

Weaving a Meaningful Jewish Space for Young Adults

BASE MOVEMENT 2021 EVALUATION

NOVEMBER 2021

Ezra Kopelowitz Ph.D.

Research Success Technologies Ltd.





Contents

- Base is My Jewish Home 1
- Methodology 2
- Executive Summary..... 3
- A Jewish Space during the Pandemic 5
- The Benefits and Impact of Base 8
- Base Weave 9
 - Base as a Meaningful Jewish Space: Both Powerful Determinant & Critical Outcome..... 11
 - Rabbinical Relationship at Center..... 12
 - Participation Matters – More is More 14
- An Experiential Learning Community 15
 - A Unique Mix in which the Intellectual and Social Interact..... 16
 - Inclusive Learning – Successes and Challenges 18
- Learning Community for Those Who Did Not Grow Up in a Jewish Community 21
- Basers from Weaker Jewish Backgrounds Show Greater Jewish Growth 23
- Finding my Adult Community..... 24
- Base Works Best up until 35 Years of Age 26
- Partners Evolve their Jewish Life Together..... 28
- Concluding Discussion..... 31
 - To whom does Base appeal? 31
 - The Base Engagement Model 34
- Appendix: Base Strands - Indices 35

Base is My Jewish Home

Founded in 2014, Base is a growing movement of young rabbinic couples building welcoming, pluralistic Jewish communities out of their homes through Shabbat and holiday hospitality, Jewish learning, and service. Base uses a strategy of “relational engagement,” believing that Jewish connection happens through the medium of interpersonal relationships rather than membership or institutional affiliation. This model puts the person—not the program—at the core of the rabbi’s work. Today, there are 10 Bases in the United States -- in Boston, Chicago (4), Ithaca, Miami and New York City (3). This report provides an in-depth analysis of the way young adults engage with Base and the contribution of Base to their Jewish lives, covering the 8 Bases operating at the time of the survey. This research builds on the 2020 evaluation in which we focused on the finding that many of the most involved Basers describe Base as “their Jewish Home.”¹

From Evaluation Report 2020

Base as “my Jewish Home” means

An intimate, warm, welcoming, and inclusive (non-judgmental, pluralistic) environment.

- A place where my voice is heard
- A home-like Shabbat experience with meals together are a core experience
- Prayer that is inclusive, egalitarian, creative, and meaningful
- A Rabbinic couple who is central to the experience of Base as a:
 - Home environment in which they feel welcome
 - A place for high-quality learning, marked by a conversation-focused experience
 - Spiritual guidance and pastoral care.

In this report, we ask:

- What are people seeking when they encounter Base?
- What factors contribute to their decision to intensify their engagement?
- When will a person come to regard Base as their Jewish home?
- What is the impact of Base involvement upon their Jewish lives?

1 Welcome - Insight from Base at Six Years — Base's First Six Years (insights.basemovement.org)

Methodology

Interviews

We conducted 13 one-on-one interviews with Basers from three Base communities. The Basers were nominated by Base staff and represented a variety of Jewish engagement trajectories and life stories. The interviews were conducted by Zoom video calls from March 16th through April 7, 2021. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. The interviews included:

- Base Miami– four Basers
- Base Chicago – Lincoln Park – five Basers
- Base Boston– four Basers

These interviews inform our understanding of “the Base Weave” (presented in this report), which we then used to design the 2021 Base annual survey.

Survey

In August and September 2021, we fielded a survey of Basers connected with the eight Bases in the United States (not counting the two new locations that opened in Chicago in July 2021). The survey was emailed to Base’s contact list. 431 who participated at a Base in the past year responded, for a response rate of 12%. 283 answered enough of the survey to be included in the analysis.

It is important to note that the findings in this document are strongly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic experience, the nature of which is explored below.

Executive Summary

To understand who “finds their Jewish home at Base” and the resulting impact on their Jewish life, our research points us to “the Base weave,” which is composed of five strands.

“Base is a meaningful Jewish space in which I feel comfortable, empowered to participate and experience community led by a Rabbinical couple whom I admire.”

When an individual experiences the Base Weave, they are likely to engage more intensively with Jewish life. At the heart of the “Base Weave” is the sense of Base as a meaningful Jewish space. These young Jewish adults report finding a Jewish space that is meaningful and appropriate to their needs. Of importance is that this Jewish space is experienced virtually (due to the Pandemic) and/or in-person.

A diverse group of young adults’ report finding their Jewish space at Base. Engagement occurs along three modes:

Trying to Access Jewish Life: There are those who did not grow up in the context of an engaged Jewish community, including some Basers who did not grow up Jewish. These individuals view Base’s experiential learning community as a critical gateway into embracing Jewish life. Base provides a safe space to learn in a social environment in which normative Jewish life is modeled and enabled.

Reconnecting to Jewish Life: The significance of Base for those raised in engaged Jewish families and communities, is that Base enables them to continue or expand their Jewish engagement as adults. Those raised Orthodox seek a pluralistic learning community that either replaces or complements their religious life elsewhere. Those raised in non-Orthodox families and communities are searching for a stimulating intellectual and social experience that enables them to continue their Jewish journey as adults. Some will seek out Base’s experiential learning community as their primary Jewish space; others will view Base as a young adult peer learning community that complements the multi-generational synagogue community or Jewish activities that they pursue elsewhere (e.g., social activism, volunteering for Federation, online activities, etc.).

