

Message from the Member Engagement Committee

The Member Engagement Committee would like to make you aware of a study done by the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion and published in the January 2015 edition of the *Journal of Religion and Health*. The survey of more than 5,000 Jews living in four of the largest Jewish population centers in the United States (Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York), found that... "Jews affiliated with a synagogue reported better health than their secular, non-affiliated counterparts." It did not seem to matter whether the affiliation was Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, or Reconstructionist; Jews who attended synagogue (whether frequently or infrequently) fared better.

This finding certainly provides an interesting talking point for synagogue membership. As always, if you know of any individuals or families who are seeking to join a synagogue, please let the Member Engagement Committee know.

We would love to hear from you.

membership@geshershalom.org or 201-947-1735

Going to synagogue can make you healthier, new study suggests US survey finds Jews who participate in their faith 'seem to do better' than those who don't

BY [JTA](#) January 15, 2015, 2:29 am [1](#)

Regular synagogue attendance may make you healthier, a new study indicates.

A study of four large American Jewish urban communities by Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion found that "adults who affiliate with a Jewish religious denomination and attend synagogue report significantly better health than secular or non-practicing Jews," Jeff Levin, director of the institute's Program on Religion and Population Health, said in a statement issued Tuesday by the Texas university.

"People with a strong sense of religious identity and who participate in their faith seem to do better, on average, than people without an active spiritual life," added Levin, a professor of epidemiology and population health, who conducted the study.

The study, based on data collected throughout the 2000s as part of Jewish community surveys from Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and New York, was published in January's *Journal of Religion and Health*.

"While there have been hundreds of studies of physical and mental health among Christians and members of other faiths, Jewish studies have been limited mostly to Israelis and to smaller clinical samples in the US or the United Kingdom," Levin said.

The results were consistent across denominations. Whether Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist or Reform, affiliated Jews reported better health than secular, non-affiliated Jews. Likewise, Jews who attended synagogue, whether regularly or less frequently, reported better health than those who never went.

Levin suggested following up with a national health survey of the Jewish population.

"This would provide an opportunity to dig a lot deeper than what's possible using data from existing community surveys, which weren't really designed to assess health," he said. "It's fortunate that a question or two on health was included in these surveys, but we can do a lot better."

A sophisticated national survey also could serve as a needs assessment that would provide valuable information for Jewish organizations seeking to address the health and life needs of American Jews, Levin said.

Established in August 2004, the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion initiates, supports and conducts research on religion.