Israel my weltanschauung concretized and I began to individuate from parents. I became somewhat more religiously conservative than my parents; this process was important for me as an experience of religious growth, and also in the process of individuation.

As an outgrowth of my experience, I have largely positive views of the phenomenon of students going through religious change in Israel, with some reservations. I also do not feel that the process of religious change is inherently psychologically beneficial or detrimental.

During the interview process, I adopted a curious, but detached stance. My outward appearance made clear to the subjects that I too was an Orthodox Jew, and I tried to use this to my advantage, in making them comfortable that I could understand their experience. At the same time, I consciously refrained from any encouraging or critical remarks or intonations regarding their responses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results in this chapter were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with eighteen subjects, who described themselves as undergoing meaningful religious change during study in Israel. Each of the students attended an orthodox high school in the United States, studied in an Israeli yeshiva for one-two years, and then returned to the United States. The information collected in the interviews were analyzed using the aforementioned methodology of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

The results are presented in four groupings, based on the categories of inquiry used in the interviews. These areas are a) level of observance, religiousness, and spirituality; b) the process of religious change; c) the interaction of religious change and psychological issues; d) relationship with parents.

Level of Observance, Religiousness, and Spirituality:

The first category of questions sought to clarify the meaning and parameters of religion in the lives of these students before study in Israel, and to detail what religious changes took place during study in Israel.

Prior to study in Israel, twelve subjects (66%) saw themselves as observing

halacha (Jewish law) within the norms of the modern orthodox community. In

retrospect, many remembered considering themselves as strictly observant at the time.

> Before I went to Israel, according to my school, I considered myself to be pretty religious. Many of the kids in [my high] school weren't religious.

Other subjects stated that they had not felt their observance to be ideal, but did not yet

feel the need to change.

> I viewed that as being the best I could have been. I admitted it as being hypocritical; I didn't think of it as the right way to live Jewishly, but I felt it was the right way to live for myself in the context that I was living in.

One student labeled this phenomenon the "delay button," explaining that he had felt

himself to be on the way to changing on a semi-conscious level, although this had not yet

manifested behaviorally at all.

> I think I always had in mind that I would become more frum (observant), when I got back; that was always in mind. There was just a delay button.

Three of the subjects (17%) grew up in Modern Orthodox families, but described

themselves as less observant than their families and living outside the norms of the

community. Among these subjects, this behavior did not seem to be a function of

rebellion, but rather a feeling of apathy regarding observance.

> As you go through high school, 10th 11th 12th, you become less afraid of the teachers, so by 12th grade you just come in at 9 a.m. after *davening* (prayer) for class.

Two of the subjects (11%) reported being strictly observant prior to study in Israel

and not changing in that sphere. One subject (11%) reported coming from a non-

observant family and being non-observant himself.

Types of Change

Almost all of the subjects (89%) reported changes in observance as a meaningful

part of their change. The specific changes varied, but included practices such as

increased care in praying three times daily, more stringent kosher standards, wearing

yarmulke (skullcap) and *tzitzit* (ritual undergarment), and more restricted contact with

girls until dating with the goal of marriage. One subject explained that this array of new

behaviors were actually a single unit for him.

> That's the only way I can describe it. Every halacha I know I try to keep.

For many subjects, however, this new level of observance was inextricably intertwined

with a new phenomenology.

> I realized that religion was defined by what you eat and keeping *Shabbos*
> (observing the laws of Sabbath), I realized it takes up more of your daily
> activities. You know making *brachos* (blessings) on food, wearing tzitzis,
> making a bracha after the bathroom, *learning* (studying Torah) at night. These
> were all things that I hadn't really considered before, that I didn't really know
> existed. Well I knew they existed, but they weren't considered an option.

While the large majority of subjects underwent observance changes, their

experiences of the changes differed. Some of the men felt the change to be an outgrowth

of their previous observance.

> I think just in terms of my relationship to G-d got deepened. I still read a lot (philosophically) and that speaks to me a lot. I think basically everything I had in high school has just been, let's say it's deeper and more intense than it was. There was no radical change. I was dedicated to *halacha* before, but now I'm more careful about certain areas. I have trouble with some of the same things that I did in high school. Sexual things, how I treat other people. The same areas that I was *nichshal* (failed to observe) before are there. I personally think I'm doing much better, but there hasn't been an eradication of any challenges. But there's the pressure and guilt factor that I should be less shayach (associated) to those things now.

Other subjects, however, felt their new observance to entail a radical shift from their previous mode.

> I just keep everything stricter. It was a pretty drastic change…
> I'd say my character has changed. I try to act in a manner consistent with Jewish beliefs.

Involvement in Torah Study

Prior to study in Israel, the subject pool was split in its study of *Torah* (the Bible and Talmud). Nine of the subjects (53%) only studied Torah as an academic subject in school. Eight of the subjects (47%), however, also studied Torah outside school, although none did on a daily basis. After study in Israel, all of the subjects studied Torah beyond academic requirements. However, many described Torah as becoming more than simply one of their extra-curricular activities. Fifteen subjects (88%) experienced it as an encompassing experience that was the focus of their life pursuit. Two (12%) subjects studied Torah beyond academic requirements, but did not describe it as an encompassing part of their life.

Among those describing Torah study as an encompassing aspect of their life,

many derived great pleasure from the activity.

> Before going to Israel, I understood that you have to learn in order to know history and halacha, but to learn it all the time?! It's boring. Why would you do that? After studying in Israel, my attitude changed. I loved it. It's an intellectual experience, where sometimes after doing it for a few hours, you're on a different planet.

Others, however, did not enjoy Torah study, but felt it to be an encompassing obligation,

"something I had to do."

The subjects described an array of different reasons and manners in which they

felt Torah study to be meaningful to them. Some felt it connected them with a larger

mission, "a responsibility because I'm Jewish, just to preserve your heritage." Others felt

learning to be their primary vehicle for connecting with the Divine.

> I sort of see it as discipline. Not an intellectual discipline, but a way to continue your connection, your relationship with G-d. It's weird because it shouldn't necessarily have to bring you towards G-d. For instance, you're learning *Bava Metzia*, (laws of ownership and contracts), but when you finish it seems to have this weird affect on you, like you feel like a better person in a way. Like you're really using your mind the way it should be used.

For others, it was not the process of learning, but the content of learning that was

meaningful.

> First of all, I feel like you have to know everything in order to do it.
> But you can't just learn straight halacha, you have to know the whole *gemara* (Talmud)…Also through learning your observance level becomes better. People also say they learn because it connects them with Hashem (G-d). That's not me. I learn because I want to know the whole Torah…It's the desire to be a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar), to give *shiur* (teach Talmud class), to know, but not the actual learning…In Israel, I created this sense of wanting to know everything…I want to learn it, *chazar* (review) it, know it, and move on to the next thing. Everything adds up and I'll have a broad base of knowledge.

Interestingly, not all who became engrossed in learning described themselves as

intellectually curious people before going to Israel.

> I generally hate reading, I just can't sit and read…That idea never came to me; it still doesn't come to me. My idea of having free time is playing basketball. I never hated learning more than anything else; I just hated reading. Now learning is everything.

Another subject explained the importance of learning outside of an academic structure.

> I think [in high school] my classes began and ended by semester. After I got my grade I forgot about the course. [After study in Israel] I was very aware that my learning had more long-term implications and that it was much more eternal things, and that what I was doing was part of a grander scheme…my learning was something that transcended that by a lot.

Back in the United States, the study of Torah also served as a conduit back to inspired

times.

> When I go to Y.U. (Yeshiva University) and learn with my *chevrusa* (study partner), I think the learning provides me with different things now then it used to. Right now it's like a breath of fresh air; it takes me back to yeshiva. I guess that's also the environment. It warms my heart; opens up/wakes up my *neshama* (soul).

Goals of Study

Subjects were questioned regarding their goals for their time in Israel both before

going and during the time they were there. Subjects' goals did not change radically

during the year in Israel. Ten (55%) reported learning as an important goal for them

before going to Israel, while sixteen (89%) reported it during study in Israel. Nine (50%)

reported spiritual growth as an important goal for them before study in Israel, while

eleven (61%) reported it during study in Israel. The major difference in goals seemed to

be in the degree of focus on and understanding of these goals. Before going to Israel,

subjects also harbored less serious goals. Five subjects (28%) reported having fun as an

important goal, and three (17%) reported going because everyone goes as a reason for

going. Many subjects explained that their desire to learn was somewhat subliminal prior

to going to Israel.

> It's very weird, because I had two separate goals [before going to Israel] and
> they completely contradicted each other. So how that was supposed to work out
> I don't know. One of them was, not really a goal, just all my friends are going
> to Israel, and I want to be a year away with my friends in a different country
> away from parents and have a great time. You know everyone comes back and
> loves it. At the same time, I was realistic and I knew that everyone who comes
> back has gotten more religious and I wasn't afraid of it. I knew that something
> was going to happen and I welcomed it a little bit.

These subjects explained that there were manifestations of their subconscious interest in

intense learning and spiritual growth in their choice of yeshiva.

> I went to have fun. I go places to have fun. That was the main goal. Well I
> certainly did not go to Israel to learn, but I did know that I was going to yeshiva.
> And a yeshiva has certain regulations. I chose a yeshiva that has regulations on
> purpose. At some point I was supposed to go to ____(a yeshiva without strict
> rules), but the whole year can go by without anything happening.   So I decided
> on _____ specifically because it has regulations. You know when I say it's all
> for fun, there was something in the back of my mind, you know I can't just have
> fun because that can't happen.

One subject explained that seeing older students who had changed in Israel gave him

some direction as to what his religious growth might entail.

> The guys who came back from yeshiva, I wanted to strive to be more like that.
> There was a certain demeanor or way they carry themselves and are serious
> about learning… When you see a product that looks impressive, it's meaningful.

Even those who were more consciously interested in learning or spiritual growth

explained that they "had no idea what that meant" prior to their study in Israel.

The focusing of goals during study in Israel manifested in several ways. For

many, it entailed setting their spiritual sights higher.

> By the end, my goal was to not have a limit of 'this is what I'm gonna be religiously,' but just to keep going and keep as many halachos as I can and be as good a Jew as I can, in action and in learning, and to be a better person also.

Another subject explained that his appreciation of the magnitude of the goal grew over the course of the year.

> I think all my goals from before remained, but I realized they were not going to happen as quickly as I hoped. I realized that it was more of a lifetime pursuit and would encompass all of my existence, as opposed to being another nice little characteristic.

The Process of Religious Change and Identity Formation:

The second category of questions focused on the manner in which religious change and identity formation took place. Subjects were asked regarding the timing, internal and external impetuses, and developmental progress of their change.

Spiritual Moments

Although the subjects changed in many different ways, spiritual moments were directly or indirectly important in the process. Subjects were asked about spiritual moments they experienced both before and during the year in Israel. Some types of spiritual experiences were common both before and during study in Israel, while others were unique to the Israel experience.

Ruach (spiritual song and dance) moments were a common response both before and during study in Israel. Ten (55%) subjects reported a ruach experience prior to Israel, while nine (50%) reported one in Israel.

These experiences entailed many different emotional and experiential aspects, and seemed to be qualitatively similar whether experienced in high school or during study in

Israel. Subjects usually described this experience as entailing some feeling of connection with something higher. The path of spiritual connection through ruach experiences varied, however, from one individual to another. One subject described it as a feeling of connectedness with others.

> *Motzei Shabbos* (Saturday night) junior year in high school at the *shabbaton* (weekend retreat). You all sit together in a huge room and have slow singing and dancing. I usually wasn't so into it, but I looked around the room and saw some of the kids that didn't keep Shabbos, and just seeing them being into slow singing, Hebrew songs- we're all Jewish, nice moment, nice general atmosphere, we're all together. I don't think it really stayed with me religiously. It was just a moment where instead of rushing through things like a regular weekend, it was a moment to step back and look around you and see who you're surrounded by.

Others, however, experienced these spiritual moments as a connection through turning inward.

> Usually the Friday night *onegs* (evening gatherings) on in Shabboses (Shabboses spent in yeshiva) were the height of spirituality. You sit there in a room and the room is pitch black. And you're able to sing and no one's watching you. It's good, you can just think of the words you're singing and think of everything you've done, will do. And you can think with the clearest mind. It really brings you a spiritual uplifting.

While these ruach experiences were similar before and during study in Israel, one subject explained that the frequency of these experiences differed.

> Pssh. You can't choose among the spiritual experiences in yeshiva; they're all over the place.

Subjects also suggested that the impact of these experiences was different. During high school, several subjects emphasized the fleeting nature of these spiritual highs.

> At Camp Moshava we would sit in a circle and sing slow songs. I was always a fan…When I say it was a spiritual moment, I mean I was sitting and schmoozing with my friends, but…sometimes, on the last Shabbos of camp,

that's when someone gets up and tells one of those meaningful stories. I remember one *tish* (Shabbos evening gathering) after my junior year, in camp. One of my old counselors gave a great speech. I guess I felt into it, excited. I don't know what it meant. It didn't translate into learning or going to davening the next day. There was no higher for me. I never knew what was higher than that. What does that mean?

Another subject explained why his pre-Israel spiritual moments only had a temporary effect.

We had a really great shabbaton…it felt good, it felt right. This is a spiritual high that I can't really explain…it didn't really leave an impact beyond the weekend. It was nice. I don't think I was looking for an impact.

On the other hand, one subject suggested that, while there was no overt impact of his pre-Israel ruach experience, he believed that it did leave an impact under the surface.

A lot of times during the summer guys are pretty wild, and it feels like everything is just about having fun and enjoying yourself, so when I felt I had a chance to do something religious I was happy about it. And I felt good about myself. At the time I was heading one way in my mind and that shifted me. Even though I didn't act any more religious, in my mind I think I was.

Conversations were also a common spiritual experience both before and during study in Israel. During high school, three subjects (17%) reported a conversation that they experienced as a spiritual moment. These conversations were usually with a charismatic figure and entailed emotional heightening. During study in Israel three subjects (17%) reported a spiritual conversation experience. One subject described such a moment.

This is toward the end. But I had a cousin in Israel that I was close with. He's a *rosh kollel* (advanced Talmud study institute director). He has a small kollel in Mea Shearim (Ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem neighborhood). He's a very special person. I used to learn with him when I was in the _____ Yeshiva…Every time I spoke with him was a religious moment. One incident I remember *Sukkos* (Jewish fall holiday) in his house. I remember the lights had gone off and the room was dark. The meal was over and we were in the sleeping *sukka* (holiday hut). I was setting up my bed with my friend. And we just got to talking. I remember we just sat there with the moonlight shining on his face. He's someone I still respect very much, and he's a

> *Chasidish Litvak* (spiritual scholar). He has a lot of feeling, a lot of emotion. He speaks very passionately about his relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu (G-d).

Although spiritual conversations were experienced in a similar manner before and during study in Israel, conversation in Israel tended to leave a more lasting impact. This subject captured the poignancy and permanence of these conversations in describing them as "Kodak moments, defining moments."

> There were several other types of spiritual moments that subjects reported experiencing both before and during study in Israel. Two subjects (11%) reported experiencing a trauma as a spiritual moment before study in Israel, while one reported a spiritual trauma during study in Israel. One subject (6%) experienced performing a kind act as a spiritual moment before and during study in Israel.

Interestingly, no subjects reported experiencing no spiritual moments before study in Israel, but two subjects (11%) reported none during study in Israel. One subject described how he changed radically without any discrete moments of inspiration.

> I wish I could tell you I went to the *Kotel* (Western Wall) and had a spiritual moment, but I didn't. I didn't have one of those crazy moments. It wasn't like a boom. It wasn't wow now I see G-d. People assume you get brainwashed. They see you go to Israel and come back completely different and assume something happened, it was a click. It was gradually, slowly over time, it just happened through one rabbi. It happened through me trying to poke holes in everything he said. I wanted to be that one person who finds the hole in the Torah and disproves Judaism. Every conversation, every philosophical debate we got into, he would just rock me. Not that he was smarter, not that he was a better debater. Bottom line was he was debating for G-d and I was debating for crazy American society views. It wasn't one time; it was months of his disproving every view that I had over time that got me.

While ruach and conversations were common spiritual experiences before and during study in Israel, prayer and learning were more common spiritual moments in Israel. Four subjects (22%) reported a spiritual prayer experience and two (11%) reported a spiritual

learning experience during high school. During study in Israel, six subjects (33%)

reported a spiritual prayer experience and five (28%) reported a spiritual learning

experience. Although all of the subjects were exposed to prayer and learning in high

school, these experiences were apparently experienced differently in Israel. One subject

described how prayer inspired him in Israel.

> So my *kollel guy* (rabbinical student) said to me 'whether you believe it or not, just daven fifteen minutes a day, do it in English, do it Russian. I don't care. Just ask G-d to show you the truth, and I promise G-d will take you there'…I can't say there was that one day, boom, when it started, but gradually I just started getting this feeling that just felt so right.

Another subject described the way in which learning had spiritual meaning to him.

> Oh there were so many spiritual moments in yeshiva. I think just learning gemara was a spiritual experience. It was a feeling, after you work at it for an hour and get the idea, you feel like you're part of it, part of the mesorah (chain of transmission of Jewish Law). The [rabbis in the Talmud] were arguing; now you understand why and what the whole deal is. Now you know what they knew. The whole year was basically one great spiritual experience.

