STUDENT MOTIVATION TO LEARN HEBREW BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE BAR MITZVAH

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study explores the trajectory of student motivation to learn Hebrew throughout the process of preparing for the bar mitzvah. It investigates the experiences of teenage students enrolled in Reform and Reconstructionist Jewish supplemental schools, focusing on Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS constructs of ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. Descriptive statistics for questionnaire data are presented alongside a thematic analysis of factors that increase and decrease student motivation. The findings highlight a decrease in motivation upon completion of the bar mitzvah and illuminate the social and individual variables that influence students' and motivation to learn Hebrew. This study concludes with a call for more research in this language community and provides evidence to support professional development and the inclusion of student perspective.

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Introduction

Motivation has garnered much attention in second language acquisition (SLA), including foreign, second language (L2), and heritage language education. However, there is limited research in motivation in Hebrew as a heritage language in American Jewish spaces. Scholars have examined identity and socialization in Canadian and British Jewish schools (Feuerverger, 2009; Atkinson, 2007), parental influence in American Hebrew schools (Feuer, 2006), and identity, ideology, and socialization in Jewish summer camps (Benor et al., 2020). Studies have also been conducted in undergraduate Hebrew courses, which include non-heritage learners (Roginsky, 2024). The limited work that has been done suggests that studying the experiences of K-12 students learning Hebrew is an opportunity that can inform the field on the connection between language and religious identity and broaden our understanding of the role of language ideology and community practices in heritage language learning (Avni, 2018).

Within Jewish spaces, Hebrew education often takes place within the context of supplemental schools, institutions affiliated with synagogues that offer after-school instruction in Hebrew and Judaic studies. However, stakeholders in these supplemental schools acknowledge the common problem of enrollment drop-off after the completion of the bar or bat mitzvah. In fact, there is a joke about this exact issue:

> A rabbi was having difficulty with mice in the synagogue. After mousetraps and cats didn't work, the rabbi called the mice together for a meeting and asked, "How would you like to have a bar mitzvah?" The mice were very excited at the prospect. They studied hard at the Hebrew School. When the rabbi felt they were ready, they had a group b'nai[1]

[1]B'nai mitzvah is the plural version of bar or bat mitzvah, which may also be used in the singular form for nonbinary or otherwise gender-nonconforming children.

mitzvah, a great big party, and then never came back to the synagogue again (Palatnik, 2023).

While this phenomenon is complex and multifaceted, part of the explanation may lie in students' motivational journey throughout the bar mitzvah process.

Taking into account Jewish cultural traditions, this mixed-method study investigates motivation in Jewish supplemental school students studying Hebrew before, during, and after their bar/bat mitzvah, in addition to exploring the factors that might influence this motivation. It seeks to deepen our understanding of the role of motivation in heritage language learning and inspire future research in the unique context of Jewish Hebrew education.

Defining Terms

Bar/bat mitzvah. The bar/bat mitzvah – a Jewish rite of passage, described by Schoenfeld (2010) as a "public performance of identity"– marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. Now considered an adult, the child who has completed the bar or bat mitzvah is expected to observe mitzvot (commandments) such as keeping kosher, wearing appropriate garments (e.g., kippah, tzitzit, tallit), and observing fast days. The term – *bar mitzvah* for boys, *bat mitzvah* for girls – refers to both the person and the event. Boys typically celebrate their bar mitzvah at age 13, and girls at age 12 or 13. This usually occurs in seventh grade. The bat mitzvah is a relatively new phenomenon (with the first publicly ordained and recognized bat mitzvah taking place in 1922), as it was traditionally only for boys (Prichep, 2022).

The bar/bat mitzvah is a public performance where the child moves "from learning to doing Judaism" by performing a series of liturgical tasks (Munro, 2016, p. 78, italics added). The child leads components of the religious service, reads from the Torah, delivers a sermon on their Torah portion, and often completes a 'mitzvah project' -- an act of community service that

embodies the concept of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). The religious service often consists of familiar, memorized songs, short prayers, and blessings in both Hebrew and English. The Torah reading is done completely in Hebrew from the Torah itself, which does not use vowels. This adds an additional layer of difficulty, as words may have several possible pronunciations; without vowels, the learner must either know the grammatical or lexical rules that determine the pronunciation, or the learner must memorize the pronunciation of each word individually. Prayerbooks and Hebrew language curricula, which comprise the bulk of the texts that students are exposed to, typically include vowels. In addition to knowledge of Hebrew, the child must also know the cantillation, or the melody, associated with each passage. The cantillation is represented in the text through cantillation marks, or tropes.

In preparation for the bar mitzvah, children are usually enrolled in tutoring in addition to their Jewish supplemental or day school education, which provides a one-on-one learning environment for learners to practice their individual passages. During these tutoring sessions, students practice their assigned portion of the Torah, in addition to other liturgical components they may perform, such as the *haftorah* (accompaniment to the Torah portion) and parts of the service. The focus is on proper pronunciation and intonation, not comprehension, which largely differs from more traditional language learning that students may be accustomed to. Students primarily rely on memorization to accomplish this – a strategy that has fallen out of favor in Western education. Memorization and accurate recitation require a high level of effort and, arguably, motivation to perform adequately. The role of motivation in memorization has been examined in Muslim religious schools, where students aim to memorize the Quran (Rabbani et al, 2025) and in ESL contexts (Xiao & Liao, 2023) for general vocabulary recall, but it has not yet been investigated in Jewish religious schools or bar mitzvah preparation.

For the sake of readability, I will refer to the bar/bat mitzvah event as the *bar mitzvah* throughout this study when speaking generally. In cases where I am specifically referring to a girl's experience, I will refer to it as the *bat mitzvah.*

Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism. Broadly, Judaism has four major denominations observed among American Jews: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist. They differ primarily on their interpretation of *halakha*, or Jewish law. Reform Judaism boasts the largest number of adherents (around 35% of all American Jews) and is associated with progressive values, individual choice in observance, and adaptation to modernity (My Jewish Learning, n.d.-a). Reconstructionist Judaism was founded by Mordecai Kaplan, who was the first rabbi to officiate a bat mitzvah in 1922 (My Jewish Learning, n.d.-a). Orthodox Judaism, the smallest group in American Jewry, is the most traditional in its adherence to Jewish law and promotes following *halakha* as closely as possible (My Jewish Learning, n.d.-b). Conservative Judaism finds a middle ground, resembling Reform Judaism in its social values (e.g., accepting female rabbis, providing gender-egalitarian seating in synagogue) while keeping some traditions (e.g., keeping kosher, following more traditional liturgical) (My Jewish Learning, n.d.-a). Participants in this study all belong to Reform or Reconstructionist denominations.

