

Why Individuals with Intellectual Disability Turn to Religion: Behavioral and Psychological Motives of Adolescents and Adults

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Abstract: This study compared behavioral (fulfillment of religious commandments), and motivational components of religiosity among 54 Jewish adolescents (aged 13–21 years) and 35 adults (30–60 years) with intellectually disability (ID) (IQ = 40–69). A special questionnaire was constructed. Results yielded similarities between the religious profile of individuals with ID and those of the general population. A different pattern was found between the age groups. Adolescents fulfilled Jewish commandments to a greater extent than the adults. Social psychology theories regarding religious change/stability over the lifecycle can serve as an explanation for these findings. Adults exhibited a more mature motivational component of fulfilling commandments (dependence on God) than the adolescents (Divine decree—obedience to God and receiving external rewards). Regression analysis indicated that among adolescents, the cognitive level contributed to the explained variance of the behavioral components, whereas among adults, chronological age contributed to the explained variance of the behavioral components.

Religion is not a uniform phenomenon. Prayer, attendance at religious services, beliefs about God and life after death, affiliation with a church, synagogue, or temple, the feeling of mystical union with a divine presence, and the efforts to bring others into the faith are only a few of the ways religion can be experienced and expressed. James (1902) and Allport (1955) put forth the idea that individuals turn to religion for different reasons. Why do individuals with intellectual disability (ID) turn to religion? What are the psychological motives that drive them to fulfill Jewish commandments? These are the two main questions on which our study focuses.

The main goal of the current study was to explore behavioral and motivational components of religious concepts among individuals with mild and moderate ID in two age groups: Adolescents (aged 13–21 years) and adults (aged 30–60 years). Another goal was to examine whether different patterns in these re-

ligious components would be found between the two age groups.

Theoretical Background

How do people's religious commitments, behaviors, and identities change as they pass through adulthood? Religious change and stability throughout life cycle has concerned social scientists for decades (Fowler, 1981; Hites, 1965; Ingersoll-Dayton, Krause, & Morgan, 2002; McCullough, Enders, Brion, & Jain, 2005). It was found that religiousness is quite stable in the general population (Idler & Kasl, 1997; Lubinski, Schmidt, & Benbow, 1996; Wink & Dillon, 2001). However, the absolute levels of religiousness of many adults also change over the course of life. McCullough et al. (2005) identified three discrete trajectories of religious development during adulthood in the general population (ages 27–80): Increases in religiosity until midlife and declines in later adulthood; very low religiosity in early adulthood and an age-related decline; and high religiosity in early adulthood and an age-related increase.

The above studies focused on adults. Another group of studies indicates an increase in

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religious faith in typically developed adolescents compared to younger ages (King, Elder, & Whitbeck, 1997). For example, conversion, which is defined as a change from one religious affiliation to another or from a non-religious background to an intense commitment to religious belief (Galanter, 1982; Levine, 1984), occurs during adolescence (Argyle, 2000). The cognitive and emotional experience of adolescents, their tendency to view the world in black and white, and ordering things in absolutes and polarities can serve as an explanation for this phenomenon. The new boastfulness and commitment to extremes may reflect emergence to the formal operations stage in which reasoning becomes more abstract and less tied to the here and now. During adulthood, the tendency to extremism is moderated and a gradual decline in religiosity may occur. It should be noted that other research found the opposite: King et al. (1997) and Tamminen (1991) found that religious belief declines sharply during adolescence.

While the issue of trajectories in religious development through the life cycle was studied in the general population, it has never been studied among individuals with ID. An ERIC and Psych-Info search yielded only a few empirical studies dealing with religious concepts among Christian individuals with low cognitive levels. These studies focused on emotional components: The role of religion among individuals with ID (Hoeksema, 1995) or the cognitive component: The concept of God in this population (Stubblefield & Richard, 1965). Gaventa (1986) and Hoeksema (1995) claimed that religion plays the same role for people with ID as it does for the general population. While the traditional approach to faith is cognition-based, Gaventa (1986) and Hoeksema (1995) use Fowler's (1996) observation, defining faith as a multi-dimensional system of relationships where the individual-self is connected to others by trust, loyalty, support, and concern. This dyadic relationship is associated with a spiritual relationship—God as its unifying factor. Therefore, according to Gaventa (1986) and Hoeksema (1995), faith and connecting to religion are possible among individuals with ID.