Most Significant Religious Changes

When subjects were asked about the most significant changes that took place

during the year, two major areas of change emerged. Among subjects responding to this

question, four subjects (45%) reported changes in weltanschauung as well as behavior.

Two subjects (22%) reported behavioral changes alone. Four subjects (45%) reported

only a change in weltanschauung. Behavioral changes entailed the types of observance

changes discussed earlier. Although the behavioral changes were more overtly

detectable, one subject explained that the base of changes was the shifting of perspective.

> I think it's more in terms of ideology than acts. The importance of being observant. Rabbi _____ spoke to us… He said that if you don't believe that this world is a corridor to the next world, this world is the most depressing thing; it's

just a time clock to dying. He also made a comment about a t-shirt he saw in New York: 'the person who dies with the most toys wins.' That molded my ideology.

Time of Year of Most Significant Change

The academic year in Israeli yeshivas consists of five periods. The first period, *Elul Zman* (The period of the Hebrew month Elul), is a five-week period from the opening of the year until Yom Kippur; the second period is the two-week Sukkot holiday break following Yom Kippur; the third period is the five-month *Choref Zman* (Winter Period) from after Sukkot until two weeks before Passover; the fourth period is the month-long *Pesach* (Passover) break; the fifth period is the two-month *Kayitz Zman* (summer period).

The majority of subjects could remember a specific point in the year of their most significant changes, but the time of year varied from subject to subject. For a significant minority, the process was gradual with no defining moments.

Ten of the subjects (55%) pinpointed a particular time during the year that was the turning point in their change process. Six (33%) labeled Choref Zman as the critical juncture; two (11%) labeled Sukkot break; one (6%) labeled Elul Zman; one (6%) labeled Kayitz Zman.

At a certain level, logistics warrant Choref Zman's place as the most common turning point, as it is the longest of the periods, spanning five-six months of the ten-month year. However some subjects felt that the uninterrupted nature of the time period

was also critical. Another subject explained that weather was a factor in the timing of his

change.

> Sometime around Chanukah is when I started getting serious, and I'm trying to
> remember why…When it gets cold in _____ Yeshiva, there's very little
> reason to leave. I'd just go from my room to the beit medrash (study hall).

Several of the other periods were more surprising times for a turning point.

Inasmuch as the learning and yeshiva atmosphere are generally the impetus for change, it

seems surprising that several subjects experienced a turning point during the Sukkot

break. The two subjects experiencing this described similar phenomena of being driven

to change by their dissatisfaction with their experiences during the break.

> I ended up going with my friends to Netanya (coastal resort town) over Sukkot.
> I decided that what they were doing is not for me any more, but it could be a
> nice vacation. I don't necessarily have to do what they do. You know, in high
> school I had friends who were eating non-kosher [while I didn't], so I could do
> the same here. But it didn't happen that way. I ended up going back to what I
> used to do. And then I had no place to go for the first days of *yom tov* (the
> holiday) and my friend had an apartment, and said we could sleep there on the
> floor. And then afterward, we'd find a hotel or something to sleep at.
>
> We ended up staying there for the entire Sukkot, and there were just guys
> coming in off of the street, you knew 'em you didn't know em. There were girls
> coming in off of the street. People passing out on the floor drunk. A lot of
> smoking… There were crazy things going on. I was sleeping all day and
> staying up all night. Right at the beginning I realized 'this is not for me,' but I
> had no other situation at the time. So it just became 'this is what I'm doing.' So
> once I got back to yeshiva after Sukkot, I was like 'o.k. I'm gonna learn now.
> I'm gonna start trying to change.'

Another form of dissatisfaction was the source of transition for the subject who

did not change until Kayitz Zman.

This happened one Shabbos in Mea Shearim after [the holiday of] *Shavuos* (late spring holiday). We stayed at one kid's uncle's house, who's a *rebbe* (teacher) in _____ Yeshiva. So in the afternoon, I went to take a nap and so did one friend. The other friend said 'I'm going to learn.' He said, 'should I wake you up?' So my friend said, 'yeah wake me up in an hour.' So I said 'wake me up in an hour too.' So three, four hours later I get up and go to the *bais medrash* (study hall), and realize these guys had been learning straight through. So I thought 'these guys are great. Look at me I'm such a bum.' It hit me. So we went to the rebbe's for *shalosh seudos* (Sabbath afternoon meal). After *havdalah* (Sabbath concluding ceremony), he starts asking us questions on the gemara, and I had no idea what he was talking about. And the other guys were asking him *kashyas* (questions) back and forth. And I'm sitting there like an idiot. And while we're sitting there, I realized that I wasted an entire year. I got back to yeshiva that Saturday night and started really learning. That was one moment that changed me in learning and in every way. I started learning *mussa*r (ethical introspection), I started davening better, getting to *seder* (partner study period) on time. Everything started to have meaning.

Change-Inducing Experiences

Ten subjects (62%) reported a conversation as a turning point in their change process. Among these subjects, some of them identified the nature of the conversation as a positively focused one, helping the subject better see the alternatives to their status quo.

I had a little schmooze with my rebbe, and he basically outlined…I had had a rough stretch…He outlined the idea of Judaism being a part of you. You're not just going to learn, but it's the change in attitude that's more important, because then everything snowballs. It took me about a month to get used to it because everybody says you go to learn.

Other subjects explained that a negative focus forced them to reconsider their previous conception of themselves, the world, or Judaism.

It was a Sunday night *erev Yom Kippur* (Yom Kippur eve), speaking with a *madrich* (dormitory counselor) and *shana bet* (second year) guy. So the madrich said to me 'you don't believe in G-d at all,' and the conversation took off from there. You find … people do whatever they want. You serve yourself, not G-d. That's believing in yourself, not in G-d.

As will be discussed later, many others were deeply turned off by a critical approach.

Two subjects (12%) reported an internal contemplative experience as critical. In one case, the subject was inspired to make definite changes by seeing others who had gone through these changes. Another subject was inspired, upon recognizing the beginnings of his own change, to make deeper changes.

Four subjects (19%) reported a gradual process of change with no notable turning point.

> I wish I could tell you I went to the Kotel and had a spiritual moment, but I didn't. I didn't have one of those crazy moments. It wasn't like a boom. It wasn't 'wow now I see G-d.' People assume you get brainwashed. They see you go to Israel and come back completely different and assume something happened, it was a click. [In actuality] it was gradually, slowly over time…

At a certain level, this could take place without the subject even realizing exactly what was happening.

> Gradually, just one day I'd do something extra. One day I was bored and I'd pick up a *sefer* (Jewish book). Like, instead of reading *Sports Illustrated*, I'd do something more Jewish oriented. And it pretty much built from there.

Drives Behind Change

In addition to understanding the content and timing of the change, the study attempted to clarify the subjects' phenomenological experience of the internal drives behind the process of change. While all of the subjects experienced the change as a step toward a more true or meaningful mode of living, most were also able to identify psychological or emotional aspects of the change process.

Five subjects (36%) described themselves as driven by dissatisfaction with the status quo. For some of these subjects the feeling of dissatisfaction was focused on their previous lifestyle.

> I guess before we went to *Eretz Yisroel*, (Israel) I was just not happy with what I was doing… Yeah, there was for sure one point for a few days in the summer before Israel-- July, August when I felt like that. All my friends were doing drugs and stuff, and everyone was just out for themselves. It was stupid. I remember coming home from work at 5:30 one day and saying 'this is so stupid.' It didn't stop me except for that one day, but…

For others, however, the feeling of dissatisfaction focused on accomplishment in learning.

> Looking around and thinking 'these guys learned so much and I haven't really learned.' That clued me in. I said 'I don't know what's gonna happen in the fall, but I have a job to do, and I became very determined and very focused.' It was a feeling that I'd wasted a lot of my time. I was just sitting in the B.M. (Beit Medrash) and looking at my gemara or sitting in my room and reading a book.. Seeing how much other people had accomplished made me realize.

Six (43%) of the subjects cited a feeling of inspiration as the prime drive behind the change.

> Nothing in particular drove me…It was just over a period of time, living in Israel and there are no academic classes, just everything is learning, gemara, mussar. It just overwhelmed me, took me over and that's how it happened.

Other subjects felt that their change was largely driven by external forces. Three subjects (21%) reported feeling driven by pressure from the environment.

> I wouldn't say this is why I grew, but people say 'I want to turn out like this or that,' and sometimes I felt like I had to do that. There is added pressure from satisfying other people. Not that these were my driving goals, but still it's an added pressure.

For one subject the environment was experienced as a gently encouraging drive to change.

> I guess it started out as curiosity, and being in the setting, I mean what else are you going to do. It's Israel, you can't go anywhere because of curfew and security. So the general framework just leads toward action, and then they hope once you start that you'll enjoy it or be drawn to it…At the beginning, the setting pushed me along.

Impediments to Change

Almost all of the subjects experienced some hesitations or impediments during the course of the process of change, but the nature of the resistance varied widely. Thirteen (72%) of the subjects reported hesitation relating to prior relationships that they feared would be compromised by change. Subjects reporting relationships as an impeding factor, were focused either on friends or family.

Nine subjects (50%) reported social ties with friends as the primary force that stood in the way of their change. These social ties slowed change in several ways. First, many subjects had friends either in Israel or in the U.S. who were not undergoing change. Occasionally these friends exerted direct pressure against change. More often, however, the subject was concerned about losing the friendship by changing from who they had been.

> I immensely enjoyed, you know I was living a life chilling with friends and just basically enjoying life. So that was really great.

Second, the religious changes that many of the subjects underwent often included changes on their perspectives on coed relationships, usually restricting heterosexual contact unless it was marriage-focused dating. Many subjects thus realized that by

progressing with their change process they would eventually feel compelled to terminate

relationships with female friends.

Five of the subjects (28%) reported family ties as significant impediment to

change. For some subjects this entailed a fear of creating a deep chasm between

themselves and their families.

> My mom always says, and I don't agree, well I really do. The more you change
> your lifestyle, the more distant you become. In college, that's been a lot of my
> rationalization for "calming down". It's very hard, when you grow distant from
> your family, because of Israel, observance, changes in thinking, you feel bad. I
> felt very bad, as much as I love them and care about them, there's a whole
> world about me that they don't understand. My mom always says that. 'You're
> going to grow distant.' I always say 'no that's not true, but it is.' That held me
> back a lot, it still does. Even though rationally people tell me it's in my hands
> to be as close or as far as I want, in reality that's not true.

Others worried about dealing with the more direct emotional reaction of their family to

their changes.

> It was also hard that in Israel everyone was praising me for getting into things
> because nobody was expecting that to happen so fast. But when I came home in
> December, I went from a hero to zero. My family and friends were like 'what
> are you doing?' All I got was praise praise praise from one side, and then I got
> home and I was like the enemy. I had an aunt say to me 'you were our favorite
> nephew what did you do to yourself.' There I was thinking 'I'm doing the most
> important thing in my life, getting closer to G-d. Living for the first time.' And
> everyone who loved me was telling me how much they were disappointed in
> me… It kind of knocked me off of my pedestal.

Some subjects felt more secure in their family relationships, but nevertheless felt more

subtly tempered by their familial connection.

> Even in high school I was very close with my parents, and I still am. When I
> come home from school, I'll sit with them for an hour or two just talking with
> them. So I guess, I don't like to see that as a something holding back, because
> I'm happy about that, and I feel lucky that I have it. But I guess it did hold me

back to some degree because I could have become "crazier" (more religiously extreme) if I divorced myself from my family.

Nine subjects (50%) described an array of internal emotional processes as significant resistances. Four cited laziness or inertia as the primary factor.

I immensely enjoyed, you know I was living a life chilling with friends and just basically enjoying life. So that was really great. I wouldn't be enjoying myself as much. You know I could be playing football instead of learning or doing chesed. It was tough to let go of some of the things that I don't do so much any more.

Two subjects (11%) identified fear of change as the primary factor.

I had a fear of change. There's always some sort of fear of the unknown. What am I going to be like? If I take this step, if I do this one extra thing, people are going to look at me differently. And if I do this, then I'm also going to have to do this. People are going to expect me to do this. I was a little scared of this.

Three subjects (17%) identified doubt as the prime factor holding them back. This doubt usually entailed philosophical questioning or discomfort with accepting a more stringent, more conservative notion of Judaism.

I guess I was also frustrated with a lot of the way guys went to Israel, had their first religious experience. I don't know, its very arrogant and elitist, but I 'm gonna say it anyway. Not about myself necessarily. You take something very exciting and powerful and give it a big group. And not everyone's ready for it and thinking about it. And it's frustrating to be part of that group. That sort of makes me feel that this religion is not working.

Many of the subjects described these impediments to change as obstacles to growth. However, others portrayed them as constructive forces that helped temper change to allow the subject to change without becoming extreme.

I think a lot of me doesn't want to become extreme. I think I believe that you can be … probably because of my cousin. The deepest person is very intense,

or has progressed a lot, but at the same time is not extreme. And maybe
because of *gaava* (conceit), I never wanted to become extreme. Maybe because
of gaava, but I always wanted to become great, and so I felt that in order to do
that I couldn't be extreme. Even though I was caught up at a certain point in the
Yeshivish (conservative Orthodoxy) thing. But any time someone started saying
'this is *asur* (forbidden) that's asur,' that set me on edge. So I don't know if
that held me back a little bit.

Two subjects (11%) reported that they had no impediments in their change process.

Influential Religious Figures

For all of the subjects, there were specific individual who were instrumental in the

process of change. These individuals can be categorized into three groups: rebbe,

mentor, or friend. Eight of the subjects (44%) reported individuals from more than

category as instrumental in their change, while ten (55%) reported one or more

individuals from only one category. Fifteen of the subjects (85%) reported a rebbe as

instrumental in the change process.

One of the primary modes of rabbinical influence was through modeling. For some

this happened by seeing the rebbe as part of an admirable group.

> You're exposed to these people who…In _____, there's an entire community
> of *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars). A community where you really think,
> at least on the outside, it's pleasantville-perfect, utopic. Everyone's *frum*
> (pious), really frum, good people. Not just on the outside but on the inside.
> And they know so much, and they're so inspiring. And living it, you don't want
> to leave that. Even if you weren't learning at all, you feel like it's having a
> really big effect on me. Just being in that environment.

Modeling also impacted some subjects on a more individual basis.

> Rav _____ was my rebbe. I always remained very close with him. I went to his
> house for meals on Shabbos. I loved him. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to
> act like him.

For other subjects, it was the relationship with the rebbe that helped to effect change.

> Rav _____ [was an influence] half by example, half by uh. I wasn't….you know, what they called his 'groupies'…I don't know if everybody felt this way, but I felt like I had a special relationship with him. We had a very good intellectual relationship. Some people went with him to Tzfat, but we went out to dinner to talk. It was just very nice. We talked for 2-3 hours. Mostly intellectually discussing issues that Jews struggle with. Sometimes personally directed. I still speak with him, not just for advice...sometimes just to share the experience. I think he has a strong personality and I gained a lot just from speaking with him about regular things.

While there were occasional references to helpful direct constructive criticism from a rebbe, many subjects noted the importance of their rebbe taking an encouraging rather than critical role in the process of change.

> I had a conversation with Rav_____ about leaving yeshiva early to go to Europe for two weeks, and he was vehemently against it, and was railing into me. He was sinking his teeth into me trying to convince me not to. And I remember thinking that was a real turnoff…It was because, I don't know whether this is justified or not, but I felt that I had come so far, that I'd gone from not learning in high school to coming to Israel, and pushing my parents to let me come to Israel. And I had struggled to get into the learning in Israel and [was] winning that battle and becoming a serious learner. And I felt 'haven't I earned these two weeks,' and I felt that he wasn't seeing that. And I walked away from that conversation very frustrated. The other conversation I had was with Rav_____ about my learning, and he said 'I know you're limping, just take it day by day.' It was very practical, it wasn't profound, but the way he told me it struck as very straight forward, as something that I appreciated a lot. And I remember thinking of that in comparison to Rav _____, and one being very negative and one very positive. Both were trying to give me guidance and help me, and one was very effective and sincere, and the other struck me as very manipulative and unhelpful.

Another subject explained the mechanism by which positive rabbinical feedback helped him to change.

> Rav _____ started to like me in January. Once he likes you, when he's nagging you…well first of all he always likes you, but until you know it. Then it started to feel like he liked me, then you like him back. My hatred of him only came because I thought he hated me…In the beginning he would say a lot of nasty things, and then you realize he's just trying to get you riled up, so you

think. Also some of his comments started to be good, you know, 'you're doing good'…you know he gets into this [yeshiva] family thing. And once you're part of the family you're in…You have to work for him to show you love. You have to work for his love, but it's worth it.

Eight subjects (44%) reported a non-rabbinical mentor as a significant religious influence. In the yeshiva setting, first-year students often have contact with second year American students as well as Israeli and American rabbinical students. For many subjects, the influence of a mentor was similar to that of a rebbe, serving as a teacher and role model.

The kollel guy, he was a very pure person, personality-wise everything he does is straight. I just admired him a lot and tried to talk to him a lot. I tried to see his worldview and try to understand things better. You know a role model, so if you look at someone you admire, look up to, you can see better where you're going.

Subjects also expressed similar concerns about the mentor maintaining a positive focus.