The philosophical and liturgical differences between Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism are beyond the scope of this paper. However, one important difference is the amount of Hebrew used during religious services in each respective denomination. The Reform synagogues in this study use the siddur (prayerbook) *Mishkan T'Filah,* which includes full transliteration of

all Hebrew text[2]; that is to say, no Hebrew knowledge is required to follow along during services. The Reconstructionist synagogue in this study uses the siddur *Kol Haneshamah*, which includes some transliteration, but not all, requiring congregants to be able to decode Hebrew if they wish to read along with the service. Both siddurim provide translations; whether the translation or original Hebrew is used depends on many factors, including personal preference of the clergymember leading the service.

Jewish supplemental school. Also called Hebrew school or religious school, supplemental school offers instruction in Hebrew and Judaic studies to students otherwise enrolled in traditional public or charter schools. Classes typically occur once or twice a week after school and/or on the weekend. This is in contrast to day school, which takes the place of the traditional public or charter school. Day schools teach core subjects (e.g., math, English, science) in addition to Hebrew and Judaic studies.

Hebrew. Defining Hebrew is a challenge. Feuer (2016) describes it best as "an umbrella term that includes biblical, liturgical, literary, modern and other genres and uses of the language and that can be meaningful for social, communal, religious, affective, nostalgic, nationalistic, and instrumental reasons" (p. 4). In this study, I focus on the use of Biblical Hebrew, the language used in the Torah and in Jewish liturgy (Van der Merwe & Naudé, 2017), though Modern Hebrew, the variety spoken in Israel today, is often included in Jewish education.

Jewish Hebrew education in supplemental schools tends to focus on the linguistic skills required to complete the bar mitzvah and participate in services and other rituals (e.g., daily prayers and blessings, holiday prayers and blessings). These skills primarily include decoding

[2]There is a version of *Mishkan T'Filah* that does not include transliteration; however, this is not the version used in these synagogues.

(i.e., sounding out the written Hebrew); however, some attention may be paid to common words and morphemes. Students are expected to read Hebrew texts aloud with accuracy and fluency. Comprehension is often taught through English translations of the text, not the Hebrew text itself. Occasionally, supplemental schools include Modern Hebrew, the variety spoken in Israel, in minor ways. For example, the school may provide teachers with monthly vocabulary lists that include fruits and vegetables, animals, and colors. Other times, schools host Israeli high school graduates who serve as cultural ambassadors (*shinshinim*, in Hebrew) and who may teach Israeli slang or other simple vocabulary words. The goals of their lessons are cultural and ideological, rather than linguistic.

Jewish Hebrew education in day schools covers the same Hebrew skills taught in supplemental schools, but also often includes a curriculum for Modern Hebrew that looks similar to other foreign language curricula. This curriculum covers reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as the grammar of Modern Hebrew.

In this study, I use Hebrew to refer to the Biblical Hebrew used and taught in bar mitzvah preparation.

Literature Review

Motivation for Language Learning

The role of academic motivation in language acquisition has informed several theories in the field of SLA, such as Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985), Ryan & Deci's Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Gardner's socio-educational model examines motivation as influenced by three constructs: Integrativeness, which refers to the learner's desire to become part of the target language community; Attitude toward the Learning Situation, which reflects the learner's feelings toward the teacher and language course; and Language Anxiety, which can be further classified by anxiety in and out of the classroom (Gardner, 2019). Gardner distinguishes integrative motivation, as defined above, from instrumental motivation, which refers to practical causes of motivation, such as monetary or career-oriented rewards (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a psychological analysis of the mechanics of motivation. Not limited to the context of language learning, SDT describes motivation as a social process informed by the person's level of autonomy (i.e., How much choice does the person have in this context?) and access to regulatory processes (i.e., What are the possible internal and external consequences?) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, intrinsic motivation describes situations where the individual has a high level of autonomy and experiences internal enjoyment in completing the task. A student who enjoys reading and is allowed to select a free reading book of their choice may experience intrinsic motivation. In contrast, external regulation occurs when the individual has very little autonomy and completes the task in order to avoid punishment or to receive an external reward. A student who does not enjoy reading and is given a specific book to read may experience external regulation when he

reads to avoid the teacher's consequence of losing recess time for not completing the required reading.

Both Gardner's (1985) and Ryan and Deci's (2000) work directly inform Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). The L2MSS is composed of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is the self that the learner aspires to be with respect to the L2. This may include components that align with Gardner's integrativeness construct (e.g., the learner may wish to fit in in the L2 community) and Ryan & Deci's internal regulation (e.g., the learner wishes to use the L2 in specific contexts outside the classroom). The Ought-to Self is the self that the learner aspires to in order to avoid negative consequences or meet external expectations. This is compatible with Ryan & Deci's external and introjected regulation (e.g., the learner wants to avoid criticism or elicit specific emotions from others). The L2 Learner Experience aligns with Gardner's Attitude Toward the Learning Situation and reflects the learner's perception of the learning environment (e.g., the language teacher, classroom, curriculum, etc.).

Dörnyei's L2MSS attempts to correct for the issue he identifies in the socioeducational model, which is that the concept of integrativeness is difficult to define. Additionally, he argues that integrativeness can occur in language-learning contexts even when the target culture is not present (Dörnyei, 2009). The relevance of integrativeness as a predictive factor in learner motivation has also been questioned, due to its low relevance across many language-learning contexts (Noels, 2001).

Atkinson (2007) gives an example of a hypothetical language learner who views the target language negatively: a servicemember in the American military who must learn Farsi to work in Iran and therefore views Iranians as "enemies" and holds negative perceptions and

prejudices against the language and culture. In this example, the servicemember experiences extrinsic pressure to learn the language but does not have a positive attitude towards the target language (Atkinson, 2007). While this motivation is not represented in SDT or the socioeducational model, it could be reflected in L2MSS, particularly as it relates to the Ought-to Self. To a less extreme degree, bar mitzvah students may experience similar motivational patterns to this hypothetical servicemember. Bar mitzvah students may similarly feel an extrinsic pressure to learn Hebrew in order to perform well during the bar or bat mitzvah; however, they may hold negative views of the language and the language learning experience. To that effect, L2MSS is the most appropriate measure of motivation in the present study.

Motivation in Heritage Language Learning

Hebrew holds a unique place in heritage language literature. Valdes (2000) would not consider most American Jews as heritage speakers of Hebrew, as most are not raised in households with fluent Hebrew speakers – the exception, of course, being the occasional American family with an Israeli parent or grandparent. Additionally, Hebrew is very rarely the first language that most American Jews acquire, which would disqualify it as their heritage language according to Polinsky & Kagan (2007). However, Hebrew certainly meets Fishman's (1999) broad definition of heritage language, as it is a "language of personal relevance other than English," as cited by Roginsky (2024). There is also an irrefutable connection between the Hebrew language and Jewish culture, as Hebrew is used for both religious and cultural purposes in all Jewish communities. While there is debate about whether Jewish learners of Hebrew should be labeled heritage learners, heritage-driven learners (Roginsky, 2024), or learners with heritage motivation (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003), the distinctions between these terms are beyond

the scope of this study. For simplicity, I will refer to Jewish learners of Hebrew as heritage learners, and Hebrew as their heritage language.