Participation and involvement of individu-

als with ID in the religious life of a community fulfills the need to worship and provides a feeling of belonging, fraternity, friendship, tranquility, solace, and encouragement, together with the opportunity to help others (Hoeksema, 1995). Dennis and Schurter (1994) adapted Fowler's stages of faith to adults with ID: Those with mild/moderate ID are capable of cognitive understanding of religious concepts, whereas those with severe/profound ID focus almost exclusively on ceremonial and experiential-emotional components. However, the above thesis was not empirically examined. Our study aims to fulfill this void.

The study goals were as follows:

Definitional-behavioral component. To investigate the extent of fulfilling Jewish commandments among adolescents and adults and whether differences would be found between the two groups.

Motivational components. To investigate the psychological motives for being religious and fulfilling Jewish commandments and to determine whether differences would be found between the two groups.

We also sought to investigate the extent to which the participants' background characteristics (age, religiosity level, cognitive level) predict the participants' religiosity and their fulfillment of commandments.

Method

Participants

The study sample was composed of 89 individuals with ID in two age groups: adolescents (aged 13–21; $N = 54$; $M = 19.27$; $SD = 1.4$); and adults (aged 30–60; $N = 35$; $M = 49.00$; $SD = 11.1$). The oldest participant was 60 years old, followed by 54 and 50 years old. The adolescents were enrolled in special-education schools for pupils with ID and lived at home. The adults worked in vocational workshops in the morning and participated in afternoon social and leisure activities and lived at home. Of the total sample, 69% were males ($N = 61$) and 31% were females ($N = 28$). A chi square test revealed no gender differences between the two groups. All subjects were independent in their daily living skills, used

public transportation and had no history of maladaptive behavior.

Based on the traditional AAMR definition of intellectual disability (Grossman, 1983), 50% of the participants ($N = 24$) were classified as having mild ID ($IQ = 55-69$) and the other 50% ($N = 24$) as having moderate ID ($IQ = 40-54$). Data were collected from the residents' personal files. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences in the ID level between the two groups ($\chi^2 = 1.33$; $df = 1$; $p = ns$).

Level of cognitive ability. Raven's Color Matrices (Raven, 1968) were used to measure basic cognitive levels. No significant differences ($t = 9.7$; $p < .001$) in Raven scores were found between the adolescents ($M = 10.50$; $SD = 2.40$) and the adults ($M = 11.60$; $SD = 5.15$).

Level of religiosity of participants' families and facilities. The official status of the schools and the vocational centers (including the families) were defined as modern orthodox. Laws pertaining to kosher food, Sabbath, and prayer were observed, but there was no gender separation in the schools and vocational centers, and boys and girls studied and worked together.

Measurements

Both qualitative and quantitative tools were used to examine three components of the religious concept, as follows:

Definitional-behavioral component. A questionnaire adapted to the study population was constructed based on the Levi, Levinson, and Katz (1994) scales designed for examining beliefs and fulfilling commandments among the Jewish population in Israel. The initial questionnaire included 14 questions about commandments related to God and three regarding human relations. A factors analysis yielded a low reliability in the last three. Almost all participants responded negatively to "Do you lie or speak evil of others?" and positively to the question "Do you honor your parents?" These questions were therefore excluded. Of the 14 commandments related to man/God, three were applicable only to males and one only to females. The answers were coded on a three-point scale: 1 (never), 2 (sometimes), 3 (always). Alfa coefficient reliability was .83.

Since all participants belonged to religious families, the participants defined their religiosity as (1) somewhat/traditional (2); or yes (3).

Factors analysis of the 11 commandments shared by both genders yielded four factors that explained 50% of the variance: Factor I—4 items—Supervised (by facility or home) commandments ($\alpha = .75$). Factor II—3 items—Autonomous and unsupervised commandments ($\alpha = .77$). Factor III—2 items—Observing fast days ($\alpha = .63$). Factor IV—2 items—Observing dietary laws ($\alpha = .66$). The mean scores for the four factors were calculated for each group.