During my "down cycle" my kollel guy was disappointed…He never raised his voice, but he was definitely disappointed. I had another rebbe who said 'you're gonna end up marrying a *shikza* (gentile-derogatory) and you're gonna have six *goyim* (gentile-derogatory) and sit in front of a Christmas tree celebrating Christmas.' I told that to [the kollel guy] and I said 'I know I accomplished so much. I keep kosher, Shabbos, I know I'll never intermarry. And here he is telling me I gained nothing.' [The kollel guy] always expressed this concept to me that you can't measure yourself against someone else…You came in from a different background, and sometimes from your background just gaining what you've gained is enough…I would never tell you that you didn't gain anything. He never went for the method of that other rabbi that turned me off like crazy. He said you definitely gained a lot, I will never tell you that you haven't gained a lot. But will I tell you that you're done. I'll never tell you that because you have so much more potential. If he would have said the whole disappointment speech also, there's no way I would have gotten back up ever… I would have just folded into complete depression.

While many had a rebbe-style relationship with a mentor, other subjects were able to

connect with a mentor in a manner that they could not with a rebbe.

> In the beginning there was a kollel guy…it was good to have a connection with him. He wore polo shirts and he seemed to have the same ideals as me. He was cool and funny. He kept me learning that whole time.

Six subjects (33%) reported a friend as a major religious influence. Subjects gave

different explanations of why they could not have been influenced by a rebbe or mentor

alone.

> I was scared into thinking that they brainwash you. I didn't know what that meant- I mean, you're sleeping and they send radio magnetic waves into your brain? I was definitely a little afraid of rebbeim. I didn't want them pushing something onto me that I didn't want. I was a little cautious.

Others emphasized the social and emotional reasons that friends served as an important

religious influence.

> Growing together is easier than growing alone; it's like anything whether good or bad, it's easier to do things in a group.

Another subject explained the mechanism for peer influence.

> My friends, I'm very close with [them] from high school. And they were all getting more religious, and I thought 'my friends are getting more religious and look like they're having a great time- I want to do it.' We were all moving together at the same time…As the year went on, I saw the people who started quicker on a different level. And other friends of mine were at the same place I was, so we would work off each other. If he added something I'd add something, if I added something he'd add something.

Close Relationships in Yeshiva

The same three categories were identified as those with whom subjects had their

closest relationships in yeshiva. Six subjects (55%) identified a relationship with a rebbe

as very close. Close relationships with rebbeim served several functions. For some of

these subjects, the relationship served as a surrogate parental relationship. This parenting

role provided structure in the formation of religious identity. One subject came to

understand this more fully in retrospect.

> When I got to college, that support disappeared. It was the first time in my life
> when there were no rebbeim around. I guess the rebbeim play a really big deal
> in how I view Judaism/Torah. Because a lot of my belief and commitment
> derives from my relationship with rebbeim and teachers like _____. I respect
> them and I admire them. Without them it was a lot harder. Not because they
> were brainwashing or anything, but they created a family structure for me
> which, you know, I don't think I have at home… so they fill in those roles.

Another subject with a parental relationship with a rebbe found the relationship to

provide emotional support.

> I'm very friendly with everyone, but the next level of closeness… only Rav
> _____-- I speak with him about everything…I had a 'wacked-out' childhood a
> little bit, so he was like a parent… Rav _____ always asks 'how are you, how
> are you feeling, is everything o.k. That's always the first question.' And then
> [asks] Torah questions.

Other subjects, however, did not experience a close bond with a rebbe. One

subject, who reported a rebbe as a strong religious influence, nonetheless explained that

he did not have a particularly close attachment to the rebbe: "I was never into the find a

rabbi and stick with him and do everything he says and become like an apostle."

Six subjects (55%) identified a mentor as the source of a very close relationship in

yeshiva. Four subjects (37%) identified a friend.

Visiting Home During the Year

Sixteen of the subjects (89%) had a return trip to the U.S. during the course of the year. In several cases, this was early in the year for a family celebration. In most cases, however, this was during the Pesach break from yeshiva. Although several subjects described the return home in multiple ways, most had a distinct experience of the trip. Eight of the subjects (44%) experienced the visit home as a distraction from the process of change. These subjects stated that they regressed spiritually during the trip. Although the trip was generally during Pesach break, during which all of the students were on vacation, many subjects explained that leaving the country entirely made it harder to pick up and continue upon return.

> The trip… may have been detrimental in progress. I don't feel this now, but I remember saying this then that… when I came back I couldn't pick it up again the way I had at first. I remember thinking that if I had not gone home, I don't know what could have happened.

Two subjects (11%) explained that the trip stunted the process of change in a different way. Rather than simply interrupting the flow of change, for these subjects returning home cast doubt on the veracity and desirability of change.

> I came home for Pesach. It was hard, it gave me a taste of what it would be like after. It scared me a little bit… Rav _____ prepared us by saying 'relax, you're not going home to learn. If you learn an hour or two [a day], that's fine.' So I expected myself not to learn. But then looking back at it, I think I was like a light switch, turn it on turn it off, do whatever I want… I guess because I can see myself with religion without religion, with Torah without Torah. Maybe that's why when I came home, it wasn't plaguing me.

Five subjects (28%) reported the trip home as having the opposite effect, assisting the process. One strengthening element of return home was in boosting subjects' self-confidence in their ability to maintain their changes outside of the yeshiva environment.

> The most spiritual growth I had as an individual during the year was over Pesach. Even though I didn't learn so much, what I did learn was such a hard learning. The year before, during Pesach, I was the most friendly, outgoing guy in Florida, so at the _____ Hotel, I was the king. I was friends with everyone, boys, girls, everyone. I was very social. But the year in Israel, I was so worried about going and losing everything I gained. I was worried about sitting around and going to the beach…you know there are stories about guys who just lose everything. So I spoke with a kollel guy for advice, and he said just pack your day with things. So I did playing tennis, golf, but even so I managed to make 20 minutes to learn, and prepare a *dvar Torah* (Torah talk) for every meal. The time learning was so much more powerful.

Similarly, others experienced the return home as solidifying their new identity.

> Pesach break was fine. It's good to show off and meet your friends who aren't religious. Especially the girls who expect hugs and kisses. But it's good when you go out with your friends, and you're wearing tzitzis (ritual garment) and stuff. I don't know if it's a good thing, being proud…For me it felt like doing the right thing and you're showing it off, I guess.

Four subjects (22%) described the visit home as a culture shock, but not a distraction from the overall process.

> It was a culture shock, I guess. Being in the atmosphere that I had been in before Israel, where I was an almost totally, well a very different person, and now I'm in the same atmosphere again as a new person. Even just sitting in my room, and walking up and down the streets in my neighborhood, there was an inner feeling like 'where am I.' It was a very changing experience.

Finally, one subject (6%) experienced the return home as neutral.

Ethical Changes

Although subjects' descriptions of change generally focused on the ritual and

spiritual changes realms, nine subjects (82%) perceived themselves as having becoming

more ethical or interpersonally sensitive over the course of the year. Some of the subjects

described this as a behavioral change resulting from direct rabbinical discussion of the

topic.   For most, however, this was seen as an outgrowth of their general spiritual change.

> I think it was a matter of attitude change. I can't say I've eliminated my bad
> traits because I still get frustrated with people. On a Sunday I was driving my
> brother to *shul* (synagogue), and I was driving a minivan down a street with cars
> parked on both sides. As I was driving, a minivan came the other way, and I
> had to move to the right. As I did that I brushed up against a parked car, and I
> didn't think anything happened. But I turned around and saw that the rearview
> mirror was cracked and hanging by a thread. So I pulled over to the right, and
> my first thought was 'drive away.' But I stopped and wrote a note, which I
> don't know if I would have before Israel. I'm just trying in my attitude to be
> more positive toward people. It turned out afterward the rearview mirror had
> been broken all along.

Alternatively, many saw ethical progress not as a qualitative change, but rather an

improvement of previously good interpersonal traits.

> I remember just walking down the path back to my room. It was a nice cool
> night. For some reason, I saw a stray dog, and I thought I bet it's hungry. So I
> went to my room and got some milk or water, maybe some food and I brought it
> outside to bring to the dog. One of my roommates asked me what I was doing,
> and I just thought about how I probably got that from my mom.

Connection with Israel

All twelve subjects responding to this question reported having deepened their

connection with Israel over the course of the year. However, subjects identified with

Israel on different planes. For some, it was a spiritual/mystical connection with the land.

My feelings about Israel were previously not very intense…Being there allowed me more time to appreciate things more…Just for me, I wouldn't say you love Israel more because you become more religious. But for me they came together.

Other subjects described it as a connection with the religious community in Israel.

I loved Israel. It became like my home. As soon as I came back I said 'after college I'm going back for another year.' Or hopefully one day I'll move there. And hopefully we will in a couple of years. It's just unbelievable. I love Israel, especially coming back to America; I realized you just can't be on the level you can be in Israel. At least for me I felt that way with all the distractions and other stuff here.

For other subjects, it was a connection with the wider Israeli nation.

It was really living there. Two of my roommates were Israeli… it really felt like being part of something, a nation. I felt guilty, my roommates were soldiers putting their butts on the line, and I wasn't. And the intifada, everyone felt so bonded by that experience. I remember it was motzei (the night after) Rosh Hashana, the alarms were sounding in the yishuv (local village). We weren't allowed to leave, and people were scared. That experience really connected us. The entire year, the experience of our parents nervous at home, and all of us trying to maintain sanity and calm really bonded us… Even if you're not doing anything there, you suffer with the people who suffer, you laugh with people, with the history. [In America], it's a moment of pain and then it passes. There, you feel like you're part of some process.

Retrospective

Subjects were asked whether and how their perspectives on their experience in Israel had changed since returning to the United States. This question sought to clarify how the subjects incorporated their periods of change into their life trajectory and into their identity upon return home.

Seven subjects (44%) reported appreciating their Israel experience even more than they originally had.

> I didn't really appreciate the time so much while I was there. The time to just sit and learn and reflect, to really choose a path to live my life, that's clicheish, but I didn't appreciate the year as much as I do now.

For those expressing increased appreciation, there was often a growing feeling of the challenge to maintain and build upon the progress made in Israel.

> I definitely feel that while I was there I was growing, and upon return I'm trying to maintain it…As time goes by I think I look back at the time in Israel more fondly, and maybe remember things a little differently than they were. I long for those days. Now is the time to shape the inspiration from the time in Israel.

Some subjects explained that the increased appreciation manifested an internalizing of the degree and meaning of their change upon returning to the United States.

> As time goes by I realize how important my time in Israel was for me, and what I'd be like without it. When you first come back you think 'o.k. this is how I am now'…In general there's times I feel like, 'if I didn't go to Israel I'd be like this guy I went to high school with or like that guy.' And you just realize how lucky I was to go and how much I got out of it. At the same time, I realize, 'oh I could have done so much more.'

Five subjects (31%) reported feeling the same about their experience as they had upon return. One subject explained that "it changed my life; that's still how I feel.

Five subjects (31%) reported having regretted and retreated from at least some aspect of the change process. These subjects explained this perspective in a number of ways. For one subject, there was a definite feeling that he had become too insular in Israel and had corrected these exaggerated changes.

> [Since returning to the United States] I've become much more aware of the different Jews out there…I've learned that I have to take them for what they are…

For another, there was a feeling that he had sunk from his spiritual heights and thought he should probably strive to return.

> I've kind of deviated in general attitude from what a *ben Torah* (pious Jew) should be. My personality maybe and my demeanor maybe.

Yet another subject was confused about the changes he had made, and no longer sure whether they were positive or not.

Religious Identification

As discussed earlier, subjects varied in their levels of observance prior to study in Israel. However, in their religious identification, the subjects were more consistent. Seventeen of the subjects (94%) identified as Modern Orthodox before coming to yeshiva in Israel. One subject (6%) identified as secular.

While all of the subjects experienced themselves as undergoing meaningful change in Israel, their degree of change and identity formation varied. Thus, subjects differed in their relationship to their original community. At the time of the interview, six subjects (33%) continued to identify as Modern Orthodox. One subject explained that he felt himself to be more committed than he had been, but still maintained a Modern Orthodox perspective.

> I'm not sure where I place myself. I guess closer to the _____ Yeshiva from what I hear. Modern Orthodox, but really being Modern Orthodox not just the name. But Riverdale is a good example, with the younger community as opposed to [my parents' community] where there's fifteen people at weekday *mincha* (afternoon service) in a shul of 500 people. Rav _____ calls it the kaddish minyan (prayer for mourners service). Eleven people including the rabbi, with nine people saying kaddish.

Four (22%) identified themselves as Yeshivish, apparently demonstrating the most

change and furthest distancing from their upbringing. Nonetheless, these subjects

demonstrated certain hesitations about affiliating with the Yeshivish community. One

expressed disdain for the notion of having to label oneself.

> I mean I'm here [in a modern orthodox shul] every Shabbos…I don't know. I
> don't care. That's stupid stuff; it gets us all caught up in…I mean [I'm] more
> Yeshivish, that's how I act, but that's because _____ is the only Beis
> Medrash that I'm comfortable learning in here. I got a lot of my *hashkafas*
> (religious perspectives) from _____- he's Yeshivish and not Yeshivish. He
> doesn't dress Yeshivish, but he thinks Yeshivish…I wear a white shirt, but I…
> people get too caught up in it. _____ reminds me of that. He sits and learns
> in jeans and a t- shirt. That's also good… People grow up Modern Orthodox
> with their shtick and become Yeshivish with some other shtick.

Another demonstrated discomfort in affiliating with the Yeshivish community, although

he essentially demonstrated that this was his affiliation.

> I met a guy in _____ College, who asked me if I'm *charedi* (Ultra-
> Orthodox). I told him I'm just a *pashute yid* (simple Jew). I mean this is a
> Yeshivish place. I wear a black hat now, but I view it more as political. If
> you're going to be in this group you're like this. How I think is from my
> rebbeim.   The way I dress looks Yeshivish so other people may associate me
> with it. I felt different then the Yeshivish guys when I came in, but I feel now
> that I have similar perspective to other guys here. I mean we haven't discussed
> our philosophy. I don't feel like an outsider here.

One subject, however, made very clear that he was Yeshivish.

> My affiliation is very black (Yeshivish). I don't know how else to say it. It's
> very hard being a *baal teshuva* (Orthodox Jew from a secular background), you
> can't mess around because you might fall back. So I have to be as right (wing)
> as possible.
>
> A kollel guy's wife says I want to be him. In some regards that's true. I love
> the fact that he's dedicated his life to *Hashem* (G-d), and went to college but
> didn't get into money and worrying about working. He knew he had to go into
> *kiruv* (religious outreach). I don't know if that's for me. That's the biggest

battle I have now is to decide if I become a lawyer or go into kiruv. I love his dedication, but I wouldn't shelter my family as much as he does.

Nine of the subjects (50%) identified themselves as between the Modern Orthodox and Yeshivish communities. For some of the subjects this entailed a state of moratorium.

I affiliate with whatever community I'm with at the time. A lot of people don't feel that way. Most of my friends, I'd say, even the one's who are Yeshivish or want to be Yeshivish, they're not Yeshivish. They're Yeshivish within the modern Orthodox community. The way I personally feel is comfortable anywhere, and that's partially because of the varied backgrounds in my family. So whoever I'm with I'll feel part of that. So I'm in YU now and I feel a part of it, but when I was in Mir this summer, I had no problem putting on a black hat and white shirt and making friends, and fitting in there.

For others, however, it manifested an integrated identity, incorporating the Israel changes while maintaining a connection with their roots through the creation of a new community identity.

I guess Modern Orthodox is the schools I went to, but I don't think Modern Orthodox is my view now. I'd say, well I honestly don't like labels, they're man-made, but if you're asking, I guess I'm the new post-Israel religion in one of its degrees.

Another subject provided another label for this group.

I don't know how to put it. The way I once heard someone put it is the YU beis medrash [community]. I consider myself between the more modern and more right wing. I don't know if the word is strictly orthodox. I don't know. I consider myself to be pretty modern, but in some ways I'm more traditional and more strict. I don't know exactly where that puts me. I guess in terms of views I'm pretty positive about college education, very positive about Israel. In terms of dress and attitude toward other Jews, I'm pretty open-minded. But some of my attitudes are more traditional, as is my love of learning and level of observance.

Stage of Identity Development

Even though the subjects in the study had been back from Israel for a period of

time, they were at a range of places developmentally. Many of the subjects emphasized

that their process of religious growth would never stop, before expressing whether they

thought their process had come to its terminus as regards their religious identity. Five

subjects (29%) reported having achieved a stable identity incorporating their change.

One subject explained how he had been able to solidify his change while still studying in

Israel.

> I think I've basically settled in terms of who I am now. I can't define an exact
> moment when it happened. I think before Pesach [during] *shana alef* [first year
> in Israel], I had already settled on these goals in life. I didn't feel strong enough
> that if I were thrown into the opposite I wouldn't go the other way, lose it. That
> definitely became stronger over the summer and shana bet.

Another subject, who was presently studying in an American yeshiva, explained the

psychological and interpersonal implications of reaching identity integration.

> I went to Columbia University recently for Shabbos and I feel more comfortable
> there then I did previous times, because I'm now comfortable with who I am.
> The previous times I was sort of withdrawn. This time I was able to act like a
> normal human being. Not that I want to live there or be part of that community,
> but I could relate to them normally without withdrawing into a shell. Without
> feeling it would adversely affect me to be there, I feel.

Eight subjects (47%) reported being close to achieving this stable identity.