Identity can inform motivation in heritage language acquisition. Leeman (2015) describes the field's focus on the construction of the 'heritage language learner' identity and social currents that affect learners' and teachers' acknowledgement of, and relationship to, this identity in the classroom. Much of previous research conducted in the United States on heritage languages and/or in community language schools have used survey data and ethnographic interviews to examine the roles of identity and cultural preservation or maintenance in minoritized groups (Leeman, 2015). Common languages of study have included Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Korean and Japanese; as postsecondary programs in particular have begun to expand, this list has grown to include Indigenous languages and other less commonly taught languages (see Ko, 2024; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2018).

Through the lens of social constructivism, which seeks to explain "contextual and interpersonal influences on motivation," Berardi-Wiltshire examined the relationship between construction of Italian identity and the resulting motivation to learn Italian in traditional classrooms in New Zealand (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2009; see Berardi-Wiltshire, 2012, 2013). Using Norton's construct of investment (Peirce, 1995) and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) theory of the ideal L2 self, she writes about language learning as a construction of the learners' ethnic identity and argues that motivation to learn the heritage language is dependent on the context and learner's view of their own identity. In these three studies, Berardi-Wiltshire's participants were adult learners of Italian in New Zealand. They were second- and third-generation descendants of Italian immigrants, enrolled in language classes independently of any degree program whose primary language goals were related to communication and connection to their Italian identity.

Similar to other heritage language learners, including the participants in the present study, ethnic identity was a key component to their motivation. However, it is important to note that these were adult learners whose Italian proficiency was not connected to any external or instrumental pressure.

Instrumental motivation may play a role in other heritage language communities. For example, Te Huia (2015) describes the significance of instrumental motivation in heritage learners of Maori in New Zealand through the lenses of investment and Benet-Martinez et al.'s cultural frame-switching. She interviewed 19 university students enrolled in Maori courses and discovered three major themes in students' motivation to learn Maori: cultural maintenance, cultural responsibilities, and external benefits such as career opportunities and salary increases. Students expressed a desire for language revitalization and discussed the roles and obligations involved in passing the language down through generations, as well as using Maori in key cultural and religious events. Although Maori is not explicitly a liturgical language, its connection to speakers' cultural responsibilities is reminiscent of languages like Hebrew and Arabic.

Many heritage language studies focus on adult participants, who have often chosen to enroll in language programs of their own accord. Even when university students must enroll in a language to complete their degree program, they are still able to select their language of study. In the present study, I focus on younger children, ages 11-14, who are enrolled in language programs of their parents' choice. This sample of participants offers a closer look at heritage language motivation under different requirements. University students are often obligated to take specific credits in order to achieve an educational and/or career-oriented goal. Younger students, however, are fulfilling family expectations rather than institutional requirements. This sample

also avoids the self-selection bias inherent in adults electing their own courses. Instead, these are children with limited autonomy and choice, and so the study includes more students who potentially lack certain types or degrees of motivation.

Heritage language schools are common sites of research for many studies on child heritage language learners. The Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools has identified approximately 300 heritage language schools across the United States, covering 67 languages (Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, 2024). In a heritage Chinese language weekend school in Canada, Chow (2018) analyzed Chinese-Canadian students' communicative, integrative, and instrumental motivational orientations in conjunction with their academic performance, ethnic identity, demographic information (age, sex, religion), and parental encouragement. He finds a strong correlation between linguistic/academic performance and the students' ethnic identity, parental encouragement, and tendency towards integrative motivation; additionally, he finds an interesting relationship between ethnic identity and age, prompting further research in this area (Chow, 2018).

Smith and Li (2022), in a heritage Chinese language school in the United States, create new constructs of a *current heritage learner self* and an *ideal heritage learner self*, inspired by Dörnyei's L2MSS, to frame learner motivation. Their findings align with Chow (2018), suggesting that age is a significant factor in motivation to learn a heritage language. They also found that learners often begin with negative attitudes toward their heritage language education at an early age (possibly because of the lack of autonomy) and shift towards more positive attitudes later in life (possibly due to greater awareness of external benefits of bilingualism, exposure to greater Chinese community, etc.) (Smith & Li, 2022). Importantly, Smith and Li

point out that the amount of heritage language spoken in the home does vary by language, suggesting that generalizability across languages is not always possible.

Hebrew is not included in the survey conducted by the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, and the heritage languages discussed in the literature are significantly different from Hebrew in many ways. First, other heritage languages are often used in the home as a means of communication, with family members who are proficient language users. While Hebrew does have a place in many Jewish family homes, and is passed from generation to generation, it is generally not used to communicate unless the family is Israeli. Hebrew is primarily used for liturgical and cultural purposes. Second, the programmatic goals of the language programs discussed above are also quite different from most Hebrew programs. Other heritage language program goals are often centered around proficiency and communication, whereas Hebrew programs tend to have cultural and ideological goals instead. Studies on Hebrew language programs have been primarily focused on identity (e.g., Avni, 2011, 2012; Feuer, 2008). Because of Hebrew's uniqueness in the context of heritage languages, more research in Hebrew classrooms is necessary.

Previous Research in the American Jewish Hebrew Context

While motivation has been investigated in many heritage language contexts, the Jewish Hebrew context has largely remained an under-researched site of study. Still, scholarship has focused on the role of identity and ideology in Hebrew learning motivation. For example, Avni (2012) examined the relationship between heritage language education and the construction of ethnic identity in the context of an ethnographic study of Hebrew use in a Jewish day school. Specifically, she looked at the semiotic functions of Hebrew and found that the symbolism of Hebrew as a language plays a central role in the classroom. When asked if they thought day

school needed to teach Hebrew, the students reacted in confusion and were unable to understand the idea of Jewish education without Hebrew lessons (Avni, 2012). While Avni does not explore student motivation to learn Hebrew, her findings inform possible factors that can affect motivation, e.g., social identity, the role of Hebrew in Jewish identity, the relationship between Hebrew and morals, and the use of Hebrew to distinguish between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Avni, 2012).

Benor et al. (2020) reinforce similar findings in a different setting – Jewish summer camp. In their work, Benor et al. examine the language policies and goals of Jewish institutions. Instead of explicit Hebrew lessons, Jewish summer camps tend to *infuse* Hebrew into everyday language and activities, with several non-linguistic goals: 1) encouraging the use of Hebrew as a sign of Jewish identity, 2) associating Hebrew with a sense of identification with the State of Israel, and 3) improving children's confidence and comfortability with Hebrew (Benor et al., 2020). While each camp has its own set of goals, there are generally no expectations around Hebrew acquisition; instead, the focus is on strengthening campers' affective and communal relationships with the language (Benor et al., 2020).