Motivational component. Goldman (1965) examined the religious emotional component of Christian children using pictures and interviews. Rosenberg (2001) also used pictures for examining the concept of prayer among Jewish pupils. This method requires analogical strategies which might be difficult for individuals with ID. Lazar, Kravitz, and Kedem-Friedrich (2004) studied the motivation for being religious among Jews from various sectors using open interviews. We examined the motivational component with focused interviews and asked the participants direct, verbal, open-ended questions as to why they fulfill each commandment, while they filled out the behavioral section.

The focused interview (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) is applicable here because the motivational loaded questions personally involve the participants. The interview provided in-depth information on thoughts, motives, and feelings toward the behavior of religion and explained and interpreted facts that interviewees raised in the interview.

A content analysis (Bartlett & Payne, 1997; Burgess, 1997; Cohen & Manion, 2000) was performed on the information gathered from the interviews. Units of analysis were sentences or phrases that addressed each topic. Data were tabulated and analyzed for central categories and subdivisions. When an additional category or subdivision seemed necessary, all previous interviews were rechecked and any information gleaned was added to the table. After this stage all interviews were checked by another researcher for reliability, and a report was written only after it was clear

TABLE 1

Means, SD, and F values for four behavioral factors according to age and religiosity

<i>Behavioral Components</i> (range 1–3)		<i>Adolescents</i> (N = 54)		<i>Adults (N = 35)</i>		<i>Total (N = 35)</i>		<i>Age</i>	<i>Relig</i>
<i>Religious definition</i>		<i>Tradi</i>	<i>Relig.</i>	<i>Tradi</i>	<i>Religious</i>	<i>Tradi</i>	<i>Religious</i>	<i>F(1,85)</i>	<i>F(1,85)</i>
Supervised	<i>M</i>	2.11	2.59	1.82	2.43	1.99	2.52	8.55**	47.99***
Commandments	<i>SD</i>	.34	.25	.53	.36	.45	.29		
Autonomous	<i>M</i>	1.78	2.60	1.76	2.35	1.78	2.51	7.55*	28.07***
Commandments	<i>SD</i>	.77	.53	.61	.51	.68	.53		
Fasts	<i>M</i>	2.01	2.17	1.78	2.09	1.89	2.13	1.69NS	3.76*
	<i>SD</i>	.61	.82	.72	.90	.73	.86		
<i>Kashruth</i>	<i>M</i>	2.52	2.90	2.28	2.69	2.42	2.82	4.47*	13.45***
	<i>SD</i>	.59	.38	.47	.52	.55	.44		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Tradi = traditional, Relig = religious

that analyses and classifications were consistent (Carspecken, 1996).

Answers of the motivational component were grouped into six categories according to the Reiss (2000) psychological religious motivation scale. Reasons indicated by each participant were counted. The seven most frequently cited reasons were: Commitment to worship because of a Divine decree—obedience to God (74.6%); dependence on God (56%); obedience to parents, family (50%); social acceptance, fraternity and belonging to a religious community (32%); expecting fulfillment of personal wishes (33%); (31%); national motivations for prayer (22%).

Procedure

The study was commissioned by the Division of Religious Education of the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Division for Mental Retardation, Ministry of Social Affairs. A preliminary study was conducted among religious persons (aged 21+ years) with ID. The final sample was composed of adults who worked in two religious vocational centers and adolescents enrolled in special education schools. Due to literacy difficulties, questionnaires were administered to participants on an individual basis, with the interviewers writing down the answers. The 3-point scale was explained and interviewers encouraged partici-

pants to give full answers to the open-ended questions.

Results

Behavioral (and religious definition)

Self definition: 38% (N = 35) of the participants defined themselves as traditional and 62% (N = 54) as religious, with no significant differences in religious ranking between the two groups.

Behavioral component: A 2X2 ANOVA (groups X religiosity) was performed in order to examine whether there are differences in observing the four behavioral factors between adolescents and adults in relation to the level of religiosity. Results yielded a significant main effect for age $F(4,82) = 3.25$; $p < .05$, $\chi^2 = .13$ and for level of religiosity, $F(4,82) = 19.14$; $p < .000$, $\chi^2 = .48$. No significant age X level of religiosity interaction was found, $F(4,82) = 2.38$; $p > .05$, $\chi^2 = .10$. Means, SD and F values of the four behavioral factors in relation to age and level of religiosity are presented in Table 1.