> I think I'm close, but I don't think I can say I've completed it. I think I even
> more than fine-tuning, some things I still need to think about. There's a few
> multiple directions I could be headed. I'm in between, but my exact attitude
> toward the world outside Judaism, I'm not clear on yet. And I'm also not sure
> what I want to do with myself, whether I want to do something religious
> professionally. I hope to reach a resolution soon, but there's time over the next

few years. Every once in a while I get nervous about it, but I'm not in any rush to get married, so I don't feel a rush regarding some of the hashkafic and professional things.

Four subjects (24%) described being in moratorium, unsure of what their integrated religious identity would be.

In a philosophical way, I think people change every day, and that's important to keep in mind. I mean I don't know how long this is going to last, I'm in college now and that's the mentality of many people in college, and that's a good thing. I don't know where my process of change is taking me; I don't know where I'm gonna go.

Mental Health and Religious Change

The third category of questions focused on the psychological impact of study in Israel. Questions focused both on issues of psychopathology as well as developmental issues of maturation.

Subjects' Mental Health

A number of interesting trends appeared regarding the interaction of study in Israel and mental health. During high school, twelve subjects (66%) reported being euthymic. Three subjects (17%) reported sub-clinical emotional symptoms. Three subjects (17%) reported experiencing clinical symptomatology.

During study in Israel, the numbers of euthymic students decreased to six subjects (33%). Euthymic subjects described yeshiva as a very warm pleasant place: "yeshiva was like a safe haven. When I think about yeshiva, I never imagine a time not smiling.

That's how I approach it." One non-euthymic subject eloquently explained the source of

other students' euthymia during study in Israel.

> Some of my friends say or think that after they went to Israel, or after they
> decided that this is the way they want to live their life, and they wanted to stay
> in the yeshiva world and continue with it. That they found *yishuv hadaat*, inner
> peace, and they are much happier. In a way I'm very attracted to that. It's true.
> If you feel like what you're doing is right all the time

Twelve subjects (66%) reported being either clinically or subclinically symptomatic

during portions of the year. These students suggested a number of different causes of the

emotional difficulties. For some subjects, the frustration of attempting to master difficult

Talmudic texts took an emotional toll.

> In Israel I would be like 'this is great I'm having a good time,' but at a
> particular time I could be in the beit medrash for four, five, six days on end
> learning, trying to learn as much as possible, and I wasn't enjoying it. Maybe
> I'd learn for twenty minutes and I'd have an epiphany and that would be great.
> But the rest of the time I'd sit there for five, six hours and I wasn't enjoying it.
> I'd be sitting and sitting hoping to come to a time when I would enjoy it, and it
> did come. We had a *sugya* (Talmudic passage) where everything fell into place
> over three weeks, right before Pesach. I was on a high. I was like the happiest
> person in yeshiva. But most of the time it was not like that.

Sometimes this frustration entailed feelings of guilt: "when I was going through certain

changes…it's a depressing feeling. I thought if I'd been learning in high school, I could

have been [so much more]." One subject explained how the serious nature of the yeshiva

environment changed the focus of his emotional difficulties.

> In high school, I would get depressed about my mom's health, and what would I
> do if she died. But that was out of my hands. In Israel I got depressed because I
> was failing, and it's much more depressing when you blame yourself… I would
> go 45 hours without sleeping, and I was taking sleeping pills.

For others, the process of going through religious change and identity formation was a

grueling experience.

> It was also a feeling of I don't know what I want to do with my life. O.k. I haven't been doing anything till now, but what do I want to do now. Do I want to be part of this weird Judaism thing and learn and every day have to worry about davening three times a day. It's a big transition.

Yet others found the loose structure to allow for mental health problems to creep in: "a

lot of things are not worth thinking about, but you just can't help it. So in Israel when

there's so much time to sit and think, it's hard."

Of the non-euthymic subjects, eight (44%) reported experiencing subclinical

symptoms, which made life uncomfortable but not debilitating.

> When I was in Israel there were times that I was sadder and more down than I had ever been any time in my life. The beginning was the hardest. I was very very frustrated at the beginning. My parents came to visit, and I spent five days with them in the hotel, and I remember forcing myself to put on a happy face. I had to show them how much I'm enjoying it. You know this is great, but inside I was like 'I hate this place I want to go home.'

Four subjects (22%) reported experiencing diagnosable symptoms. One subject

poignantly portrayed his suffering during study in Israel.

> Towards the end of Sukkot, I started thinking about things a lot religiously. Sometimes I couldn't necessarily think about learning because I was thinking about these things…I was having problems with thoughts in my head that I couldn't get rid of and stuff like that. It was problems with obsessions, not regular O.C.D. A lot of things are not worth thinking about, but you just can't help it. So in Israel when there's so much time to sit and think, it's hard. I don't know if it would have happened without going to Israel, but, of course, it's a chemical imbalance. But I didn't know how to label it then…It was really bothering me. It was very hard; I didn't know what was going on. If it was a *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) kind of thing or a punishment.

Subjects described varied experiences in receiving help for their psychological problems during study in yeshiva.

> And then when it really really got bad, I went to talk with my rebbeim but they didn't understand. I went and told them again that it's still bothering me. Sometimes I just broke down because I couldn't help it. But I didn't let it stop me…I thought I needed help and went to a psychologist.

While this subject found his rebbes unable to properly diagnose and deal with his clinical symptoms, many subjects with subclinical symptoms described how rebbeim were able to help them with an encouraging approach: "my rebbe told me 'what you're going through, it's tough but you're good the way you are or if you change.'" Another subject emphasized the importance of the rebbe's choice of method in addressing him during his period of depression and religious stagnation.

> During my "down cycle" the kollel guy was disappointed…He never raised his voice, but he was definitely disappointed. I had another rebbe who said 'you're gonna end up marrying a shikza (gentile) and you're gonna have six goyim (gentiles) and sit in front of a Christmas tree celebrating Christmas.' I told that to the kollel guy and I said 'I know I accomplished so much. I keep kosher, Shabbos, I know I'll never intermarry. And here he is telling me I gained nothing.' The kollel guy always expressed this concept to me that you can't measure yourself against someone else…You came in from a different background, and sometimes from your background just gaining what you've gained is enough…I would never tell you that you didn't gain anything. He never went for the method of that other rabbi that turned me off like crazy. He said 'you definitely gained a lot, I will never tell you that you haven't gained a lot. But will I tell you that you're done. I'll never tell you that because you have so much more potential.' If he would have said the whole disappointment speech also, there's no way I would have gotten back up ever… I would have just folded into complete depression.

During the period since return to the United States, ten subjects (55%) reported euthymia. Seven subjects (39%) reported subclinical symptoms. One (6%) reported diagnosable symptoms.

Introjects

Subjects were asked to identify the person or people whom they experienced as an introject, "the person whose opinion of you mattered most," before going to Israel. Eleven of the subjects (65%) identified one or both parents as the person. Two subjects (12%) identified a friend. Two subjects (12%) identified a rebbe. One subject (6%) identified a grandparent. Three subjects (18%) could not identify an introject.

After study in Israel, seven of the subjects (47%) continued to identify a parent as an introject. One subject illustrated why his parents remained his introjects even after he had differentiated himself from them through his process of change.

> All my *midos* (character traits), everything I have is from my parents… [Even in the ritual realm], I don't look at it as I did terrible things and that person's not me. I feel like maybe if I hadn't been that, I wouldn't be who I am now.

Nine of the subjects (60%) reported a rebbe as an introject. Four (36%) reported a friend. One subject described the power of friendships during the process of change to leave an imprint.

> Maybe my friend from high school. We were very close in high school, and when I left Israel in the middle of shana bet, he cried and said I see how much we've grown together, and I hope we can stay close. So even though our moral systems are pretty different, still I might carry his voice with me.

One subject (9%) reported a grandparent. Four subjects (27%) could not identify an introject.

One of the critical questions in this arena is whether parents are replaced by rebbes or others as the introject during study in Israel. Among these subjects, three (27%) of those originally reporting a parental introject replaced the parent with a

rebbe. Four (36%) added on a rebbe, while maintaining a parental introject. Four

(36%) maintained a parental introject and did not add on a rebbe. One subject

explained how internalizing a rebbe figure was not an important aspect of his change.

> I think the entire experience as a whole has the imprint effect on me. I know some people put up pictures of Rav _____ on their door, but that's not for me. Maybe I should, but I wanted to get something like a necklace or something as a symbol of the experience, but it was too weird. It's not the point to get something physical.

Another subject described the ongoing impact that a non-human introject had on his

religious identity formation.

> When I first came back, I would just have the Kotel in my mind. If anything was leading me away, I would think 'one or two months ago, I was sitting in the Old City [of Jerusalem] right across from the Kotel, and now you're gonna do something wrong, or not continue with what you did there'…It was more of an image of the Bet Hamikdash (temple) over the Kotel, and a feeling of 'how could I let go.'

Parental Relationships:

The final category of questions focused on the subjects' relationships with their

parents. Queries focused on the quality of the relationship and the nature of

disagreements and differences throughout the process of change.

Relationship with Parents

Ten of the subjects (55%) reported having a good relationship with their parents

prior to their time spent in Israel. Five of the subjects (28%) reported having a mediocre

relationship. Three subjects (17%) reported having a bad relationship.

The numbers remained similar during the subjects' time in Israel. Nine subjects (53%) reported a good relationship. Subjects reported several reasons for having good relationships while in Israel. Distance and maturity allowed some subjects to reflect more objectively about their parents.

> I spoke with my mom every day from Israel. I think you develop more of an appreciation of them. You can analyze your relationship with them and everything they've done for you when you're not really in it. Rav _____ also focused a lot on that. Sort of leads you to think about that.

Others suggested more temporary causes.

> Definitely while I was in Israel we were closer. We spoke on the phone a lot, and I was able to show maturity in helping with some problems with my younger brother. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Nonetheless, subjects suggested that remaining connected despite the distance allowed for the relationship to grow along with the change.

> My father came [to visit] shana alef twice…that was important. I wanted him to see who I was now and see what he thought. I was looking for acceptance, and he was very happy.

Six subjects (35%) reported a mediocre relationship during study in Israel. Two subjects (11%) reported a bad relationship. Interestingly, while the overall numbers stayed the same, only half of the subjects remained at the same level of functioning. Among those whose relationship changed, four improved, while three became worse.

After return from Israel, nine subjects (56%) reported good relationships. Subjects experiencing good relationships upon return attributed them to several factors. For some, the face to face connection eased certain tension that had built during the year.

> My mother thinks I'm a little crazy, but it's a lot better now than it was when I was in Israel. Now my mother sees me in person and sees that personality-wise I'm still the same. But while I was in Israel, my mom just heard my schedule for the day and it was very hard for her to adjust…once I came home and she saw me it eased a lot of the worries. I think also she has a friend whose son came back and was really *chareidi* (Ultra-Orthodox) and stayed in Israel, and she was scared about me.

Others felt that their new maturity helped the relationship upon their return.

> I think that the way disagreements would play out are pretty much the same, but the content is different…In high school, if I lost a disagreement with my parents, I'd be cursing them to myself. Now, I'd be more trying to understand their perspective. I'd understand that they are doing it because they care about me, not to be nasty.

Eight subjects (50%) reported mediocre relationships, while no subjects reported bad relationships.

In comparing parental relationships before and after study in Israel, seven of the subjects (44%) reported the same level of functioning, while seven (44%) reported a change. Of the seven reporting a change, five reported an improvement while two reported worsening.

Arguments with Parents

When asked whether they recalled having arguments with their parents during high school, nine subjects (75%) reported that they did. Three subjects (25%) reported that they did not. During their stay in Israel, four subjects (40%) reported arguments becoming more intense. Three (30%) reported arguments remaining the same intensity. Three (30%) reported their becoming less intense.

Religiousness Compared To Parents

Subjects were asked whether they perceived themselves to be more, less, or equally religious as their parents before and after study in Israel. Before study in Israel, six subjects (43%) perceived themselves as having been less religious. Eight subjects (57%) perceived themselves as equally religious. Two (14%) perceived themselves as more religious. After study in Israel, all of the responding subjects perceived themselves as more religious.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In discussing the results of this study, it is important to reiterate the implications

of its status as a qualitative study. While the qualitative nature of this study carries with

it several advantages, the findings can only serve as meaningful hypotheses requiring

corroboration. Nonetheless, a comparison of the study's findings with the literature on

religion and psychology, religious change and conversion, study abroad, and adolescent

identity development is enlightening. In comparing and contrasting the experience of

study in Israel with related areas of research, clarity is brought to both the unique and

universal elements of the phenomenon. The discussion is divided into four sections,

based on the areas of questioning in the interview protocol.

Level of Observance:

The first set of questions pertained to the content of change, surrounding the

subjects' religious observance and Torah study. Subjects were asked regarding their

level of observance before and after study in Israel. Prior to study in Israel, eleven

subjects (61%) saw themselves as observing halacha within the norms of the Modern

Orthodox community, but not being as strict as they became during study in Israel. Some

subjects felt satisfied at the time with their level of observance, while others remembered

a semi-conscious feeling that their observance was insufficient.

However even the latter subjects did not feel the need to change at that time. One student labeled this phenomenon the "delay button," explaining that he now recognized that he had been anticipating future change. The presence of inclinations to change in the pre-Israel phase will be discussed in more detail in the "Process of Change" section.

Three of the subjects (17%) grew up in Modern Orthodox families, but were less observant than their families and living outside the norms of the community. Among these subjects, this behavior did not seem to be a function of rebellion, but rather a feeling of apathy regarding observance. The role of family and community in transmitting religious values will be discussed in the "Parental Relationships" section.

Two of the subjects (11%) reported being fully observant prior to study in Israel and not changing in that sphere. Two other subjects (11%) reported coming from non-observant families and being non-observant themselves.

Subjects were asked whether they perceived themselves to be more, less, or equally religious as their parents before and after study in Israel. Before study in Israel, five subjects (50%) perceived themselves as less religious; four subjects (40%) perceived themselves as equally religious; two (20%) perceived themselves as more religious. Despite their varied levels of prior religiousness, after study in Israel, all of the responding subjects perceived themselves as having become more religious. Religiousness was not defined in the question, and thus responses included observance, weltanschauung, or spirituality.

It is not surprising to find unanimity of religious change in this sample, as one of the criteria for selection for the study was the experience of meaningful change. Nonetheless, this phenomenon of becoming more religious than one's parents is widespread. Tobin (2000) conducted research on present and past American students of Israeli yeshivas. Among male respondents, she found that 67% of alumni and 47% of present students felt themselves to be more observant than their parents.

When subjects were asked for the most significant changes that took place during the year, two major arenas emerged. Sixteen subjects (89%) reported behavioral changes. This finding is in consonance with Judaism's intimate involvement with the mundane. R. Steinsaltz (1976) has noted that the Talmud addresses the entire spectrum of human experience, including areas such as agriculture, civil law, marital law, and the holiday cycle. Thus, it is understandable that almost all subjects felt practical, behavioral change to be an intricate aspect of their overall change process.

Many subjects (39%) emphasized, however, that this new level of observance was inextricably intertwined with a new phenomenology, experiencing one's life as revolving around the service of G-d. In reality, responses of subjects to other questions indicate that the majority of subjects shared this experience, even some of those who did not give this as a response to this question. R. Soloveitchik (2000) has demonstrated extensively that Jewish Law focuses on "outward action," but also seeks the creation of a particular religious "inward experience."

These findings are also consistent with the notion that, for deeply religious individuals of all faiths, religion pervades their being such that their psychology can only be understood by understanding their religiousness. From a cognitive perspective, the

religious perspective of life events is deeply woven into the fabric of their schemas (McIntosh, 1997).

While the large majority of subjects underwent observance changes, their experiences of the changes differed. Some of the students felt the change to be an outgrowth of their previous observance while others experienced it as a radical shift from their previous mode. Thus, for the subjects in this study there was a range of experience of the meaning of religious change. For some subjects, their changes were subtle improvements without changing their essential identity. For others, however, changes entailed a radical recreation of the self. These distinctions will be more fully clarified in later discussion of the subjects' identity formation.

The spectrum of degree of change within the subjects stands in contrast to the traditional literature on religious change, which has focused on radical religious shifts. The notion of change as a more nuanced growth process has been written about primarily in the secular humanist framework of personal growth (Pargament, 1997).

More recent psychological literature on religion, however, has noted the presence of differing types of change. Pargament (1997) differentiated between "conservational" religious change and "reconstructive" religious change. In the former, the goal is to change in order to maintain and solidify the individual's present identity, while in the latter the goal is a replacement of the former self with a new sense of being.

In traditional Judaism, the study of Torah occupies a focal place in life (Lichtenstein, 2003). Thus, subjects were asked about the role of Torah study in their life before and after study in Israel. Indeed, changes in the quantity and quality of Torah study were central to most subjects' change processes.

Prior to study in Israel, the subject pool was split in its study of Torah. Seven (47%) of the subjects only studied Torah as an academic subject in school. Eight of the subjects (53%), however, also engaged in extra-curricular Torah study, albeit usually in small quantities. After study in Israel, all of the subjects studied Torah beyond academic requirements. However, many described Torah as more than simply one of their extra-curricular activities. Fourteen subjects (88%) portrayed it as an encompassing experience that was the focus of most of their available time and energy. Two subjects (12%) studied Torah beyond academic requirements, but did not describe it as an encompassing part of their life.

Among those describing Torah study as an encompassing force in their life, many derived great pleasure from the activity. The presence of pleasure as a driving force in these subjects' process of change can be understood from both a religious and psychological perspective.