Even in more formal educational settings, such as Hebrew school and day school, linguistic goals are non-communicative. Schachter (2020) discusses Hebrew reading instruction, beginning with a problem that many have identified: a mismatch between what it means to read Hebrew and how Hebrew reading skills are taught. With the bar mitzvah at the forefront of Jewish educational goals, most Hebrew language programs focus on the skills needed to succeed in 'reading' from the Torah, i.e. decoding. Schachter investigates the implications of teaching children to decode without comprehending the text and the effect this instruction has on students' attitudes towards Judaism (Schachter, 2020). She also addresses student motivation and argues

that our students do not have a meaningful goal for learning Hebrew. While they may place importance on the bar mitzvah, it fails to be meaningful until the months leading up to the event (Schachter, 2020).

Gross and Rutland (2020) and Atkinson (2007) examined Jewish students' motivation and attitudes towards Hebrew learning in the Asia-Pacific region and Britain, respectively. Gross and Rutland analyzed the effects sociocultural environments on attitudes towards Hebrew learning, using the four parameters proposed by Ofner and Tannenbaum (2012): love of the language, importance of the language, use of the language, and religious connotations of the language (Gross & Rutland, 2020). They found significant differences across the four parameters in each location due to factors such as how isolated the Jewish community is, plans to return to the parents' home country of Israel, variations in multilingualism and immigration, among others (Gross & Rutland, 2020). While this study looked at variation across different countries, the educational settings examined were all similar; they took place only in a formal educational setting (i.e., day school) with explicit Hebrew instruction.

Atkinson (2007) also focused on day school, addressing student motivation to maintain both Jewish identity and involvement in Hebrew teaching and learning. She used the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory, as well as Gardner's socio-educational model as a theoretical framework. She conducted case studies of students ages 13-15 who had already completed their bar mitzvah, investigating their motivation to: 1) remain involved in the educational program after the bar mitzvah, 2) take on a leadership role in this context, 3) maintain their Jewish identity, and 4) continue to teach and learn Hebrew (Atkinson, 2007). She found socialization and relationships to be the primary motivating factor in students' decisions to stay involved in Jewish life and Hebrew school. Her results for student

motivation to learn Hebrew echo what Te Huia (2015) and other heritage language studies claim – learners feel an obligation to pass the language to their children and help future generations perpetuate the language. Atkinson's (2007) participants also expressed a desire for their future children to celebrate their bar mitzvah, perpetuating not only the use of Hebrew but also a sense of Jewish identity.

Together, these studies suggest that community, identity, and life cycle events play a significant role in the intergenerational transmission of Hebrew, and this research draws attention to a need for a deeper inquiry of motivation in Hebrew students. The current study seeks to expand Atkinson's (2007) and Gross and Rutland's (2020) work by including data before the bar mitzvah event in a novel educational environment. This study also builds on the field's understanding of motivating factors from a broader perspective outside of case studies.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate learners' motivation to learn Hebrew before, during, and after their bar mitzvah year, as well as factors that affect learners' motivation. The following research questions guide the current study:

1. Does students' level and type of motivation to learn Hebrew vary before, during, and after the bar mitzvah year?
2. What factors influence students' level and type of motivation to learn Hebrew throughout the bar mitzvah process?

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were all students enrolled in synagogue-run supplemental Jewish schools in Michigan. All participants were between the ages of 11-14 (*M = 12.5; SD = 0.941)* and in grades 6-8. Of the 14 participants, eight agreed to a follow-up interview. A summary of participant information is displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participant Demographics.

	Participants Surveyed(n = 14)	**Participants Interviewed**(n = 8)
Age		
11	2	2
12	5	2
13	5	2
14	2	2
Denomination		
Reform	13	7
Reconstructionist	1	1
Progress Towards Bar Mitzvah		
Before	2	2
During	6	3
After	6	3

In this study, I categorized students by the distance and measurable progress from their bar mitzvah. If the student had not yet begun bar mitzvah tutoring, they were categorized as *Before*. Students who had begun tutoring but had not yet performed their bar mitzvah were categorized as *During*. Students who had completed the entire process of the bar mitzvah, including the day-of, were categorized as *After*. In this categorization, bar mitzvah tutoring serves as a natural delineation in the preparation process. Tutoring may also affect motivation, as it is a concrete step towards the bar mitzvah, which may feel abstract and distant to younger students.

While I do not explore the impact of further demographic factors, interviews revealed information that may inform individual differences, including gender identity, additional languages spoken at home, and neurodivergent disorders.

Context

This study was conducted at supplemental religious schools affiliated with three synagogues in the Midwest: two Reform and one Reconstructionist. Two of the synagogues (Reform Synagogue 1 and the Reconstructionist synagogue) were located in the same city. Jews are a minority in this area, comprising only 1.29% of the state's population (Sheskin & Dashefsky, 2024). Many participants reported being the only Jewish student in their public school.

Both Reform synagogues offer classes for students from preschool to grade 12, and the Reconstructionist synagogue offers classes from kindergarten to seventh grade. Many students who participated in the study reported having attended school since the youngest possible grade. Two schools (Reform Synagogue 2 and the Reconstructionist synagogue) label themselves as Religious Schools, and Reform Synagogue 1 labels itself as a Religious & Hebrew School.

At the time of the study, Reform Synagogue 2 hosted two *shinshinim* –high school graduates from Israel who serve as cultural ambassadors at Jewish educational sites around the world– at the time the study was conducted. These visitors act as teaching assistants and may lead a variety of instructional activities (e.g., whole-class instruction, small group work, whole-school demonstrations, etc.). The *shinshinim* at this school worked closely with the seventh grade students and focused their instruction on Israeli culture, history, and politics.

In addition to Hebrew instruction, all three schools teach Judaic studies, including topics such as Torah study, Jewish and Israeli culture and history, holidays and life cycle events, and

Jewish values. Weekend classes typically included religious services and an introduction to Jewish liturgical practices.

Instruments

This study consists of one mixed-methods questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Before designing the instruments, an exploratory interview was conducted with a bar mitzvah student who was not included as a participant. The exploratory interview informed the items prepared for the questionnaire and interviews, which were then piloted with the same bar mitzvah student. Upon piloting, no questions lead to confusion or doubt for this learner, supporting the validity of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire questions are based on instruments used in previous research investigating motivation through L2MSS (Driver, 2020; Csillagh, 2016). The quantitative section of the questionnaire, addressing motivation, included 25 items, and a reliability analysis of these items revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, suggesting high reliability. Each participant was given one of five randomized versions of the survey. Participants were asked to rate items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The second portion of the survey collected demographic information such as participants' birthdays, bar mitzvah dates, synagogue, and participation in bar mitzvah tutoring.