Results indicate that the mean scores for all participants for all commandments ranged between 2.15 to 2.25 on a three point scale, indicating that the participants often fulfilled Jewish commandments.

Age: Univariate analysis indicated signifi-

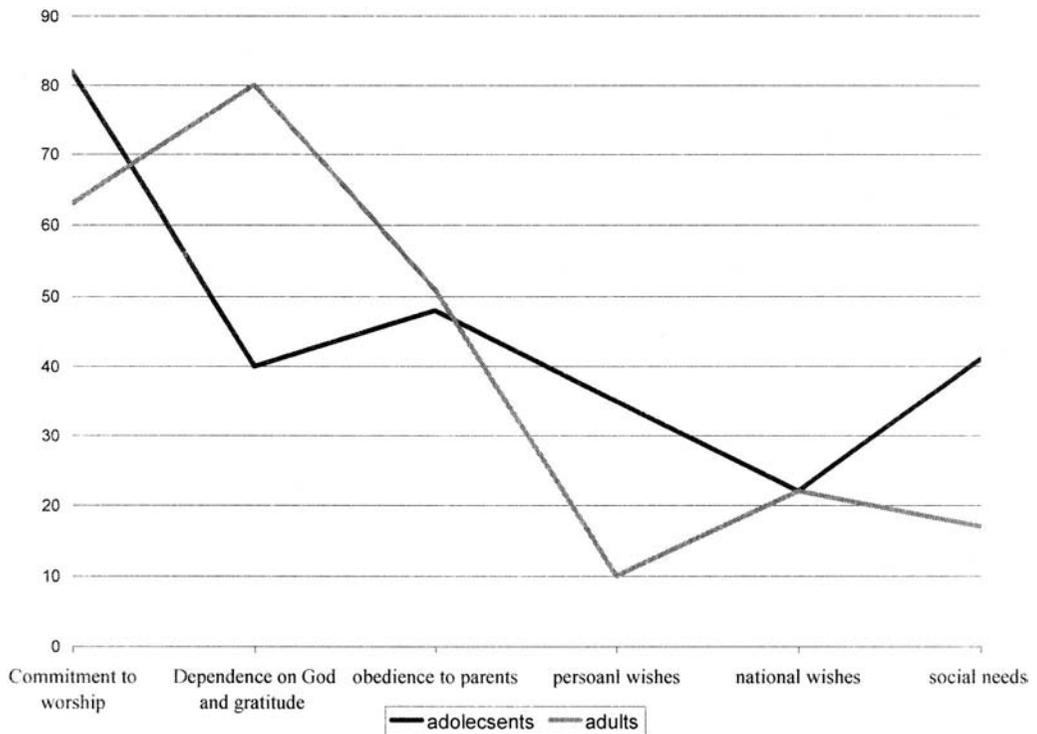


Figure 1. The patterns of motives for being religious of the two age groups.

cant differences between the two age groups in all behavioral factors except the autonomous factors: The mean scores of fulfilling supervised commandments, fast days, and dietary laws were significantly higher among the adolescents than the adults.

Religiosity: Univariate analysis indicated that the scores of the religious participants were significantly higher than the scores of the traditional participants in three out of the four factors: The supervised and autonomous commandments and dietary laws.

ANOVA with repeated measures between the four factors was performed for the whole sample in order to examine whether differences would be found between the four factors. The results yielded significant differences, $F(3,99) = 53.05; p < .001$. Paired comparison indicated significant differences between supervised, autonomous, and fast days versus dietary laws ($p < .05$). The mean score of the dietary laws commandments was significantly higher than the mean scores of the other commandments.