Religiously, many strains of Jewish tradition have taught that enjoyment of religious living is condoned and even mandated. Thus, many Jewish commentators translate the Biblical verse "[You will be punished] because you have not worshipped the L-rd, your G-d with joy and goodness of heart."(Deuteronomy 28:47). Similarly there is a Talmudic debate regarding the cause for the nazarite's requirement to bring a sin-offering (Tractate Nedarim 10a). One opinion states that he is culpable for depriving himself of the pleasures of the world. Psychodynamically, the process of change can be understood simply as a manifestation of Freud's pleasure principle (McWilliams, 1994), with the transfer of object from childhood pleasures to more intellectual ones.

Other subjects, however, did not usually enjoy Torah study, but still felt similarly encompassed by the study of Torah and driven to study it. This experience can also be explained both religiously and psychologically. The second opinion in the aforementioned Talmudic passages takes a more monastic approach. It explains that the nazarite requires atonement at the conclusion of his nazaritic period for abandoning the holiness of his restrictive living and returning to the pleasures of the world.

The phenomenon of change and dedication in the absence of pleasure can also be understood psychologically. In the latter half of the 20th century, psychological thinkers raised challenges to the pleasure principle, and suggested that there are other inner forces that motivate as powerfully as pleasure. Erikson (1950) suggested that individuals are driven primarily by the need to meet the challenges of their particular life stage, in this case identity formation. Similarly, Rogers (1961) proposed that individuals' need to grow and find fulfillment is their strongest motivation. Thus, the yeshiva students in this study were driven to dedicate themselves to Torah study by the need to find identity and fulfillment, even though it did not give them hedonic pleasure.

The subjects described an array of different reasons and manners in which they felt Torah study to be meaningful to them. For some the very process of learning allowed them to connect with a larger mission or with the Divine. For others, it was not the process of learning, but the content of learning that was meaningful.

Many of the perspectives of these students echo writings on the phenomenology of Torah study in the Jewish tradition (Lichtenstein, 2003). R. Lichtenstein explained that the study of Torah has served both as a means to learning halacha as well as an experience of connection with the Divine and with Jewish tradition.

Despite its deeply intellectual nature, for some subjects Torah study was more religiously than intellectually focused. Thus, not all of the subjects who became engrossed in learning described themselves as intellectually curious people before going to Israel. One subject explained that it was the non-academic yeshiva schedule that helped him to become intellectually engaged. Along these lines, Pargament (1997) lists Bible study as one of many religious acts that connect the religious devotee with G-d.

Subjects were asked about their goals for their time in Israel, both before and during their stay. Subjects' goals did not change radically during the year in Israel. Ten subjects (59%) reported learning as an important goal before going to Israel, while twelve (71%) did during study in Israel. Nine (53%) reported spiritual growth as an important goal before study in Israel, while eleven (65%) did after Israel. The major difference in goals seems to be in the degree of focus on and understanding of these goals. Before going to Israel, five subjects (29%) also reported having fun as an important goal and three (18%) reported "going because everyone goes" as a reason for going to Israel, while these less serious goals were discarded during the process of change. For many students, the focusing of goals in Israel also entailed setting their spiritual sights higher.

Although it is possible that subjects projected more serious goals backward in retrospect, this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation. Overall, subjects seemed comfortable acknowledging their change, and discussing what they had been like prior to study in Israel.

Inasmuch as goals are a manifestation of one's weltanschauung, these findings demonstrate a considerable, but not necessarily radical change during study in Israel. This is not fully consistent with religious change literature, which generally focuses on

religious conversion. Pargament (1997) defines religious conversion as "an effort to re-create life, the individual experiences a dramatic change of the self, a change in which the self becomes identified with the sacred." While the change in this subject pool was significant, it was not necessarily comparable to a conversion in its scope. Many of these subjects, growing up in Orthodox homes, described having had a certain degree of prior affiliation with the sacred. Thus, while the experience certainly entailed a change in the self, entailing an increased identification with the sacred, their goals manifested a degree of this even before study in Israel.

Many subjects explained that their desire to learn was somewhat subliminal prior to going to Israel. These subjects explained that there were manifestations of their subconscious interest in their choice of yeshiva. One subject explained that seeing older students who had changed in Israel gave him some direction as to what his future religious growth might entail.

This finding resonates with Pargament's (1997, p. 147) suggestion that "[t]he theory of spontaneous generation of religion fails as much in the religious case as it does in the biological. Even when religion seemingly comes out of nowhere a closer analysis often reveals evidence of religious availability." Nonetheless, even those who were more consciously interested in learning or spiritual growth prior to study in Israel, explained that they did not really have a clear picture of what change would entail.

The Process of Change:

The second set of questions moved beyond the content of the change to focus on the process of change, including contributing factors, timing, and trajectory. Subjects

were asked regarding spiritual experiences before and during study in Israel. Spiritual

moments played an important role in the students' process of change. The subjects

described a number of different types of spiritual experiences, some of them unique to

study in Israel while others had been experienced during high school as well.

Many subjects initially expressed surprise upon being asked for a spiritual

experience during high school. After their initial hesitation, however, all were able to

think of an experience. This is consistent with the literature on religious conversion. A

case study (Pargament, Royster, et al., 1990, p.7) of a born-again Christian portrayed an

apparent first-time religious inspiration that was actually grounded in subtle, earlier

internalizations of spirituality. While tripping on drugs, Tim entered a bathroom,

> I'm thinking this is pretty cool, bathroom, you know, commode,
> tub…somebody talking to me that has a lot of influence, a lot of pack, a lot of
> punch behind him, cause I responded like, 'OK G-d, what do you want?' I was
> looking in the mirror and it says 'all your life you have believed in me'…This
> Scripture started to filter through my head, and I couldn't remember what it
> was. I couldn't identify it as I can now. It was John 3:16, and it's just that I
> remember parts of it from when I was a kid.

Elsewhere, Pargament (1997) explained the implications of this case study:

> Religion seemingly emerged out of nowhere to help him get his life back
> together. Through the interview, however, it became clear that Tim did not
> come to this critical moment empty-handed, and his conversion did not grow
> out of a void. He brought with him a set of religious resources, burdens, and
> predispositions, and these factors played an important role in his experience.

Ruach moments were a commonly reported as a spiritual experience both before

and during study in Israel. Upon being asked to describe a spiritual moment before and

during study in Israel, ten (56%) subjects reported a ruach experience prior to Israel,

while eight (47%) reported one in Israel.

Among those reporting a ruach experience, the quality of the experience varied from individual to individual. Thus, one subject described it as a feeling of connectedness with others, while another described it a connecting to G-d through turning inward. This multiplicity of experiences of spirituality and of motives in religious life was suggested by early pioneers in the field of psychology and religion (James, 1902). James explained that, inasmuch as individuals' temperaments are one of the drives behind religious pursuits, it is intuitive that some would be attracted to religion's comfort while another to its fire and brimstone.

The subjects' different spiritual experiences are also captured well in more contemporary listings of goals of religious pursuits. Included among these goals are the search for community and the search for self. Moreover, contemporary writings generally term the experience focused internally as "spirituality," while labeling as "religiousness" the feeling of connection to a community of members (Pargament, 1997).

While ruach experiences were similar before and during study in Israel, the frequency of these experiences differed. Subjects also suggested that the impact of these experiences was different during study in Israel. Several subjects emphasized the fleeting nature of these spiritual highs during high school, while in Israel spiritual moments had a long-term impact on religious change. Pargament (1997) reported that different individuals reacting distinctly to the same religious experience is a universal phenomenon. Thus, only some people respond to religious inspiration with the "a-ha" experience, predictive of religious change.

The difference in experience may be due to the environment, maturation, or other factors. Alternatively, Straus (1979, p. 163) suggests that it is not the experience but the

follow-up that is determinative: "It is not so much the initial action that enables the convert to experience a transformed life but the day to day actions of living it."

Conversations were also a common spiritual experience both before and during study in Israel. During high school, four (22%) subjects had a spiritual conversation experience. These conversations were usually with a charismatic figure and entailed emotional heightening. During study in Israel, however, spiritual conversations, like ruach moments, often had a more lasting effect. One subject termed this experience a "Kodak moment." The importance of interactions with religious figures in the process of change has been noted in the literature, but not carefully studied (Galanter, 1989).

Two subjects (11%) reported a traumatic experience as a spiritual moment before study in Israel while one subject reported such an experience during study there. The frequency of spiritually meaningful traumatic experiences for the yeshiva students appears small relative to the general literature on conversion. In a study of converts, Kox, Meeus, and Hart (1991) note that some form of emotional distress was involved in the change process of 67% of their subjects compared to 20% of the controls. The interaction between distress and change in yeshiva students will be further discussed later.

One subject (5%) reported doing an act of kindness as a spiritual moment both before and during study in Israel. The infrequency of report of these kinds of spiritual moments is in line with the general spirituality literature, in which spiritual experiences are related to more uniquely religious and G-d centered moments.

While ruach and conversation were common spiritual experiences before and during study in Israel, prayer and learning were more common in Israel. Only one

subject (5%) reported a spiritual prayer experience and one (5%) reported a spiritual learning experience during high school. During study in Israel, however, six subjects (33%) reported a spiritual prayer experience and five (28%) reported a spiritual learning experience. Although prayer and learning were not new experiences in Israel, they were apparently experienced differently.

This phenomenon of experiencing previously performed religious acts in a different manner is not directly addressed in the literature, and may be related to the normal developmental trajectory of a religious upbringing. The most analogous phenomenon in general religious change is probably denominational switching. This phenomenon has become more common in many communities in recent years, including for example, the African-American community (Sherkat, 1992). In this phenomenon, individuals who have previously lived and practiced within one religious community switch to another. Thus, although many of the religious practices of the new denomination are broadly identical to their previous experience, the practices are infused with new meaning.

Surprisingly, two subjects (11%) reported a spiritual experience before Israel, but not during Israel. The phenomenon of gradual change without discrete moments of inspiration or turning points will be discussed later.

In addition to understanding the content and timing of the change, the study attempted to clarify the subjects' phenomenological experience of the internal drives behind the process of change. While all of the subjects experienced change as a step toward a truer or more meaningful mode of living, some were also able to identify psychological or emotional aspects of the change process. Among those pinpointing a

psychological drive, five of the subjects (45%) cited a feeling of inspiration as the prime

drive behind the change. Six subjects (55%), meanwhile, described themselves as driven

by dissatisfaction with the status quo. For some of these subjects the feeling of

dissatisfaction was focused on their previous lifestyle. For others, however, the feeling of

dissatisfaction focused on accomplishment in learning.

Thus, two prototypical change processes seem to emerge. In analyzing their

psychological motivations, some subjects described themselves as dissatisfied with their

previous mode of living, while others had been satisfied, but became inspired to change

nonetheless. The meaningfulness of this distinction between "dissatisfied changers" and

"inspired changers" is manifest in the application of these prototypes to other aspects of

the change process. The relevance of these prototypes will, therefore, be discussed

throughout the remainder of the "Process of Change" section.

A similar dichotomy has been noted in cognitive research, which has pinpointed both

positive and negative cognitive factors predisposing subjects to conversion processes.

One study described conversion as a result of a cognitive search for clarity and

understanding (Loveland, 2003). Similarly, but in a negative light, another suggested that

conversion results from an inability to live with ambiguity (Ullman, 1982). This notion,

however, stands in stark contrast to the conclusion drawn by Pargament (1997, p. 250)

regarding the drives behind religious change.

> Radical change does not come easy. Some type of stressor, tension, conflict, or
> uneasiness seems to be a prerequisite. The trigger may be an important
> transition or major negative events, such as the death of a loved one, a health
> threat, a divorce, or a critical loss.

The inconsistency of the subjects' overall experiences and Pargament's statement may, once again, be a function of degree of change. Perhaps, "radical change" is generally driven by negative emotions or cognitions, while more subtle change need not be.

Subjects were also asked, conversely, what factors impeded the process of change. Almost all of the subjects experienced some impediments during the course of the process of change. Many of the subjects described these impediments as obstacles to growth. However, others portrayed them as constructive forces that helped temper the process to allow the subject to change in a balanced fashion.

The nature of the subjects' resistances varied widely. Thirteen (76%) of the subjects reported impediments relating to prior relationships that might be compromised by change. Of these, nine (53%) reported social ties as the primary force that stood in the way of their change. These social ties took primarily two forms. First, many subjects had friends either in Israel or in the U.S. who were not undergoing change. Occasionally these friends exerted direct pressure against change. More often, however, the subject was concerned about losing the friendship by changing from who he had been.

Second, the religious changes that many of the subjects underwent often included changes on their perspectives on coed relationships, usually restricting heterosexual contact unless it was dating for the purpose of finding a spouse. Many subjects thus realized that by progressing with their change process they would eventually feel compelled to terminate relationships with female friends.

The notion of religious change being restrained by social factors runs contrary to the usual notions of the interaction of religion and social interaction. Both philosophers

(Durkheim, 1915) and psychological researchers (Jacquet & Jones, 1991) have noted the deep connection between the two, with the search for greater social intimacy often serving as the prod to religious change. As one convert expressed it, "ours is a friendly place, but I joined [my church] for something more than friendliness. It was familiness I missed and wanted." (Pargament, 1997, p. 56) It would certainly not seem that the search for social connection as a drive to change is absent in conversion to Judaism. Like other major religions, community is a focal aspect of Jewish life (Jacquet & Jones, 1991). Rather, it seems that this phenomenon is specific to this group, relating to the unique place of friendship during the adolescent period (Berk, 2001)

These findings also differ from the notion of religious change as a solution to emotional problems and discontent. For these subjects, the decision to change entailed giving up pleasurable activities. Rather, this is in line with the aforementioned approaches of Erikson (1950) and Rogers (1961) that the need to find identity and meaning can override the pleasure principle.

Five of the subjects (29%) reported family ties as a relationship that was a significant impediment to change. For some subjects this entailed a fear of creating a deep chasm between themselves and their families. Others felt more secure in their family relationships but nevertheless felt more subtly tempered by their familial connection.

This finding can be seen through several prisms. From the perspective of attachment theory, a relationship with G-d entails the same relational elements as does the relationship with one's parents (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Thus, developing a deeper attachment with G-d creates some tension in the other, competing parental relationship.

Alternatively, these subjects' family-based hesitations can be understood developmentally. During the stage of separation-individuation, it is normal to encounter struggles of connection and abandonment in the relationship with one's parents (Schultheis & Blustein, 1995). In fact, going through a phase of conflictual independence has been found by some to be the healthiest form of separation (Rice, 1992).

Tobin (2003) also notes that the influence of parents in the change process may be stronger in the era of cell phones. Only ten years ago, students usually spoke with parents no more than once per week due to the difficulty of procuring a pay phone, while the numbers have increased recently. Nonetheless, this effect may be more meaningful for girls than for the boys in the study. In Tobin's (1998) study of current yeshiva students, 43% of girls, but only 20% of boys spoke with their parents at least three times per week.

Nine subjects (53%) described internal emotional processes, including laziness, fear, and doubt as significant impediments. As with social impediments, the literature on religious change has focused on emotions as a prod rather than an impediment to change. As will be discussed later, emotional distress has been found to be a strong predictor of religious change. Although it is not discussed in the psychology literature, one assumes that internal emotional processes sometimes serve as an impediment in conversion processes of all religions. Nonetheless, this phenomenon may be more distinct in this subject pool for several reasons. First, the change here is generally part of an ongoing process rather than a discrete event. Thus, there is more opportunity for the student to be aware of emotional hesitations. Moreover, the emotional struggles may be an element of the age-appropriate separation-individuation process.

Subjects were questioned regarding the timing of their change. The majority of subjects could point to a time in the year of their most significant change, although the turning point occurred at different times in the year for different subjects. For a significant minority, however, the process was gradual with no defining moments. The earlier distinction of change prototypes based on drive seems related to the timing of change. It appears that those who were "dissatisfied changers" were more likely to have had a discrete point of change (67%), while those who were "inspired changers" were more likely to change gradually (60%). Additionally, several of the "dissatisfied changers" experienced their turning point during the Sukkot break, absent any yeshiva influence. It was apparently the contrast between the yeshiva environment and the more hedonistic alternatives, and their dissatisfaction with the latter that spurred change. Thus, the process of change for "dissatisfied changers" may be similar to the experience described in Christian conversion experiences. As discussed earlier, the conversion literature has long described change as being driven by negative factors (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996) and entailing a discrete turning point in the change process (Starbuck, 1898; James, 1902).

Ten of the subjects (56%) pinpointed a particular time during the year that was a turning point in the change process. Six (33%) of these identified Choref Zman as the critical juncture; two (11%) pinpointed Sukkot break; one (5%) labeled Elul Zman; and one (5%) labeled Kayitz Zman.

At a certain level, logistics warrant Choref Zman's place as the primary turning point, as it is the longest of the periods, spanning five-six months of the ten month year. One subject explained that the season also contributes, as there is little to do during the

cold, rainy winter months other than remain in yeshiva. Galanter (1982) has similarly

documented the importance of separation from larger society in the change process for

those who join a charismatic religious group.