The questions used in the semi-structured interviews aimed to address the survey items in deeper detail and covered topics such as the role of Hebrew in daily life, learners' opinions of Hebrew instruction and tutoring, their experiences preparing for the bar mitzvah, and their families' and friends' influence (or lack thereof) on their Hebrew learning.

All surveys were conducted in person. Six of the eight interviews were conducted in person, and the remaining two were conducted on Zoom. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes and one hour, resulting in 154 minutes of interview data.

Before administering the survey or beginning the interview, participants were read a consent form and given the opportunity to ask questions. Parental permission was also obtained for each participant.

Analysis

Qualitative interview analysis. The audio recordings were transcribed through MaxQDA and manually cleaned. An inductive thematic coding scheme was used for interview analysis. Eight themes were first identified across the eight interviews: (1) comparison to other languages, (2) usefulness of Hebrew, (3) goals for learning Hebrew, (4) feelings towards Hebrew, (5) connection to Judaism, (6) stress/anxiety, (7) Hebrew learning experience, and (8) connection to family. On the second round of coding, themes were condensed to focus on motivational factors and learning experiences, ultimately leading to three themes for analysis: (1) preparation for the bar mitzvah, (2) familial influence, and (3) religio-cultural significance.

Quantitative survey analysis. Each survey item was coded according to the L2MSS construct it represented. The codes, constructs, and examples are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey codes.

Code	L2MSS Construct	Number of Items	Example
O	Ought-to Self	6 (1 negative)	• My family and/or teacher puts a lot of pressure on me to learn Hebrew. • Negative: I don't need to study Hebrew to be involved in Jewish life and culture.

Table 2 (cont'd).

D	Ideal Self	6 (3 negative)	• My family will be proud if I learn Hebrew. • Negative: Hebrew is not important to me.
LE	L2 Learning Experience	6 (3 negative)	• I like Hebrew class. • Negative: I wish my school didn't have Hebrew class.
IL	Intended Effort	3 (1 negative)	• If my school didn't offer Hebrew, I would find another way to learn it. • Negative: I don't work hard to learn Hebrew.
M	None (Language attitude and ability)*	4 (2 negative)	• People tell me I'm good at learning languages. • Negative: I'm not very good at learning languages.

*These items are not constructs in L2MSS. They included questions about general language learning attitude and ability, serving as a control to measure each group's approach to language learning and ensure group equality.

Five randomized versions of the paper survey were created and distributed equally across participants. During analysis, negative items were reverse-coded, and descriptive statistics were calculated on the total sum of all items within each category. The data was split by participant groups Before, During, and After, referring to their progress towards their bar mitzvah. Due to the number of participants and low statistical power, descriptive statistics are presented.

Results

Quantitative findings

The survey measured participants' identification with specific components of L2MSS: ought-to self motivation, ideal L2 self motivation, perception of the L2 learning experience, and intended learning effort. The following section discusses each component in depth. All statistical measurements refer to the participants' Likert scale responses, where 1 represents Strongly Disagree, and 5 represents Strongly Agree, to the items measuring each construct.

In this section, I first provide the quantitative results from the survey.

Intended Learning Effort. Participants showed a clear trend of decreasing intended learning effort throughout the process of preparing for the bar mitzvah. A sharp drop-off is seen after students have completed the bar mitzvah, dropping from a mean response of 4.0 (SD = 0.79) during preparation of the bar mitzvah to a mean response of 2.44 (SD = 0.78) after.

Table 3. Survey results: intended learning effort.

	IL Total		
	Before	During	After
Valid	2	6	6
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.667	4.000	2.444
Std. Deviation	0.471	0.789	0.779
Minimum	4.333	2.667	1.333
Maximum	5.000	5.000	3.667

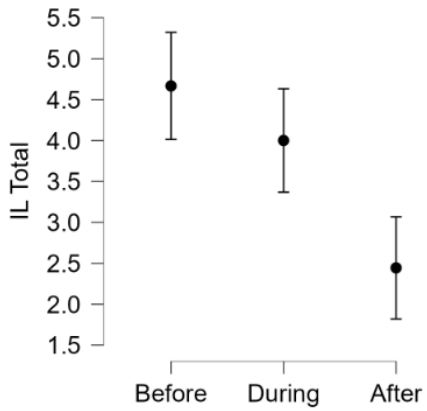

Figure 1. Interval plots for intended learning effort.

Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to Self. There was a considerably wider range of ideal L2 self motivation in the During (range of 2.00 – 5.00) and After (range of 1.83 – 4.50) participant groups than ought-to self motivation (ranges 2.00-3.20 and 1.40-3.20, respectively).

A comparison of the responses to the ought-to self section and the ideal L2 self section (Tables 4 and 5) demonstrates that all participants (Before, During, After) demonstrate a higher level of ideal L2 self motivation (*M = 4.17, 3.56, 2.97)* than ought-to self motivation *(M = 3.10, 2.80, 2.07*). Both types of motivation drop off throughout the process of preparation for the bar mitzvah.

Item 10 ("If I don't learn Hebrew, I won't be able to do my bar/bat mitzvah") was excluded from the ought-to self section total, as it was significantly higher than the other items in the section. This outlier was consistent across all three participant groups, with a mean of 4.21 overall. Further exploration of this outlier is included in the qualitative findings.

Table 4. Survey results: ought-to self motivation, without item 10.

	O Total Minus BM		
	Before	During	After
Valid	2	6	6
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	3.100	2.800	2.067
Std. Deviation	0.707	0.420	0.700
Minimum	2.600	2.000	1.400
Maximum	3.600	3.200	3.200

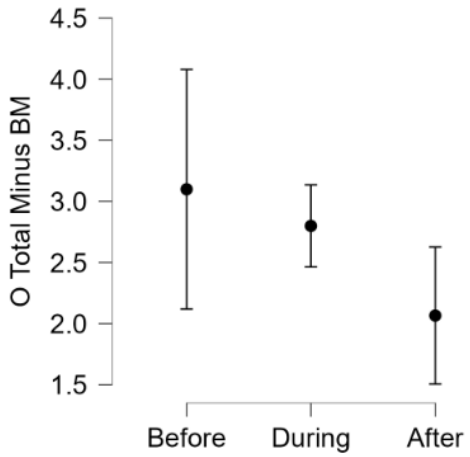

Figure 2. Interval plots for ought-to self motivation, without item 10.

Table 5. Survey results: ideal L2 self motivation.