Motivational Component

Only six of the psychological motives were frequent. Chi square analyses revealed significant differences between the two age groups in four motives. Commitment to worship because of a Divine decree—obedience to God ($\chi^2(df = 2) = 3.84; p < .05$); personal wishes ($\chi^2(df = 2) = 5.48; p < .05$), and social needs ($\chi^2(df = 2) = 3.29; p < .05$) were significantly more frequent among the adolescents than the adults, whereas the frequency of dependence on God was significantly higher among the adults than the adolescents ($\chi^2(df = 2) = 13.29; p < .001$). Figure 1 depicts the different patterns of motives for being religious of the two age groups.

Prediction of Fulfilling the Commandments and Understanding the Cognitive Factors

We employed hierarchical regression to determine the extent to which each of the following variables (chronological age, level of reli-

TABLE 2

Regression coefficients for the behavioral factors according to age, religiosity and Raven scores

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Supervised Command β</i>	<i>Autonomous Command β</i>	<i>Fast Days β</i>	<i>Kashruth β</i>
Age	-.26**	-.14	-.26*	-.27*
Religiosity	.55***	.47***	.09	.38**
Raven	-.13	.01	-.18	.06
R ²	.40***	.23***	.12*	.19**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

giosity, cognitive baseline level according to the Raven) could explain the participants' fulfilling Jewish commandments (supervised and autonomous commandments, fast days, dietary laws). At the first step, the predictor variables were the above background variables. The second step included the interactions between these characteristics. Dependent variables were participants' scores in the four factors of the behavior component. Regression coefficients for the behavioral factors are presented in Table 2 (the table presents the regression coefficients of the second step including the main effect and the interactions).

Table 2 indicates that 40% of the variance of the supervised commandments, 23% of the autonomous commandments, and 19% of the diary laws could be explained. Only 12% of the variance of the fast days could be explained. Results yielded a significant contribution of chronological age to the explained variance of supervised commandments, diary laws, and fast days, with negative regression coefficients, the older the subjects the less they fulfill the commandments. Level of religiosity also contributed to the explained variance of the behavioral factor, except for fast days. In these factors the regression coefficients are positive, i.e. the higher the level of religiosity, the higher the fulfillment of commandments. The main effect of cognitive level did not contribute significantly to the explained variance of the behavioral factors. However, the regression yielded a significant age X Raven interaction with regard to supervised commandments and fast days. Pearson's correlations were calculated between Raven and supervised commandments and fast days

among the adolescents and the adults separately. Results yielded significant negative correlations among the adolescents for the supervised commandments and fast days, respectively ($r = -.30$; $r = -.27$; $p < .05$), i.e. the higher the Raven scores, the less they fulfill these commandments. In contradistinction, the correlations among the adults were low and non-significant for the supervised commandments and fast days ($r = .01$; $r = .13$; $p > .05$, respectively).

Discussion

The study's objective was to explore the behavioral and motivational components of religious concepts among adolescents (aged 13–21 years) and adults (aged 30–60 years) with mild/moderate ID. Two important attributes emerged from the findings. Results yielded similarities between the religious profile of individuals with ID and those of the general population, i.e. individuals with ID do fulfill commandments and are connected to religion for motivational reasons similar to the general population. The other relates to the differences between the age groups: the adolescents fulfilled Jewish commandments to a greater extent than the adults. However, the adults exhibited more mature motivational reasons for being religious.

Definitional-Behavioral Component

The whole sample's mean scores for fulfilling the commandments ranged between 2.15–2.25 on a three point scale, indicating that they often fulfilled Jewish commandments (all participants belonged to modern ortho-

dox religious families). However, ANOVA and regression analyses indicated that religious participants fulfilled the supervised and autonomous commandments to a greater extent than traditional participants. This is self-evident. However, no significant difference was found between traditional and religious participants in observing fast days and dietary laws. This finding is consistent with the religious trends of the Israeli general population (Levi, et al, 1994), which demonstrate that 90% of Israeli Jews adhere to at least one dietary rule and 71% of Israeli Jews fast on the Day of Atonement regardless of their religious self-definition. Findings thus revealed similarities in the type of commandments observed between individuals with ID and traditional/religious sectors of the Israeli society.

Results showed that 23% of adults defined themselves as traditional, i.e. less religious, compared to 4% of adolescents. ANOVA also indicated that adolescents fulfilled the supervised commandments, fast days and dietary laws more than adults. This group was also more diligent in observing unsupervised autonomous commandments.