Subjects reporting change at a particular juncture during the year were asked

regarding the nature of the experience marking the critical change moment. Ten of the

subjects (63%) reported a conversation as the turning point of their year. This trend

stands in contrast with the most common Christian change experiences. In his classic

study of converts, James (1902, p. 250) presented the following individual's experience

as typical:

> The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me,
> body and soul, I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going
> through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of
> liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. I can recollect distinctly
> that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

The different impetus behind the yeshiva students' change may be attributable to

differences between Christian and Jewish change experiences. Alternatively, these

subjects' change experiences might be particular to their developmental stage.

Three subjects (19%) reported a gradual process of change with no notable

turning point. These gradual changers reported spiritual moments, but did not find these

the key moments in the process of change. This change pattern is found in other religions

as well. Pargament (1997) noted that studies have found instances of significant change

with and without a specific trigger.

Even among subjects experiencing gradual change, most subjects were aware of

the presence of the process of change. This is consistent with the change literature as

well. Even among those involved in cults, most seem to be consciously aware of the process of change (Melton, 1986).

Interestingly, only one of the subjects (11%) who had a reported ruach spiritual moment described the experience as his turning point. Rather, six subjects (66%) reported a conversation as decisive, while two subjects (23%) reported a gradual process with no decisive moment. Thus, even for the spiritually/experientially oriented, an intellectual component was necessary to effect identity change. These findings stand in contrast to the descriptions of turning points for individuals undergoing Christian change.

Subjects were asked regarding the role of individuals in the yeshiva in their process of change. For seventeen subjects (94%), there were specific individual who were instrumental in the process of change. These individuals were in one of three groups, rebbe, mentor, or friend. Seven of the subjects (39%) reported individuals from more than category as instrumental in their change, while ten (56%) reported one or more individuals from only one category. Fourteen of the subjects (78%) reported a rebbe as instrumental in the change process.

One of the primary modes of rabbinic influence was modeling. This entailed admiration of both the individual and the community of which he was a part. For other subjects, it was the relationship with the rebbe that helped to effect change. The literature does not focus strongly on the involvement of other individuals in the change process. Although Pargament (1997) does anecdotally document examples of individuals with poor parental relations seeking a new relationship, the new relationship on which he focuses is the relationship with G-d rather than with a religious figure. Discussion of the role of clergy, meanwhile, focused more on their role in pastoral

counseling (Boisen, 1948; Taylor & Chatters, 1988; Sandoz, C., 2001) than on their involvement in the change process.

There are, however, several isolated discussions of the role of clergy in encouraging religious identity change and formation. Moilanen (1974) focused on the religious development of Finnish ministers, and corroborated the importance of relationships with clergy in the process of religious change.   He also noted that discussion with a Christian authority figure was more integral in the change process of those who changed at a discrete point and at a young age. The relevance of discrete change did not apply for the yeshiva students, amongst whom both the discrete changers and gradual changers were likely to feel relationships with a rebbe to be instrumental in the change process.

While there were occasional references to helpful constructive criticism from a rebbe, many subjects noted the importance of their rebbe taking an encouraging rather than critical role in the process of change.   Griffin (1982) found the same success with a more positive approach for pastors looking to engender psychological and religious growth in parishioners.

Seven subjects (39%) reported a mentor as a significant religious influence. Mentors included shana bet and kollel students. For many subjects, the influence of a mentor was similar to that of a rebbe, serving as a teacher and role model. Other subjects, however, were able to connect with a mentor in a manner that they could not with a rebbe.

In understanding the difference between relationships with rebbes in high school and during Israel, one subject suggested that the difference was not in the rebbes but

rather the students and the structure. Pargament (1997) has noted this phenomenon and explains that "availability, convenience, and accessibility are important factors, but they are not the only reason why people cope in religious ways (149)." Rather, current environmental and internal factors help create different responses to previously experienced stimuli.

Five students (28%) reported a friend as a major influence. The power of the peer group or congregation in the conversion process has similarly been documented across many religions (Pargament, 1997).

While a number of subjects reported a rebbe or mentor alone as their influence, none of those reporting a friend as an influence, described him as the sole influence. Rather, the friend supported the process of change along with a mentor or rebbe. The role of the rebbe appears to be more central than the role of the clergy described in the literature, in which the clergy seems to play a more optional role.

The same three categories of rebbe, mentor, and friend were identified as those with whom subjects had very close relationships in yeshiva. Six of the subjects (55%) identified a relationship with a rebbe. Close relationships with rebbes served several functions. For some of these subjects, the relationship served as a surrogate parental relationship. This parenting role provided structure in the formation of religious identity. Other subjects with a close relationship with a rebbe found the relationship to provide emotional support.

Some students, however, did not experience a close bond with a rebbe. Even among those identifying a rebbe as the strongest religious impact upon them, some explained, nonetheless, that they did not have a particularly close attachment to the rebbe.

Seven students (64%) identified a mentor as their closest relationship in the yeshiva, while four students (36%) identified a friend. The relatively small number identifying a friend as their closest relationship is striking. During adolescence, peer relationships are particularly focal, allowing for exploration (Berk, 2001) and providing support during stressful times (Kanner et al., 1987). This finding may be meaningful, or it may be an artifact of the question's wording and its placement after the question about the individual who most impacted the subject. Although a rebbe was the most popular choice for closest relationship, the frequency of the rebbe response was lower for relationship than it was for religious impact. That is, while subjects were most likely to have been religiously impacted by a rebbe, they were somewhat less likely to have had their closest relationship with him. Nonetheless, these findings do underscore that the impact of rebbes and mentors is not merely through preaching or teaching, but rather through a personal relationship.

Sixteen (89%) of the subjects had a return trip to the U.S. during the course of the year. In several cases, this was early in the year for a family wedding or bar/bat mitzvah. In most of the cases, this was during the Pesach break from yeshiva to visit their family. Subjects were asked about their experience of these trips home during the course of study in Israel. Although several subjects described the return home in multiple ways, most had a distinct experience of the trip.

Eight of the subjects (44%) experienced the visit home as a distraction from the process of change. These subjects felt that they regressed spiritually during the trip. Although the trip was generally during Pesach break, during which all of the students

were on vacation, many subjects explained that leaving the country entirely made it harder to pick up and continue upon return.

Two subjects (11%) explained that the trip stunted the process of change in a different way. Rather than simply interrupting the flow of change, returning home cast doubt on the veracity and desirability of change. Four subjects (22%), meanwhile, described returning home as a culture shock, but not necessarily distracting from the overall process.

The difficulty of integration in Israel and reintegration in the U.S. is consistent with the experiences of American university students during study abroad. Researchers have discussed the difficulty of integration into a foreign society, terming this the "U curve" (Nash, 1991). Students entered the foreign country with a high sense of well-being, which dipped and then rose as the individual underwent the process of integration.

Other studies have expanded this model, speaking of a "W curve," noting that the same phenomenon of adjustment occurs upon reentry to one's home society. Often upon returning home, travelers found that their families and old friends were not very receptive to their experiences and perspectives. They often had the need to find friends with similar experiences to find support and validation (Raschio, 1987).

Five subjects (28%) reported the trip home as having the opposite effect, helping along the process. This was experienced either as a self-confidence boost in the subject's ability to stick with the change in an "alien" environment. Alternatively, it was experienced as strengthening by solidifying the subject's new identity by interacting with his previous friends and environment as his new self. Finally, some explained its importance in alerting the subject to the challenges at the end of study in Israel, thus

helping focus the subject on the needed strengthening of the change during the remaining time in yeshiva.

There are several possible explanations of the different experiences students had during return home. One explanation, alluded to above, is that the degree of preparation for the culture shock of return determined the subject's ability to handle the experience. Researchers found that the expectations of the traveler upon returning home appear to be critical to the individual's well being. Students who were unprepared for an adjustment period upon returning home experienced added pressure (Koester, 1984).

Alternatively, one study suggested that "the sojourners who experience the greatest difficulty in the home adjustment may be those who were most successful in adapting to the foreign culture" (Brislin and Van Buren in Koester, 1984, p. 252).

Subjects were questioned about growth in the ethical sphere. Nine of the responding subjects (82%) perceived themselves as having becoming more ethical or interpersonally sensitive over the course of the year, although very few offered this at the outset as an example of the content of change. Some of the subjects described this as a behavioral change resulting from direct rabbinical discussion of the topic. For most, however, this was seen as an outgrowth of a general persona change. This finding is not consistent with Berger's (1999) finding that ethical improvement was not an aspect of religious change for yeshiva students in Israel. It is possible that Berger's larger sample provided a more accurate result. Alternatively, Berger's finding may require further assessment and perhaps qualification. It is also worth noting, however, that most of the subjects affirming ethical improvement did not view this as central to their change.

During initial questioning regarding change in Israel, almost none of them gave examples of ethical improvement.

For some religious changers, ethical and interpersonal change is at the heart of their change. Thus, in Gorlow and Schroeder's (1968) eight types of religious individuals, one group is termed "socially oriented servants." The yeshiva students do not fit this prototype, as evidenced by their failure to mention this as a focal religious change. Rather, the subjects of this study more likely fall into the categories of "self-improver," "moralist," "G-d seeker," and "intellectual." Nonetheless, there is anecdotal evidence that even converts whose change did not focus on social justice felt a natural inclination to help others. In his interviews with converts, Starbuck (1899) found such a phenomenon. One subject explained that after conversion "I had more tender feeling toward my family and friends," while another "felt in harmony with everybody, and all creation and its Creator." This appears to be reflected among the yeshiva students as well in their assertion that ethical improvement was an outgrowth of their general religious change.

One of the more interesting aspects of change is the manner in which people incorporate their periods of change into their life trajectory and into their self-image.

Subjects were asked whether and how their perspectives on their Israel process had changed since returning to the United States. Six subjects (43%) reported appreciating their Israel experience even more than they originally had. For those expressing increased appreciation, there was often a growing feeling of the challenge to maintain and extend the progress made in Israel. Some subjects explained that the

increased appreciation stemmed from an internalizing of the degree and meaning of their change upon returning to the United States.

Four subjects (29%) reported feeling the same about their experience as they had upon return, and four subjects (29%) reported having regretted and retreated from at least some aspect of the change process. These subjects explained their perspective in a number of ways. For one subject, there was a definite feeling that he had changed too far in Israel and had corrected these extreme changes. The nature of the subject's later perspective was not clearly predicted by the nature of their experience of returning home during the middle of the time in Israel.

These yeshiva students' experience is consistent with those of members of other religions. The phenomenon of religious change in the direction of decreased religiousness is a common sociological phenomenon, and the literature has long addressed the issue of the stability of beliefs and religious observance (e.g. Polanyi, 1952). Moreover, studies of religious change have also noted the phenomenon of an increase in religiousness subsequently followed by a decrease. Vorwahl (1933) even suggested that this pattern is a stage of normal adolescent development. He outlined the three periods of religious feeling during adolescence as 1) search for religious experience 2) doubt resulting from disillusionment or questioning 3) identity integration.

There is also a common phenomenon of testing a religious change for a period of time before deciding whether to retain the change. Even in the most extreme form of conversion, the joining of a cult, this phenomenon is common. Less than 10% of those who attend cult recruiting programs join the cult; moreover, the great majority of those who join subsequently leave the cult in less than two years (Melton, 1986).

Popular wisdom in the Orthodox Jewish community suggests that many students who undergo change in Israel reverse those changes completely upon return. This study's findings suggest that, even among those who still describe themselves as having undergone meaningful change in Israel, there may be an element of retreat from the degree of change.

As discussed earlier, subjects varied in their levels of observance prior to study in Israel. Subjects were also asked regarding their religious affiliation, which was found to be more consistent. Seventeen of the subjects (94%) identified as Modern Orthodox before coming to yeshiva in Israel. One subject (6%) identified as secular. While all of the subjects experienced themselves as undergoing meaningful change, subjects varied in their relationship to their original community. At the time of the interview, five subjects (28%) continued to identify as Modern Orthodox. One such subject explained that he felt himself to be more committed than he had been, but he still maintained a Modern Orthodox perspective. Four (22%) identified themselves as Yeshivish, apparently demonstrating the most change and furthest distancing from their upbringing. Nonetheless, some of these subjects expressed certain hesitations about affiliating with the Yeshivish community. Nine of the subjects (50%) identified themselves as straddling in between the Modern Orthodox and Yeshivish communities.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint a qualitative difference between those who changed their self-definition and those who did not, these varying levels of change are similar to those found in other populations. Pargament (1997) averred that the practice of referring to individuals who switch religious denominations as converts is misleading. In the process of conversion, there is a change in the goals of living. In denominational

switching the end remains more or less the same, while the path to the goal changes. (Travisano, 1970). Similarly, among the yeshiva students, those who became yeshivish experienced the change as more of a conversion process, while those who remained Modern Orthodox did not.

An additional framework is also helpful in formulating the different levels of change. Pargament (1997) suggested that one of the areas in which psychology and religion diverge is in their goals of change. In psychology, the goal is growth and improvement, while in religion the goal is a more radical conversion. While this may be true in some religions or circumstances, that is not necessarily the case for this population. Phenomenologically, the Yeshivish students may have had an experience akin to conversion, the "straddlers" an experience akin to denominational switching, and the Modern Orthodox an experience akin to the humanistic psychological notion of personal growth.

There are several additional trends in relation to the yeshivish students, albeit based on a very small sample. Students who became Yeshivish were more likely to have been rebellious in high school. Two (50%) described themselves as religiously rebellious in high school. Moreover, two (66%) of the total number of subjects who described themselves as rebellious became Yeshivish. This concept of shifting from one end of the spectrum to the other is widespread in popular wisdom, and is eloquently captured in a short story about a convert. In *the Man who Saw through Heaven*, the narrator describes the protagonist's drastic change by noting "the blacker the heathen, the whiter the light they want" (Steele in Haydn & Cournos eds., 1947, p. 46).

There also may be an overlap between the category of "dissatisfied changers" and those who become Yeshivish. Three of the subjects (75%) describing themselves as Yeshivish reported dissatisfaction as their primary drive to change.

There also appears to be a trend (100%) among the Yeshivish to experience the return trip as a distraction. This can be understood through the lense of the study abroad (Koester, 1984) and conversion (Pargament, 1997) literature. Inasmuch as their change is more radical, the return home is all the more stressful, while the longing to return to the location abroad is more intense.

The experience of the "straddlers" may be conceived of in several ways. For some subjects, the limbo state entailed unfinished identity development as will be discussed later. For others, however, it manifested a psychological attempt to maintain the Israel changes while remaining connected with their roots through the creation of a new community identity. This may have been one method of resolving the separation-individuation struggle. Another subject provided another label for this group, suggesting that this group was affiliated with no group but itself, referring to it as the "new post-Israel religion." This is consistent with the aforementioned w-curve finding in which returnees from study abroad had to look to fellow students returning from abroad for empathic social support (Raschio, 1987).

There are also several possible trends with the subjects identifying as Modern Orthodox. First, there may be a trend toward less encompassing focus on Torah study. While the large majority of subjects, fourteen (88%), identified their post-Israel dedication to Torah study as their first priority whenever there was time in their schedule, two (40%) Modern Orthodox subjects identified their study as important but not

encompassing. This may also be related to the students' experience prior to study in Israel. Although half of the subjects reported extracurricular learning during high school, only one (20%) of the subjects identifying as Modern Orthodox after study in Israel had this experience during high school.

In addition to the content of their change, there may be certain aspects of the process of change that are associated with the Modern Orthodox students. On the one hand, the less intense change of Modern Orthodox subjects does not seem to be a function of less connection with the yeshiva environment. The Modern Orthodox subjects were as likely as others to have had a rebbe as an important influence (100%). However, in comparison to the Yeshivish students, Modern Orthodox subjects may have been less likely to have their closest relationship with an authority figure. Of the Yeshivish students responding regarding their closest relationship, two (66%) reported a rebbe and one (33%) reported a mentor. Of the Modern Orthodox subjects, two (50%) reported a rebbe, while two (50%) reported a friend. One Modern Orthodox subject thus emphasized that his yeshiva and rebbes had impacted him without his developing a close connection with a rebbe.

> I was never into the find a rabbi and stick with him and do everything he says and become like an apostle… I think the entire experience as a whole has the imprint effect on me. I know some people put up pictures of Rav _____ on their door, but that's not for me.

This seems consistent with Pargament's (1997) depiction of the interplay of religious intensity and institutional connection: "Sacred power can be attached to the local mainstream congregation and clergy as well as the nontraditional group. The loyalty and devotion the individual feels for the neighborhood church and its leader can

also become a new organizing force for the self." Thus, in the case of the yeshiva students, it may also be that the less intimately connected the individual becomes with an authority figure, the less likely extreme change becomes.

Even though the subjects in the study had been back from Israel for a period of time, they were at a range of places developmentally. Many of the subjects emphasized that the process of religious growth would never stop, before expressing whether they thought their process had come to its terminus as regards their religious identity. Five subjects (28%) reported having incorporated their change into a stable identity.

The majority of subjects, however, reported feeling that they had not yet achieved a stable identity. Eight subjects (47%) reported basically knowing what their identity would be, although they felt they had not yet achieved it. Four subjects (24%) reported being in limbo, unsure where they would end up. Erikson (1950) termed this phase prior to identity formation "moratorium." He suggested that going through such a phase is part of healthy development during this phase of life. However, only longitudinal research could determine whether moratorium would soon be followed by identity formation or identity confusion. The normal trajectory is to complete this stage of adolescence, and then move into the stage of young adulthood with its challenge of intimacy versus isolation.