	D Total		
	Before	During	After
Valid	2	6	6
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.167	3.556	2.972
Std. Deviation	0.000	1.047	1.142
Minimum	4.167	2.000	1.833
Maximum	4.167	5.000	4.500

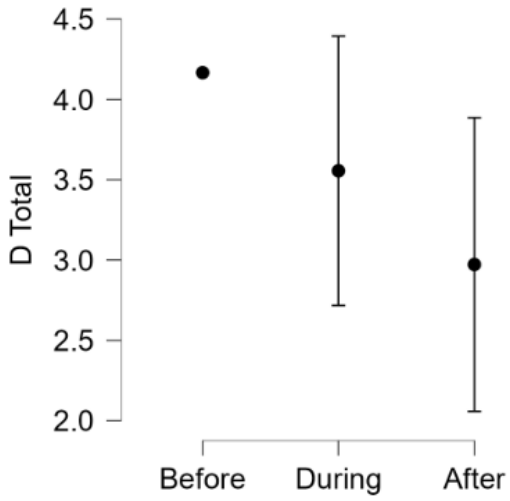

Figure 3. Interval plots for ideal L2 self motivation.

L2 Learning Environment. This section describes students' perception of their Hebrew class. The Before group had the most positive perspectives (*M = 4.50; SD* = 0.0), and the During (*M* = 3.64; SD = 1.09) and After (*M = 3.28; SD = 1.13*) groups remained somewhat neutral with wider ranges.

Table 6. Survey results: L2 learning environment.

	LE Total		
	Before	During	After
Valid	2	6	6
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.500	3.639	3.278
Std. Deviation	0.000	1.092	1.129
Minimum	4.500	1.667	1.667
Maximum	4.500	4.833	4.667

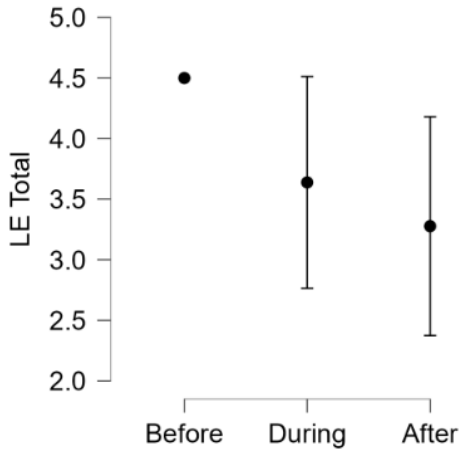

Figure 4. Interval plots for L2 learning environment.

Language aptitude and ability. This section does not correspond with L2MSS; rather, it measures participants' feelings towards their own language aptitude and ability. All three groups reported similar responses *(M = 3.38, 2.83, 3.33; SD = 0.53, 0.88, 1.3*), suggesting that all groups are equal in these measures and their approaches to language learning.

Table 7. Survey results: language attitude and ability.

	M Total		
	Before	During	After
Valid	2	6	6
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	3.375	2.833	3.333
Std. Deviation	0.530	0.876	1.252
Minimum	3.000	2.000	1.750
Maximum	3.750	4.500	5.000

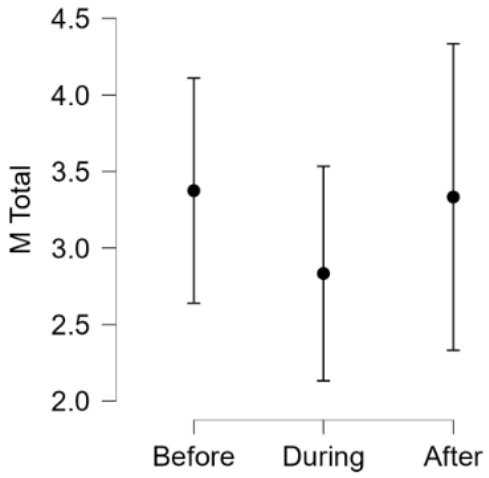

Figure 5. Interval plots for language attitude and ability.

Qualitative findings

Inductive coding revealed three major themes in student motivation to learn Hebrew: (1) bar mitzvah performance, (2) familial influence, and (3) identity. Additionally, two themes that arose in interviews to a lesser extent include usefulness and difficulty of the language, and the perceived effectiveness and quality of Hebrew instruction.

Bar mitzvah performance. When asked about their personal learning goals for Hebrew or their perception of why they were enrolled in Hebrew school, the majority of participants (6 out of 8; 75%) identified the bar mitzvah as the sole reason behind Hebrew instruction. When pushed, many participants acknowledged that Hebrew is used independently of the bar mitzvah (e.g., religious services, prayers) but maintained that the bar mitzvah performance was either their personal goal, or that of the school. This supports the drop in motivation seen in the survey data; students appear to feel that they have achieved their objective in learning Hebrew and no longer feel the same level of motivation. It also explains the outlier of item 10 (“If I don’t learn Hebrew, I won’t be able to do my bar/bat mitzvah”), which had the highest total response across all three groups. This was the strongest source of ought-to self motivation. Similarly, item 14 (“I

am interested in studying Hebrew after my bar/bat mitzvah"), coded as ideal L2 self as it reflects an intrinsic desire to become a stronger Hebrew speaker, shows a strong contrast across groups with a steady decline as learners move from Before (M = 5.00; SD = 0.00), During (M = 3.17; SD = 1.60) to After (M = 2.50; SD = 1.64).

Half of the participants (4 out of 8) reported feeling anxiety or stress around learning Hebrew and preparing for the bar mitzvah. Most of this anxiety is fear of making mistakes or performing inadequately. One participant stated,

> *But then I had to, you know, basically memorize all these different passages. And that was very stressful and anxiety-inducing, especially because not only do you have to memorize the words, but you have to memorize the melodies, too, because you have to chant it* (Participant 2, interview).

Another participant (Participant 3) said the bar mitzvah was stressful because of the importance of the event and the amount of time and energy it required to prepare. This participant reported additional stress because he was one of the first members of his family to have a bar mitzvah. As a result, he believes future bar mitzvahs in his family would be "less time, effort, and preparation" because his family now knows what to expect from the process.

Overall, participants demonstrate both ideal L2 self and ought-to self motivation in learning Hebrew for the bar mitzvah. They appear to have an ideal L2 self that reads their bar mitzvah portion accurately, and an ought-to self that satisfies the external requirements, including expectations of those around them. As mirrored in the quantitative data, both types of motivation decrease after each stage of bar mitzvah preparation.

Familial influence. Six participants (75%) discussed the role of their family in their journey to learn Hebrew and prepare for the bar mitzvah. All six agreed that their participation in

the bar mitzvah was important to their parents, but the survey and interview data showed that participants did not feel overly pressured by their parents. Table 3 provides the survey items and participant responses that align with external pressure to learn Hebrew.

Table 8. Survey results for external pressure to learn Hebrew (n = 14).