The regression analysis pointed to another phenomenon. Among adolescents the cognitive level (according to Raven test) contributed to the explained variance of fulfilling the commandments. Those with higher cognitive levels observed supervised commandments and fast days to a lesser degree. The regression did not yield contribution of the cognitive level to observing commandments among the adults. These findings thus indicated that among the adolescents religion is expressed by fulfilling Jewish laws related to cognitive levels and among the adults—to chronological age.

Social psychology theories mentioned in the theoretical background can serve as an explanation for the difference between the two age groups. As stated earlier, McCullough et al. (2005) identified three discrete trajectories of religious development during adulthood (ages 27–80): Increases in religiosity until midlife and declines in later adulthood; very low religiosity in early adulthood and an age-related decline; and high religiosity in early adulthood and an age-related increase. The above studies focused on adults, whereas another group of studies indicated an in-

crease in religious faith in adolescents compared to younger ages (King et al., 1997). It was found that religious conversion occurs during adolescence (Argyle, 2000).

The level of religiosity of the two ID age groups that were studied in this research, i.e. higher religious level of the adolescents compared to the adults, apparently represents the trajectory of religious decline in adulthood according to McCullough et al. (2005). Caution should be exercised since this study was cross-sectional. The participants' age ranged between 15–21 and 30–60 years. We did not study ages younger than adolescence or early adulthood (age 20–30) as McCullough et al. (2005) did with the general population. Furthermore, our population was different from the gifted subjects studied in McCullough et al. (2005). However, our argument is that religious change of individuals with ID throughout the course of life is a phenomenon common to that of the general population and that several religious trajectories over the course of life may also exist in populations with ID. Our study yielded a decrease in religiosity from adolescence to adulthood. Perhaps other studies will show another trend in religiosity between different age groups. Further research examining the religious development of people with ID throughout the stages of life may shed light on this issue.

The pattern of fulfilling commandments between the adolescents and adults questions the source of both groups' commitment to worship—does it stem from autonomous decisions or is it associated with their motives of obedience to God or loyalty to their parents? Would differences be found between the two ages group in their motives for worshipping God? The answers to these questions are anchored in the motivational component.

Motivational Component

Results yielded internal and external motives for being religious. Internal motives included commitment to worship, dependence on God, and obedience to parents. External motives included expectation of personal wishes and fulfilling social needs. Findings indicated that external motives were less dominant than internal ones in observing commandments in both groups.

Both groups expressed a need for someone to lean on and a spiritual anchor. They have a sense of security that they have someone to rely on and believe that everything is directed by God (“In case of trouble I know He’s with me,” said a girl with ID; “He helps me, so that I have the courage to do the right thing, gives me confidence,”). However, this motive was found at a higher rate among the adults than the adolescents. Reiss and Havercamp (1998) and Reiss (2000) studied the psychological motives for being religious among students and service providers of individuals with ID. Findings indicated that the need to rely on outside forces and dependence was the dominant motive for becoming religious.

In contradistinction, the motive of obedience to God and parents was found at a higher rate among the adolescents than the adults. Adolescents also expressed the extrinsic benefit at a higher rate, i.e. the need for social belonging to a religious community and the need to be granted personal wishes.

Results of the motivational part can serve as an explanation for findings in the behavioral part. Adolescents’ fulfilling Jewish commandments to a greater extent than the adults may stem mainly from Divine decree—obedience to God and receiving external rewards.

We did not empirically measure participants’ moral stage. According to Kohlberg, the heteronomy stage is characterized by acceptance of moral laws originating in an adult and imposed from the outside as undisputable. Their validity is eternal and holy. In the autonomy stage (age 11+), morality is freed of external pressure and the individual acts out of self-choice according to behavior laws which he has internalized. The answers indicate that the adolescents’ motives for fulfilling Jewish commandments are heteronymous according to Kohlberg (1964), whereas the adults’ motives were autonomous.