Those in moratorium were primarily in one of two limbo states. Some of the subjects were hovering between being Yeshivish and being a "straddler." Other subjects were hovering between being Modern Orthodox and being a "straddler." Overall, the subjects in the former state of moratorium seemed more comfortable with their exploration than the latter. This may have been because the latter were pulling back from

their change and questioning the very change they had undergone, which consisted of a stressful dilemma. The latter were simply deciding how far to take the change which they had maintained.

The difficulty of identity integration for subjects retreating from change is demonstrated through another finding. An interesting trend appeared regarding the relationship between the student's retrospective on study in Israel and their stage of identity integration. Students whose appreciation of the experience had remained steady or increased were generally closer to identity integration than those who regretted or had retreated from some element of the experience. Of the former, five subjects (45%) were done with the process; five (45%) were in view of finishing; and one (9%) was in limbo. Among the latter, none had completed their identity integration; two (40%) were in view; and three (60%) were in limbo.

Mental Health:

The third set of questions addressed the interplay of religious change and psychological functioning. A number of interesting trends appeared regarding the interaction of study in Israel and mental health. During high school, eleven subjects (69%) reported being euthymic. Three subjects (19%) reported sub-clinical emotional symptoms. Two (13%) reported diagnosable mental disorders.

This finding regarding the mental health of religious changers is not consistent with the literature's portrayal of conversion as a reaction to psychological distress. Psychoanalytic thinkers have explained conversion as an attempt to maintain ego

integration in the face of potential disintegration (Christensen, 1963). Research has upheld this approach revealing correlations of religious change and prior psychopathology (Granqvist, 1998). Longitudinal analysis has also revealed that increased religiousness over time was predicted by negative models of self before change. In fact, Pargament (1997) has gone so far as to suggest that trauma or conflict is a prerequisite for a conversion experience. These findings have been duplicated in the Orthodox Jewish community, in the study of *baalei teshuva* (returnees to Orthodox Judaism) (Witztum, Greenberg & Dasberg, 1990; Trappler, Endicott, & Friedman, 1995).

The discrepancy between the yeshiva students' experience and the literature probably reflects two issues. First, psychological problems may be generally necessary to shake individuals from inertia in order to undergo changes. However, during adolescence, identity change lies at the core of the normal developmental trajectory (Erikson, 1950), and therefore can take place without the prod of psychological upheaval. Second, as noted earlier, many of the subjects in this study underwent meaningful, but not radical, change. Trauma may be a prerequisite for radical changes, but not for more subtle ones.

Closer analysis reveals that hints of the prototypical "pathology-change" model may be present even in this subject pool. In looking at the "dissatisfied changers," the dissatisfaction seemed to often stem from stressors, trauma, or degrees of psychopathology. All of the "inspired changers" described themselves as euthymic before coming to yeshiva. Among the "dissatisfied changers," on the other hand, two (33%) were euthymic prior to yeshiva in Israel, while two (33%) experienced stress or subclinical symptoms, and two (33%) experienced clinical symptomatology.

Moreover, stressors may have served as more powerful prods to change even in this subject pool, as "dissatisfied changers" changed more quickly than "inspired changers." Among "inspired changers," two (40%) identified the Choref Zman as their time of change, while three (60%) described the process as a gradual one over the course of the year. On the other hand, "dissatisfied changers" tended to change earlier in the year. Three (50%) had changed before the Choref Zman, while one (17%) changed during the Choref Zman, and two (33%) changed gradually.

Psychological similarities between "dissatisfied changers" and converts may extend to the post-change period. Converts often report psychological relief from having converted, and feel released from some of the sources of tension and stress. This appears to be the case, for "dissatisfied changers" as well. This release of tension after change was described by one student.

> Some of my friends say or think that after they went to Israel, or after they decided that this is the way they want to live their life, and they wanted to stay in the yeshiva world and continue with it, that they found *yishuv hadaat* (inner peace) and they are much happier. In a way I'm very attracted to that. It's true. If you feel like what you're doing is right all the time.

Due to the stresses of transition, only one (20%) of the "inspired changers" reported only euthymia during yeshiva. Four (80%) experienced stress and symptoms of adjustment disorder. Among "dissatisfied changers," meanwhile, during study in Israel, three (50%) were euthymic, two (33%) experienced stress or subclinical symptoms, and one (17%) experienced symptoms of clinical depression. Thus, in contrast to the situation prior to study in Israel, "dissatisfied changers" were more likely to be euthymic than "inspired changers" during study in Israel.

During study in Israel, the numbers of euthymic students decreased to six subjects (33%). Twelve subjects (67%) reported being non-euthymic during portions of the year. They suggested a number of different causes of the emotional difficulties, including academic frustration and growing pains. Eight subjects (44%) reported experiencing subclinical symptoms, which made life uncomfortable but not debilitating. Four (22%) reported experiencing diagnosable symptoms.

Studies of the interaction of mental health and religious change focus on mental health before and after change rather than during it. Thus, it is not clear whether the decreased euthymia may be reflective of a typical aspect of religious change. This finding of decreased well-being is consistent, however, with the experience of other adolescents undergoing transitions. Eccles, Lord, &Buchanan (1996) found younger adolescents to undergo temporary dips in self-esteem at the beginnings of both junior high and high school. Similarly, Koester (1984) found the beginning of study abroad to be an emotionally difficult time for American college students.

This conception of yeshiva dysthmia as a transient phenomenon related to transition is supported by the subjects' psychological state upon return to the United States. During the period since return to the United States, ten subjects (56%) reported euthymia. Seven (42%) subjects reported subclinical symptoms. One (6%) reported diagnosable symptoms.

Many subjects with subclinical symptoms during study in Israel described how rebbes were able to help them with an encouraging approach. The phenomenon of students reaching out to rebbes for psychological assistance is consistent with the practice of religious individuals across the spectrum of age and religion. Clergy are often the

front-line practitioners of mental health work for many reasons (Hohmann & Larson, 1993). First, religious people are used to sharing life cycle events, along with their accompanying stressors with their religious leaders. Second, clergy are immediately accessible in the individuals' communities. Third, people feel less stigmatized in bringing their problems to a religious guide than to a mental health professional.

One subject with more serious clinical symptomatology, however, reported that his rebbes were unable to properly diagnose and handle his clinical symptoms. There has been little research on the efficacy of clergy therapy, although there are some findings of satisfaction (Veroff et al., 1981). Nonetheless, clergy generally have little training in mental health issues. For instance, Domino (1990) found that a wide variety of clergy had less knowledge of psychopathology than undergraduates in abnormal and introductory psychology courses. Thus, it would not be surprising if rebbes in Israeli yeshivas and clergy generally, had difficulty addressing cases of clinical psychopathology.

Subjects were asked which individuals in yeshiva had the strongest emotional impact upon them. Many subjects could not identify someone who had an emotional impact on them. Of those responding, five subjects (55%) identified a rebbe as an important emotional influence. In explaining the emotional impact, some spoke regarding developing maturity while others addressed relief from emotional distress. For those students assisted in maturation, the rebbe served a role common in the process of identity formation. Erikson (1950) explained that adolescents often interact, question, and imitate different adults in an attempt to gain clarity regarding their own sense of self. For the students receiving emotional stability during a religiously and emotionally trying period

of transition, the rebbe served the mental health function that clergy often play for people of all ages (Hohmann & Larson, 1993).

Parental Relationships:

The final series of questions addressed the quality of the subjects' relationships with parents, and its interaction with their religious change. Eight (53%) of the subjects reported having a good relationship with their parents prior to their time spent in Israel. Five of the subjects (33%) reported having a mediocre relationship. Two (13%) reported having a bad relationship.

The numbers remained similar during the time in Israel. Nine subjects (64%) reported a good relationship. Three subjects (21%) reported a mediocre relationship. Two subjects (14%) reported a bad relationship. Interestingly, while the overall numbers stayed the same, only half of the subjects (7) remained at the same level of functioning. Four of those subjects (29%) relationships improved. Three of the subjects' (21%) relationships became worse. Thus, in this sample, there was no clear pattern of the effect of the change process on the parental relationship.

After return from Israel, seven subjects (50%) reported good relationships. Seven subjects (50%) reported mediocre relationships, while 0 subjects reported bad relationships. In comparing parental relationships before and after study in Israel, seven of the subjects (54%) reported the same level of functioning, while six (46%) reported a change. Of the six reporting change, four (31%) reported improvement while two (15%) reported worsening.

In comparing parental relationships during and after the subjects' time in Israel, eight (62%) reported status quo. Of the five subjects (38%) reporting change, two (15%) reported improvement while three (23%) reported worsening. Here too, there was no clear pattern regarding the interaction of religious change and relationship with parents.

This finding differs from the results of a dissertation on the relationships between baalei teshuva and their non-Orthodox families (Eidex, 2000). That study found tense relationships with family after the process of religious change. Feelings in the relationships included anger, resentment, confusion, and concern. On the surface, this might be attributed to the degree of change. Unlike the yeshiva students, baalei teshuva undergo a more extreme change, which is thus more likely to create tensions with their family. Nonetheless, as will be discussed below, the more radical changers within the yeshiva student pool actually improved their relationships with their parents.

These findings regarding parental relationships also shed light on the literature on the "u-curve" (Nash, 1991) and "w-curve" (Raschio, 1997) discussed earlier. While there were signs of the psychological impact of transitions going to and returning from Israel, these do not generally appear to have had a distinct impact on the parental relationship. Thus, the quality of parental relationships seems to have remained stable despite the distance and change.

While change does not seem to have affected the quality of parental relationships, the quality of parental relationships may have affected the nature of change. All of the subjects reporting a bad relationship with their parents prior to yeshiva identified themselves as Yeshivish; one of the Yeshivish students reported a mediocre relationship; while none reported a good relationship. Among the Modern Orthodox and the

"straddlers," all reported a mediocre or good relationship prior to study in Israel. Thus, there is a trend for poor relationships to serve as a predictor for more extreme change in Israel.

This trend is consistent with the literature. Studies have demonstrated that both the home and the external environment play a role in the creation of an individual's religious identity. Myers (1996) found that parental religiosity is the most reliable predictor of a child's degree of religious commitment. The likelihood of a parent being able to pass on their perspective to his child, meanwhile, is dependent upon the quality of the parent-child relationship.

The general perception is also that the more radical the change, the more strife. In this small sample, the three responding students who identified as Yeshivish all experienced an improvement in their relationship with parents. While this sample is extremely small, it stands in contrast to the anecdotal report of an administrator at Yeshiva University. He stated that as many as 80% of those who become extremely religious have problems back at home (Tobin, 2000). It may be that, while subjects with an initially poor relationship improved, those with an initially good relationship deteriorated.

When asked to identify the person or people whom they experienced as an introject, "the people whose opinion of you mattered most," before going to Israel eleven of the subjects (79%) identified one or both parents; two subjects (14%) identified a friend; two subjects (14%) identified a rebbe; and one subject (7%) identified a grandparent.

After study in Israel, seven of the subjects (64%) continued to identify their parent as an introject. A traditional developmental view might suggest that the subjects continuing to report deep attachment to their parents had not achieved as healthy or complete a process of individuating from their parents (Kenny & Donaldson in Tobin, 1998). More recent researchers, however, have framed healthy parental attachment as "an enduring emotional bond with parents" (Schultheiss & Blustein in Tobin, 1998, p.249). That is, psychologically healthy adjustment entails achieving autonomy within the context of "an interdependent, rather than an independent relationship with their parents." (Tobin, 1998)

Eight of the subjects (73%) reported a rebbe as an introject. Much has been written in the literature of religion regarding the role of the search for a parental figure in religious conversion or switching. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found that subjects describing their mother as cold and unresponsive were more likely to undergo a process of religious change. While this may have played a role for these subjects, most of those who became closely connected with a rebbe reported a good parental relationship prior to yeshiva. Moreover, most subjects maintained a parent as an introject alongside the rebbe. Among subjects initially reporting a parental introject, three (27%) replaced the parent with a rebbe. Four (36%) added on a rebbe, while maintaining a parental introject. Four (36%) maintained a parental introject and did not add on a rebbe.

Four subjects (36%) reported a friend as a post-Israel introject. This is consistent with the developmental literature. Close relationships with friends have been found to be of particular import to college-aged men (Rice, 1992). While closeness to fathers was

critical prior to identity-development transitions, afterward peer support became more important.

When asked whether they recalled having arguments with their parents during high school, nine subjects (75%) reported that they did. Three subjects (25%) reported that they did not. During their stay in Israel, four subjects (40%) reported arguments becoming more intense. Three (30%) reported their remaining the same intensity. Three (30%) reported their becoming less intense.

The presence of conflict during late adolescence has been described by Anna Freud as an "inevitable" part of the separation process (Kenny & Donaldson, 1992). More recent researchers have suggested, however, that separation may take place with or without the intensification of conflict (Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994). The present findings are more in line with the latter approach, with variation in the subjects' experience of conflict in the parental relationship during the process of change.

Limitations of the Study:

The primary limitation of this study is inherent in all qualitative research. The use of this methodology was highly appropriate for the analysis of the little-studied area of the change process of yeshiva students; it should help provide direction within this field both for further research and clinical understanding. Nonetheless, inasmuch as the study was done with a small sample and without statistical analysis, the results should be treated as hypotheses for further study. It is also important to realize the limitations that the retrospective nature of the study cast upon its findings.

In addition to the limitations inherent in the methodology, there were also other features of the study that need to be considered. The study tentatively points to different prototypes of change, including the distinctions between dissatisfied and inspired changers, and the comparisons to conversion, switching, and personal growth. In addition to these groups, however, there are also different demographic groups both in this study and in the general population of yeshiva students. Among boys returning from study in Israel, there are three types of schools from which they choose. Boys attend either a secular university, Yeshiva University, or a yeshiva. In the present study, most of the subjects attended Yeshiva University, with three attending a secular college and four attending a yeshiva. The study of these three groups as a unit may be misleading as there may be specific trends necessitating separate study of each of the groups (Shavelson, 1981).

The need to study distinct groups independently was also the impetus behind focusing the study on boys alone. While this is not a limitation in terms of the study's goals, clearly the experience of girls needs to be studied independently as well.

Finally, the interviewing, coding, and analysis were all done by the author. Thus, the possibility must be entertained that personal biases or inclinations in interpretation and coding affected the outcomes of the study. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that some of the author's hypotheses were disconfirmed, while other findings were unexpected. Thus, it would appear that the results do not reflect the author's preconceived biases.

Implications for Future Research:

There are numerous findings of this study, some of them isolated points, but many of them interrelated with each other. The primary task in following up this study will be to determine the appropriate measures to confirm or disconfirm its hypotheses. Many of the findings of this study related to differences between the "dissatisfied changers" and the "inspired changers." "Dissatisfied changers" were more likely to have had poor relationships with parents and mental health problems prior to study in Israel. They were also more likely to change more extremely in Israel. All of these tentative correlations need to corroborated, preferably through the use of surveys prior to, during, and after study in Israel.

The findings suggesting that stress and symptoms increase during study in Israel and then return to baseline will especially benefit from being investigated via valid measures. Subsequent research could make use of sweeping semi-structured interviews such as the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders (SCID) or the Diagnostic Interview Schedule, Version IV (DIS-IV). Alternatively, time limitations might make the use of brief screening assessments such as the Symptom Checklist-90 Revised (Derogates, 1977, 1994), the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogates & Melisaratos, 1983), or the Psychiatric Diagnostic Screening Questionnaire (Zimmerman & Mattia, 1999, 2001) more feasible. Using the shorter measures might make it feasible to administer the screenings several times during study in Israel to help pinpoint the most stressful times during the year. Summerfeldt and Antony (2002) outline the many alternatives for diagnostic interviewing, while Bufka, Crawford, and Levitt (2002) provide an extensive discussion of the assorted brief screening assessments.

The use of validated measures will also bring clarity to the issue of parental relationships. The findings of this study point to a greater stability in the relationship than is sometimes expected in the Orthodox community. Future studies should also use validated measures to assess yeshiva students' relationships with their parents before, during, and after study in Israel.

The present findings point to a number of differences related to the degree of religious change. For instance, students who changed most radically were more likely to have experienced psychological symptomatology and parent relationship conflict during high school. Randomized selection of subjects would help clarify whether these findings extend to differentiating between students who change and those who do not change at all.

There are also many additional aspects of the Israeli yeshiva experience that could be clarified using qualitative analysis. First, inasmuch as this study focused on the process of change for boys, a study of girls' experiences would be enlightening. Additionally, this study sampled the experiences of subjects from an array of Israeli yeshivas. Further studies might compare the experiences of boys in different programs. This study also focused on the experience of the students, while future research might incorporate the perspectives of parents and teachers, as Tobin (2000) did in her study.

All in all, little research has been done in this area. Most of the limited writings are opinion pieces or educationally focused research. The only psychologically focused studies of this subject pool are Halpern's (1993) study of adjustment problems and Tobin's (1998) analysis of the interaction of study in Israel and parental relationships. Study in Israeli yeshivas and its impact is an area of particular interest to parents,

educators, and mental health professionals within the Orthodox Jewish community.

However future studies will also shed light on the related, expansive topics of religious

conversion, religious identity, study abroad, and adolescent identity development.

Clinical Implications:

This study points to implications in a number of different areas. It may be most

beneficial to focus this discussion on the different categories of individuals affected by

the process of change in Israel. First, students should be alerted to several things. One of

the most striking aspects of this change is the wide range of speeds at which students

undergo changes. Although quantitative and longitudinal research will clarify the issue,

this study finds no support for the popular notion that quicker change is psychologically

damaging.