Item Number	Item	Mean	Median	Mode
7	My family and/or teacher puts a lot of pressure on me to learn Hebrew.	2.93	3	2
11	Everyone around me will be disappointed/upset if I don't learn Hebrew.	2.43	3	3
12	Everyone around me expects me to learn Hebrew.	2.57	2.5	2

Two participants (Participants 1 and 3) shared that their parents didn't have the same Hebrew educational experiences as they did growing up, and that this was a factor in their parents' desire for them to continue Hebrew school and have a bar mitzvah. When asked if they would want to continue learning Hebrew after the bat mitzvah, one participant shared:

> *My parents would most likely make me go.[…] Especially my mom. Because she didn't really have a lot of time to learn hers. Because her parents didn't really do the things that were required. So she only had, like, a year and a half or two to learn. She had [a bat mitzvah], but it was really rushed. So she wants me to have the opportunity to have one. So she'll most likely make me go to Hebrew school after my bat mitzvah* (Participant 1, interview).

Two other participants (Participants 5 and 6) mentioned the influence their siblings had on them. Because they had older siblings who had become *madrichim* (teenage teaching assistants in Jewish supplemental school), they also expressed a desire to continue Hebrew school after the bar mitzvah and to pursue their own positions as *madrichim*.

Notably, participants made a distinction between learning Hebrew and preparing for their bar mitzvah. Although Hebrew knowledge is required for the bar mitzvah, many did not seem to recognize their Hebrew instruction or bar mitzvah preparation as *learning Hebrew*. One participant even stated, "I didn't really realize they were even trying to teach us Hebrew" (Participant 8). Multiple participants said that their parents "didn't care" if they learned Hebrew but wanted them to do their bar mitzvah.

Religio-cultural significance. Most participants expressed a connection between the Hebrew language and being Jewish. Although they did not consider it a necessary component of being Jewish (i.e., they stated that you can be Jewish without speaking Hebrew), they generally agreed that Hebrew can be part of a Jewish identity. Participant 4 stated, "If I can't do Hebrew, basically a Jewish person's religiously native language, [my bar mitzvah] couldn't be as religious because a lot of the religious songs aren't so holy if they're in English." This student made a clear connection between the language and religious practice.

Others commented that they found Hebrew to be an important part of Judaism and included it when describing their Jewish identity, but they couldn't express a specific use for Hebrew. When asked about religious services, many said that they followed the transliteration or simply memorized the common prayers. Even if students agreed that their family performed specific rituals at home, they stated that they did not use Hebrew at home and no one else in their household spoke Hebrew. The major religious and cultural use for Hebrew in the participants' lives appears to be the bar mitzvah. After completing the bar mitzvah, they still recognized Hebrew as part of their identity regardless of actual Hebrew usage.

Perceived usefulness of Hebrew. One of the most common reasons participants gave for lack of interest in Hebrew was their perception of the usefulness of Hebrew. They expressed that

Hebrew was not a useful language to learn because they didn't need it for communication. Participant 8 expressed interest in using Hebrew to communicate in Israel, but several other participants stated that they could simply use English in Israel instead. Additionally, they did not find Hebrew particularly useful in religious services because of the availability of English transliteration and translation.

Hebrew learning experience. Generally, Jewish supplemental schools do not include grammar or extensive vocabulary practice in their instructional goals. Instruction is primarily designed around teaching accurate decoding. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction around the curriculum and lessons, stating a preference for more traditional language teaching methods used in public schools. On the other hand, other participants voiced excitement about individual tutoring and one-on-one learning opportunities, because that allowed the teacher to tailor instruction to their levels and abilities. In sum, participants' enjoyment of the L2 learning experience declined throughout the bar mitzvah process despite the simultaneous decrease in learning-related stress and anxiety.

Discussion

The results of the surveys and interviews provide valuable information about the type and level of motivation students feel while learning Hebrew, as well as the factors that play into their motivation. In response to research question one, which inquires how the bar mitzvah process affects students' level and type of motivation, the present findings suggest that the bar mitzvah is a strong, but temporary, motivating factor. The smaller ranges and lower means in responses to ought-to self motivation prompts suggest that messaging around ought-to self motivation factors (e.g., you need Hebrew to perform your bar mitzvah, you need to learn Hebrew to be involved in Jewish life and culture, every Jew should be able to speak Hebrew) is more consistent across families and schools, but perhaps less powerful. Ideal L2 self motivation (e.g., Hebrew is important to me, one day I'd like to teach Hebrew at religious school) is, by definition, more personal and leaves more room for individual differences. Both types of motivation decrease over time, suggesting that participants need a new source of motivation to continue learning Hebrew.

This study applies L2MSS in a novel environment and provides insight into ideal L2 self and ought-to self motivation in Jewish supplemental school students. It aligns with and supports Atkinson's (2007) investigation into students' motivation to continue learning and teaching Hebrew after the bar mitzvah, utilizing a new framework to measure motivation. Finally, this study echoes Schachter's (2020) emphasis on the need for motivational reasons beyond the bar mitzvah to ensure long-term commitment and investment in Hebrew learning.

Iin response to research question 2, which seeks to identify the influencing factors in student motivation, current findings parallel studies done in other Hebrew contexts, namely, university Hebrew courses and Jewish day schools both in and outside of the United States. The

themes discovered in these interviews echo Roginsky's (2024) findings in undergraduate students of many backgrounds studying Hebrew. Roginsky (2024) analyzed her undergraduate Hebrew students' narratives on identity and identified the themes of religious motivation, cultural motivation, and family relations. The participants in the current study find similar reasons to participate in supplemental school; however, their experiences are more strongly defined by the bar mitzvah.

Studies done in day schools and summer camps have primarily focused on identity and ideology, not motivation; however, qualitative results in these studies mirror those found in the present study. Like the participants in Avni (2012), Walters (2017), Feuerverger (2009), and more, the participants in the current study recognized the role of Hebrew as a component of Jewish identity and religious life. Parental desires are also reflected in anecdotes shared by this study's participants, parallel to the findings of parental influence in Feuer (2006) -- specifically, the importance parents place on Jewish identity and community and appear to communicate to their children.

Additionally, this study answers Walters' (2017) call for more research into the learners' perception of Hebrew instruction. The current findings on students' perception of the Hebrew learning environment support Walters' (2017) findings and echoes similar interview answers for why students learn Hebrew and what they don't enjoy. Participants in both studies expressed a connection to Judaism as a culture and religion and recognition of the educational opportunity they were afforded that may have been unavailable to their parents. They also expressed the importance of memorization and decoding in Hebrew instruction and a sense of dissatisfaction in both this style of learning and their lack of ability to communicate or understand the language itself.