The rational choice theory—a new paradigm in the sociology of religion (e.g., Sherkat & Wilson, 1995; Stark & Finke, 2000), can explain the adults’ motives for being religious. According to this theory, people make rational choices that are consistent with their preferences and tastes insofar as the available information, their ability to understand that information, and external constraints on their choices permit (Finke & Stark, 2003). In de-

termining the religious trajectory, McCullough et al. (2005) found that in the United States, where religiosity is generally high in spite of the freedom of religion, the preference to be religious is autonomous, although it is caused in part by proximity to others (family members, coworkers, or social class) who have similar preferences (Sherkat & Wilson, 1995). Thus, people who were raised in highly religious homes are expected to acquire a strong preference for religion as adults (McCullough, Tsang, & Brion 2003; Sherkat & Wilson, 1995).

The free choice paradigm can be applied to our adult group. Cea and Fisher (2003) asked adults (aged 30–65) with mild and moderate ID to explain the essence of a hypothetical medical treatment (psychiatric, medical, and dental treatments) to three patients. Participants pointed out pros and cons, made the appropriate choice, and explained their choice to the patient. Our results coincide with the above, showing that adults with ID can rationally explain their decisions regarding their fulfilling various Jewish commandments.

Since the present study did not examine the participants’ background, we cannot determine parental influence. However, the adults’ motives for fulfilling commandments point to a degree of autonomy. Further research is recommended. According to Jewish theology, faith in God is not just a theological thought, but a commitment to worship and fulfill Jewish commandments (Leibowitz, 1982). Discussion of the religious obligations of people with ID is also germane to their integration within society. Regardless of how outsiders might view this, a religious family will find it extremely difficult to cope with a situation of violation of Sabbath laws. Educating toward fulfilling commandments and accepting God is therefore part of the religious commitment of facilities for students with low cognitive levels (Farbstein, 1995; Feinstein, 1996).

The findings of this section coincide with those of Gaventa (1986) and Hoeksema (1995) indicating that religion plays an important role for people with developmental disabilities. In light of the above, religious schools, sheltered residences, and vocational centers should relate to the needs of religious persons with ID with the appropriate care.

Persons with ID attend religious services (synagogue, church) whether as adults or children. It behooves professionals to contact congregational services and invite congregations to visit facilities and create mutual acquaintances and joint activities.

Conclusion, Limitations, Practical Recommendations and Further Research

The pattern of fulfilling Jewish commandments between the two age groups seemed to reflect McCullough et al.'s (2005) trajectory of religious decline in adulthood. In other words, the decline in fulfilling Jewish commandments in the transition from adolescents to adulthood that was found in our study could reflect a normative phenomenon. Furthermore, the adults exhibited more mature motives for being religious (dependence on God) than the adolescents (obedience to Divine decree). Thus, our study indicates that chronological age-related experiences exert a significant effect on behavioral and motivational components of the religious concept of individuals with ID.

Our study was cross-sectional. Our interpretation of the different pattern of fulfilling Jewish commandments between the adolescents and adults should therefore be viewed with caution. A longitudinal study that will evaluate the same participants starting in adolescence until adulthood will shed light on the religious trajectory of individuals with ID through the life cycle.

Although our study was conducted among Jewish individuals with ID, the implications should be applied in other religions as well. Action should be taken in order to maintain and strengthen religious belief and faith, so as to reduce a decline in faith after the adolescents leave school and move to a more independent lifestyle as adults. Furthermore, a comparative study of individuals with ID of Christian, Muslim or other religions is recommended.

We have no information on the answers that typically developed religious students with the same mental age might have given on the specific study variables, especially on the motivational ones, and further investigation is necessary. The current study focused on the behavioral and motivational components of

religion. It is recommended to also examine the cognitive component, i.e. participants' level of understanding cognitive concepts such as God, prayer efficacy, righteousness and evil, and Providence.

Discussion of the religious identity of adolescents is associated with their identity configuration in other areas (Erickson, 1975; Marcia, 1980; Marcia & Archer, 1993). An investigation of the formation of religious identity according to Marcia (1980; 1993) is recommended. Such a study would explain the question of autonomous religious decision making in this population.

This study raised the following question: The behavioral component of the religious concept among adolescents was found to be associated with mental age (basic cognitive level according to Raven), whereas in adulthood it was found to be associated with chronological age. Is this phenomenon limited only to religion or does it also apply to other areas of life? Further research is recommended to shed light on this issue.

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