Students should also be aware that there are many different manners in which

people change. Students sometimes feel pressure to have a life-changing moment, a

"Kotel moment," as one student called it. Alternatively, others feel uncomfortable about

the strong impact that a single moment had on them. Similarly, some students feel

unusual for not developing a personal connection with a rebbe, while others worry that

they have become too close with a rebbe. It would be helpful for students undergoing

change to understand that there is a wide range of normalcy within the process.

While students should be alerted to normal patterns, they should also be aware

that study in Israel is often a stressful experience, particularly during the early months of

the year. Students are often misled by the impressions they receive during high school

from older students returning from study in Israel. Many of the students who change

during the year come back to the U.S. with glowing reports of their experience. To a large extent these reports reflect their experience, but, for several reasons, sometimes the reports gloss over the stressors. First, much of the stress occurs in earlier parts of the year and is not so vividly recalled by the end of the year. Second, some students feel a conscious or unconscious pressure to show others that they had a successful year. One of the subjects described the experience of reporting to his visiting parents in Israel how well things were going while thinking to himself "get me out of here."

In addition to awareness of stressors, it will be helpful for students to be alerted to the signs of more serious psychopathology. This issue manifests itself in the experience of one of the subjects, who suffered for an extended period of time before understanding that his obsessive thoughts were symptoms of a mental disorder. This population is particularly susceptible to overlooking clinical symptoms as there are many areas of psychopathology that are hard to differentiate from intense religious behavior or devotion (Greenberg & Witztum, 1991).

Parents should also be aware of the findings of this study. Striking the ideal relationship with their child in Israel is a difficult task, as the student undergoes the process of separation-individuation. On the one hand, a parent should realize that the early phases of study in Israel are very commonly a temporarily stressful transition that requires only patience and time. On the other hand, they should be aware of signs that symptoms of psychopathology in need of treatment have arisen.

Parents will also benefit from considering other aspects of this study. Many parents report feeling rejected by their children who have changed to varying degrees from their upbringing. Undoubtedly, some students create this feeling through their

words or behaviors. In other cases, however, it appears to be the very act of change that leads parents to feel rejected by their children, as suggested by the heuristic of vividness (Plous, 1993). In the literature on judgment and decision making, it has been demonstrated that people perceive vivid information as more significant and encompassing than it actually is. Thus, parents may tend to focus on noticeable signs of change in their child, and exaggerate its implications for their relationship with their son.

At the same time, however, parents may pay insufficient attention to the complexity of the change process. Most subjects who reported deeply respecting their parents during high school continued to do so upon return from Israel, despite their changes. Additionally, focusing on the noticeable changes, parents may not realize that their children are still in moratorium and searching for an integrated identity.

As discussed earlier, rebbes often serve simultaneously as educators, surrogate parents, religious guides, and therapists. The most important information for rebbes is the psychologically related findings of this study. Providing basic empathy for the stress of the transition to Israeli yeshiva can be very helpful to students. Moreover, as discussed earlier, rebbes are the front-line agents for detection of the symptoms of psychopathology. Due to their religious training and focus, rebbes are particularly at risk for interpreting symptomatology as healthy religious fervor. The meticulous prayer of a student suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder, the mental self-flagellation of a clinically depressed student, and the pious fasting of an anorectic can mistakenly be praised or ignored in the yeshiva setting.

This study also has implications for the rebbe's role in the religious life of the student. Many students pointed out the difference in religious and psychological impact

resulting from a rebbe's approach. Many suggested that a positive, encouraging approach was more beneficial both psychologically and religiously.

Mental health professionals should also consider the results of this study. Although the situation has improved in recent years, many leading psychologists have written negatively of religion and religious change. Neither this study nor the literature find confirmation for the theory that religious change breeds psychopathology. On the other hand, religious psychologists in particular should note that there is some evidence in this study and in the literature that individuals with a history of psychological troubles may be more likely to change. Nonetheless, each individual must be assessed individually to determine whether the change process has contributed to the problems or whether it might have provided increased stability to the student.

Mental health professionals have a critical role in this area, beyond the treatment of returning students with psychological problems. Prevention work, in the form of preparation and education of students, parents, and rebbes could go a long way toward improving the Israel experience and minimizing undetected psychological troubles during study in Israel.

The format and timing of such programs could be structured in a number of ways. Students and parents could be invited to a special event at the high school, or such a talk could be incorporated into "Israel night" events that are held at most schools. Rebbes could undergo training during the summer prior to the arrival of students at the beginning of the month of Elul. Shames (2001) has discussed the need for a systematic approach to this issue, and has outlined suggestions for the implementation of corrective measures.

His ideas should spur further discussion and, more importantly, concrete implementation

in meeting the psychological needs of yeshiva students.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Informed Consent

I, _____, give permission to Daniel

Jacobson, a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional

Psychology of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to interview me and

audiotape me, as well as to take notes of this interview. Mr. Jacobson is conducting

research on the psychological and religious change of boys studying in Israeli yeshivas.

The interview contains questions addressing my religious and psychological state before

and after attending yeshiva in Israel. It will also focus on the nature and process of the

psychological and religious changes that took place during the year in Israel.

The goal of his study is to assist the Orthodox Jewish community in understanding the

Israeli yeshiva experience. The interview experience may also be helpful to me in

reflecting on my experiences. If I so desire, I will have access to Mr. Jacobson's

dissertation upon its conclusion.   I understand that Mr. Jacobson is conducting this

research under the supervision of Lew Gantwerk, Psy.D., Director of the Center for

Applied Psychology at Rutgers.

I understand that at any time, if I wish, I can discontinue the audiotaping of the interview,

the written recording of the interview, or the interview in its entirety. The interview

should last for approximately 90 minutes. I also understand that after the interview is

Initials _____

completed, if I decide that I do not want my interview utilized in the final data analysis, I can request that my data be removed from the data analysis. In addition, I understand that the researcher will remove all identifying data from the data collected, and that all information collected from the interview will be maintained in a locked cabinet.

If any part of this interview process causes me excessive emotional distress or impairment, I understand that I may contact the researcher for him to arrange appropriate counseling services.

I understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary. I understand that I can contact Daniel Jacobson, the researcher at:

Phone #: 516-410-7016 Email address: dbj14@juno.com

Lew Gantwerk, the supervisor of this project, can be reached at:

Phone #: 732-445-7793 Email address: gantwerk@rci.rutgers.edu

Should I have any questions regarding my rights as a research subject, I can contact the Rutgers Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 732-445-2799.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my files.

Initials_____

Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Name of Investigator

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Initials_____

APPENDIX B

The Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Psychological and Religious Change During

Study in Israel

Level of Observance, Religiousness, and Spirituality Before and After Israel Study

1. What was your level of observance before Israel?

2. What was your level of observance after Israel?

3. What are examples of new observances that you accepted during study in Israel?

4. What was your daily time set aside for extra-curricular learning before and after study

    in Israel?

5. What did learning mean to you before and after study in Israel?

6.   What were your goals for the year in Israel?

7. Did your goals change over the course of the year?

8. Had you considered staying for two years before you went to Israel?

9.   How did you choose your Yeshiva? What were your prime factors?

10. Describe one of your most spiritual moments from before yeshiva?

11. Describe one of your most spiritual moments during yeshiva?

The Process of Religious Change

12. What were the most significant religious changes that you went through during your

time in Israel?

13. At what point during the year did the most significant changes take place?

14. Were there any critical events, discussions, points in time during your change process?

15. What were the prime drives behind the changes?

16. What factors held you back from making changes that you considered?

17. What individuals in the yeshiva had the biggest impact on you religiously?

18. With whom did you have the closest relationship in yeshiva?

19. What drove your decisions to change?

20. How were they influenced by your study?

21. How were they influenced by older students?

22. How were they influenced, by students your age?

23. How were they influenced by rabbis?

24. Did you return to the U.S. during your year of study? How did that affect your experience?

25. How has your perspective on your Israel experience changed since you returned to the U.S.?

26. With what Jewish community or communities do you now affiliate? Modern Orthodox, Dati Leumi, Yeshivish, Chasidish, or another?

27. Do you feel that you have completed your process of change? If yes, when did this take place? If no, when do you foresee this taking place?

Emotional/Psychological Issues and Change

28. Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties
    before study in Israel?

29. Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties during
    study in Israel?

30. Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties
    after study in Israel?

31. Describe two people whose opinion of you was most significant to you, before and
    after study in Israel?

32. What individuals in the yeshiva had the biggest impact on you, emotionally?

Family Issues

33. Are both of your parents living?

34. Did you grow up with both of them?

35. How would you describe your relationship with your parents before, during, and
after your study in Israel?

36. Have you had major disagreements with your parents before, during, or after your
study in Israel?

37. How did you handle the disagreements?

38. In what ways were you religiously similar or different from your parents before
yeshiva?

39. In what ways were you religiously similar or different from your parents after yeshiva?

40. What is your place in your family's birth order?

41. Describe your relationship with your siblings before, during, and after yeshiva?

42. Did your older siblings attend yeshiva? What was their experience?

43. How much and in what way were you affected by your older siblings' experience?

44. How has this interview been for you?

45. Are there any questions that I have not asked that you feel are important to understanding your yeshiva experience and change process?

46. Do you have any questions of me regarding the study?

APPENDIX C

Coding Manual

Level of Observance

1. What was your level of observance before study in Israel?

    1. Within Modern Orthodox norms- 11 (61%)

    2. Less observant than Modern Orthodox norms- 3 (17%)

    3. More observant than Modern Orthodox norms- 2 (11%)

    4. Non-observant- 2 (11%)

2. What was the nature of your Torah study before study in Israel?

    1. Academic subject only- 7 (47%)

    2. Extra-curricular study as well- 8 (53%)

2a. What was your daily time set aside for extra-curricular learning after study

    in Israel?

    1. Encompassing pursuit- 14 (88%)

    2. Extra-curricular study as well- 2 (12%)

3. What were your goals for Israel study prior to leaving for Israel?

    1. Learning-10 (59%)

2. Spiritual growth- 9 (53%)

3. Having fun- 5 (29%)

4. Everyone goes-3 (18%)

4. What were your goals for Israel study prior during study in Israel?

1. Learning-12 (71%)

2. Spiritual growth- 11 (65%)

5. What kind of spiritual moment did you experience before studying in yeshiva?

1. ruach moment- 10 (56%)

2. conversation-4 (22%)

3. trauma- 2 (11%)

4. act of kindness- 1 (5%)

5. prayer- 1 (5%)

6.   Describe one of your most spiritual moments during yeshiva?

1. ruach moment- 8 (47%)

2. conversation

3. act of kindness- 1 (5%)

4. prayer- 6 (33%)

5. learning- 5 (28%)

6. None- 2 (11%)

The Process of Religious Change

7. What were the most significant religious changes that you went through during your time in Israel?

    1. behavioral- 16 (89%)

    2. weltanschauung- 7 (39%)

8. At what point during the year did the most significant changes take place?

    1. Elul Zman- 1 (5%)

    2. Sukkot Break- 2 (11%)

    3. Choref Zman- 6 (33%)

    4. Kayitz Zman- 1 (5%)

    5. Gradual- 8 (44%)

9. Were there any critical events, discussions, points in time during your change process?

    1. Conversation- 10 (63%)

    2. Gradual- 4 (25%)

    3. Contemplation- 2 (13%)

10. What were the prime drives behind the changes?

    1. Inspiration- 5 (45%)

    2. Dissatisfaction- 6 (55%)

11. What factors held you back from making changes that you considered?

1. Relationships

    a. Friends- 9 (53%)

    b. Family- 5 (29%)

2. Emotional Factors- 9 (53%)

12. What individuals in the yeshiva had the biggest impact on you religiously?

1. Rebbe- 14 (78%)

2. Mentor- 7 (39%)

3. Friend- 5 (28%)

13. **With whom did you have a very close relationship in yeshiva?**

1. Rebbe- 6 (55%)

2. Mentor- 7 (64%)

3. Friend- 4 (36%)

14. Did you return to the U.S. during your year of study? How did that affect your experience?

1. Distraction-8 (44%)

2. Strengthening- 5 (28%)

3. Culture Shock- 4 (22%)

4. Creation of Doubt- 2 (11%)

15. Did you improve ethically or interpersonally during your year of study?

    1. Yes- 9 (82%)

    2. No- 2 (18%)

16. How has your perspective on your Israel experience changed since you returned to the U.S.?

    1. Appreciate More- 6 (43%)

    2. Same Feeling- 4 (29%)

    3. Regret/Reversal (29%)

17. With what Jewish community or communities do you now affiliate? Modern Orthodox, Dati Leumi, Yeshivish, Chasidish, or another?

    1. Modern Orthodox- 5 (28%)

    2. Yeshivish- 4 (22%)

    3. In Between Modern Orthodox and Yeshivish- 9 (50%)

18. Do you feel that you have completed your process of change? If yes, when did this take place? If no, when do you foresee this taking place?

    1. Stable identity- 5 (28%)

    2. Approaching stable identity- 8 (47%)

    3. Limbo- 4 (24%)

Emotional/Psychological Issues and Change

19.   Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties

before study in Israel?

1.   Euthymic- 11 (69%)

2.   Subclinical symptoms- 3 (19%)

3.   Mental Illness- 2 (13%)

20. Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties

during study in Israel?

1.   Euthymic- 6 (33%)

2.   Subclinical symptoms- 8 (44%)

3.   Mental illness-4 (22%)

21. Did you suffer from depression, anxiety, or other mental/emotional difficulties

after study in Israel?

1.   Euthymia- 10 (56%)

2.   Subclinical symptoms- 7 (39%)

3.   Mental illness- 1 (6%)

22. Describe two people whose opinion of you was most significant to you before study in

Israel?

   1. Parent- 11 (79%)

   2. Friend- 2 (14%)

   3. Rebbe- 2 (14%)

   4. Grandparent-1 (7%)

23. Describe two people whose opinion of you was most significant to you after study in

Israel?

   1. Parent- 7 (64%)

   2. Friend- 4 (36%)

   3. Rebbe- 8 (73%)

24. What individuals in the yeshiva had the biggest impact on you, emotionally?

   1. Rebbe- 5 (63%)

   2. Mentor- 2 (25%)

   3. Friend- 1 (12%)

Family Issues

25. How would you describe your relationship with your parents before your study in Israel?

    1. Good- 8 (53%)

    2. Mediocre- 5 (33%)

    3. Bad- 2 (15%)

26. How would you describe your relationship with your parents during your study in Israel?

    1. Good- 9 (64%)

    2. Mediocre- 3 (21%)

    3. Bad- 2 (14%)

27. How would you describe your relationship with your parents after your study in Israel?

    1. Good- 7 (50%)

    2. Mediocre- 7 (50%)

    3. Bad- 0

28. Did you have major disagreements with your parents before your study in Israel?

    1. Yes- 9 (75%)

    2.No- 3 (25%)

29. Did disagreements become more or less intense while studying in Israel?

    1. More- 4 (40%)

    2. Same- 3 (30%)

    3. Less- 3 (30%)

30. In what ways were you religiously similar or different from your parents before yeshiva?

    1. Less religious- 5 (50%)

    2. Equally religious- 4 (40%)

    3. More religious- 2 (20%)

31. In what ways were you religiously similar or different from your parents after yeshiva?

    1. More religious- 17 (94%)

    2. Equally religious- 1 (6%)

APPENDIX D

Hebrew Words Glossary

asur- forbidden
baal teshuva- Orthodox Jew from a secular background
bais/t medrash- study hall
Bava Metzia- laws of ownership and contracts
ben Torah- pious Jew
brachos- blessings
Chareidi- Ultra-Orthodox
Chasidish Litvak- spiritual scholar
chevrusa- study partner
Choref Zman- Winter Period
davening- prayer
dvar Torah- Torah talk
Eretz Yisroel- The Land of Israel
erev Yom Kippur- Yom Kippur eve
frum- pious/Orthodox
gaava- conceit
gemara- Talmud
goy- gentile-derogatory
halacha- Jewish law
Hashem- G-d
hashkafas- religious perspectives
havdalah- Sabbath concluding ceremony
kashyas- questions
Kayitz Zman- summer period
kiruv- religious outreach
kollel guy- rabbinical student
learning- studying Torah
madrich- dormitory counselor
midos/t- character traits

mincha- afternoon service
Motzei Shabbos- Saturday night
*mussa*r- ethical introspection
neshama- soul.

nichshal- failed to observe
onegs- evening gatherings
pashute yid- simple Jew
Pesach- Passover
Rebbe- teacher

rosh kollel- advanced Talmud study institute director
seder- partner study period
sefer- Jewish book
shabbaton- weekend retreat
Shabbos- the Sabbath
shalosh seudos- Sabbath Afternoon meal
shana alef- first year in Israel
shana bet- second year in Israel
Shavuos/t- late spring holiday
shayach- associated
shikza- gentile-derogatory
shiur- Talmud class
shul- synagogue
sugya- Talmudic passage
sukka- religious hut
Sukkos- Jewish fall holiday
talmid chacham- Torah scholar
tish- Shabbos evening gathering
Torah- the Bible and Talmud
tzitzit- ritual undergarment
yarmulke- skullcap
Yeshivish- conservative (right wing) Orthodox
yetzer hara- evil inclination
yom tov- the holiday

APPENDIX E

IRB Exemption