Finally, this study opens lines of inquiry into how stakeholders in Jewish education (administrators, teachers and staff, parents, and students) perceive and discuss what it means to learn and use Hebrew. Despite their enrollment in Hebrew instruction and their use of Hebrew in and out of the home, participants stated they were not learning Hebrew and did not use Hebrew outside of supplemental school. Similarly, when I first reached out to schools about recruitment, many school administrators and faculty warned me that the school did not teach Hebrew, or that the students were not learning Hebrew. This is a potential avenue of future research in supplemental schools, in the same vein that Benor et al. (2020) conducted in summer camps and Karpman (2024) in day schools.

Pedagogical Implications

This study provides insight into students' perception of their L2 learning environment and the role it plays in language learning motivation. The quantitative data shows a relationship between L2 learning environment perception, intended learning effort, and motivation. Like motivation, both the L2 learning environment and intended learning effort are highest before students begin preparing for the bar mitzvah and decrease over time. It is difficult to determine whether their L2 learning environment enjoyment drives their motivation, or if lower motivation leads to a more negative overall experience of the L2 learning environment. These findings suggest a need for strategies to maintain student motivation and engagement beyond the completion of the bar mitzvah. School administrators may consider investing in professional development to build teachers' skillset in these areas, as well as evaluating school curriculum for engaging content and activities. Additionally, faculty may wish to incorporate school- or class-wide incentives related to achievement in Hebrew class, especially beyond the bar mitzvah.

Data in this study supports the positive effects of one-on-one instruction and other opportunities where students are able to receive individual attention and tailoring by teachers. In this area, Hebrew education might serve as an example for other foreign language instructional settings where students may benefit from one-on-one learning opportunities. While this is not always possible, given the time constraints and logistical reality of teaching, the use of differentiated instruction in the classroom may provide opportunities for an increase in student interest and engagement. More research is needed to fully elucidate the benefits of tutoring and one-on-one settings in heritage, and especially liturgical, languages.

Best classroom practices that increase student motivation and engagement are undoubtedly beneficial; however, the current study suggests that Jewish supplemental school

students need to internalize strong ought-to self and/or ideal L2 self motivation in order to maintain interest and intended learning effort in Hebrew beyond the bar mitzvah. Future research may provide more insight on techniques and curriculum that offer the most engagement to students throughout the bar mitzvah process.

Conclusion

This study set forth to explore the trajectory of student motivation to learn Hebrew throughout preparation for the bar mitzvah, and, like any empirical work, there are a number of limitations to keep in mind for the current study as well. First, this study is limited by the small data sample, particularly the limited number of participants who had not yet begun preparing for the bar mitzvah. As a result, only descriptive statistics were possible. More research is needed to allow for statistical analysis and to draw conclusions about a wider population. Additionally, this study only includes participants in supplemental school, not day school; because of the difference in population, curriculum, and structure across educational environments, the results of this study are not generalizable to day school students. Finally, only Reform and a very small number of Reconstructionist students were recruited for this study. Results may vary across other Jewish denominations. For example, future research might consider student motivation in Conservative and Orthodox schools, as well as in day schools of all denominations. Because Reform Judaism is unique in its positioning and use of Hebrew, research in other denominations may yield very different results. Likewise, the scope of this study did not explore the role and impact of Israeli *shinshinim* on participants. Future research on the role of *shinshinim* in Jewish education, Hebrew instruction, and the development of Jewish identity in students is needed. Because *shinshinim* represent a rare opportunity for American students to interact with L1 Hebrew speakers, their impact ought to be investigated.

Finally, this study raises questions about implicit and explicit language policies and ideologies that come from both synagogues and families. More investigation is needed on how synagogues, religious schools, and families position the learning and use of Hebrew, and how this is internalized – or *not* internalized – by students.

The findings of this study are especially relevant in a time of decreasing enrollment in Jewish supplemental schools. This data can inform school administrators and faculty seeking to increase student enjoyment and enrollment in Jewish supplemental schools beyond completion of the bar mitzvah, in addition to supporting professional development in teachers of heritage and liturgical languages.

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APPENDIX A: VERSION A OF SURVEY ON MOTIVATION TO LEARN HEBREW

Survey on Motivation to Learn Hebrew

Your unique ID number: _____

Instructions

In this survey, I would like you to answer some questions by circling a number between 1-5 for each question, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Here's an example question:

I like pizza.	1	2	3	4	5

Please only circle one number for every question. Please answer all questions.

Survey Questions

Question	Your Answer				
If I have children, I don't think it would matter to me if they learned Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
I wish my school didn't have Hebrew class.	1	2	3	4	5
Everyone around me will be disappointed/upset if I don't learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
People tell me I'm good at learning languages.	1	2	3	4	5
Learning Hebrew is boring.	1	2	3	4	5
I am doing my best to learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
My family and/or teacher puts a lot of pressure on me to learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5

One day, I'd like to teach Hebrew at a synagogue, Jewish school, or summer camp.	1	2	3	4	5
I am not interested in studying Hebrew after my bar/bat mitzvah.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't need to study Hebrew to be involved in Jewish life and culture.	1	2	3	4	5
I like Hebrew class.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm one of the best students in my language class(es).	1	2	3	4	5
Everyone around me expects me to learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
Hebrew is not important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm not very good at learning languages.	1	2	3	4	5
If my school didn't offer Hebrew, I would find another way to learn it.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't understand why we're learning Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
Every Jew should be able to speak Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
If I don't learn Hebrew, I won't be able to do my bar/bat mitzvah.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't work hard to learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
I like the activities we do in Hebrew class.	1	2	3	4	5
My language class is not my best subject.	1	2	3	4	5
My family will be proud if I learn Hebrew.	1	2	3	4	5
Learning Hebrew makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
I want to be able to use and understand Hebrew during services at synagogue.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION PAGE

Your unique ID number: _____

Please write your answers to the questions below.

1. How old are you?

2. What grade are you in?

3. When is/was your bar or bat mitzvah? (Please include the month, day, and **year**)

4. Do/did you go to bar or bat mitzvah tutoring? Please circle **one:**

   Yes No

APPENDIX C: LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USED

- Tell me about learning Hebrew.
- Did you/will you participate in bar/bat mitzvah tutoring?
- How do you feel about learning Hebrew in general?
- Any changes in your feelings about Hebrew before, during, after bar mitzvah?
- Do you think you will continue learning Hebrew after your bar/bat mitzvah?
- What does Hebrew mean to you?
    - Is there a connection between being Jewish and speaking Hebrew? Can you be Jewish and not know any Hebrew?
- Do you see yourself ever going to Israel and using Hebrew to communicate there?
- What role, if any, do your friends play in your efforts to learn Hebrew?
- What role, if any, does your family play in your efforts to learn Hebrew?
- Do you have any goals for learning Hebrew?