Partner-Relationship. Basers figuring out their Jewish life in the context of their relationship with a Partner or Spouse are also very likely to report Jewish growth as a

result of their Base participation. For many of the partnered, engagement with Base is part of their personal journey building a Jewish life with their partner.

A major accomplishment is that alongside those who grew up engaged in Jewish life, Base also appeals to many whose social characteristics are associated with reduced involvement in conventional Jewish life. They may be raised by one Jewish parent, or non-denominational, or even non-Jewish; they may have received no Jewish schooling in childhood; and/or they may be married to or partnered with a non-Jewish spouse or significant other. Although they are slightly less likely to participate in Base activities, they are more likely to report Base empowering their Jewish growth, pointing to a distinctive facet of the Base model.

This report shows how Base enables engagement as an **experiential Jewish learning community, in which combination of social and intellectual experience is critical for success.** We show where Base’s practices currently work well, highlighting best practices and offering suggestions for improvement.



A Jewish Space during the Pandemic

The move to virtual programming during the pandemic required the Base rabbinic couples to make dramatic changes. They managed to move from an exclusive practice of in-person meetings to focusing on relationship-building through virtual meetings. Best practices included:

1. **Intimacy:** Creating intimate virtual spaces for people to connect and get to know one another – including one-on-one meetings with the Rabbi or Rabbi’s partner, small social and/or learning events and ongoing small group learning cohorts.
2. **Follow-up and outreach:** Either the Rabbinical couple or volunteers on their behalf reached out to those Basers who initially stopped participating, invited newcomers to attend and followed up after a meeting to encourage ongoing participation.

To the extent that Basers engaged in multiple points of contact with the Rabbinical couple or other Basers, even if virtual, they reported personal benefit and an experience of community.

Please describe Base’s contribution to your Jewish life during the Pandemic?

"I lived alone during most of the pandemic and really would not have spoken to people most days if it weren't for Base's virtual classes."

"A community to check in with and a rabbi to check in on me was helpful for mental health."

"I was able to continue learning and feel connected to a community during a time of separation from community. I had plenty of relationships and loved the people I was living with but this is different than being part of a community. I also moved cities during the Pandemic and did not have a religious space in my new city. Base's virtual programs helped me to continue practicing."

"Base was my main Jewish space during the pandemic. Our Base met weekly for check ins, had virtual learning, and a group of us had outdoor in person services for the High Holidays, had Shabbat picnics, and hung out socially outdoors. I learned with the Base couple and spoke with them about personal matters during the pandemic."

"I participated in an online Seder when everything first shut down and I helped with some of the readings. It was incredibly helpful and made me feel a lot more comfortable dealing with such an intense time and a feeling of loss not being able to have a regular Passover."

The COVID pandemic led to a shift from an exclusive focus on in-person programming to person-to-person interactions limited to virtual (online) spaces, or, in the case of some Bases, a mix of in-person and virtual programming.

A comparison over five years of annual Base evaluation surveys shows the resulting changes (exhibit 1, next page).

- **In-person contact drops:** Prior to the Pandemic, Shabbat meals in the Base home were the anchor event in which the large majority of Basers participated. Other in-person social events also drop.
- **Virtual learning rises:** Jewish learning occurring through one-time events or ongoing small group cohorts become the most frequent form of Base participation.
- **Rabbinical contact gains greater prominence.** In 2019 -- prior to the Pandemic -- 30% of Basers report one-on-one meetings with the Rabbi or Rabbi's partner. This number rose to 54% in 2021. The change signals the importance of personal follow-up from the Rabbinical couple to encourage ongoing participation in the learning groups.

A new Baser: Sam, 26 years old, Base Chicago Lincoln-Park

An email from the Jewish Federation advertising Rabbi Megan's "Learn Program," was the first he heard of Base. It came at a point that he had just switched jobs, to a 9-to-5 position and found he had more time. It was also just after the Pandemic hit and there was not much else happening, so he signed up. Sam was intentionally seeking out Jewish community. He had not succeeded in finding a Jewish place previously, so he was apprehensive. Ironically, he is not sure, if he had to go to an in-person event, like a Shabbat meal, he might not have connected with Base. He recalls going to a Friday night dinner at Hillel. *"There were so many people there, it was hard to know who with who was and feel comfortable. Here it was all individuals coming into a Zoom with an intellectual focus, with which I felt comfortable."*

A Veteran Baser: Matt, 25 years old, Base Chicago-Loop

"Base is my primary Jewish place, especially this past year, it has been mine and my fiancée's main Jewish center, partially because we have the most friends there, and also enjoy that Base is class and conversation based. We both enjoy that aspect of Base, together and separately. Base has been a way to stay connected to community in the Pandemic."

Exhibit 1: In which of the following Base activities have you participated at any point since last summer?

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jewish learning	47%	46%	52%	63% ↑	71% ↑
Attended a Jewish holiday experience	56%	53%	58%	59%	55%
Attended a Shabbat meal	72%	69%	80%	77%	54% ↓
Met with a rabbi or partner one-on-one	34%	30%	30%	39%	54% ↑
Participated in a small group discussion	33%	27%	27%	37%	48% ↑
Went to a social event	46%	39%	39%	51%	42% ↓
A program co-sponsored by Base and another group	36%	29%	36%	38%	40%
Took part in a service project or activity	23%	20%	17%	21%	22%
Attended a social justice event			12%	14%	21%
Heard a guest speaker	22%	19%	19%	23%	21%

69% of respondents reported participating three or more times in an online forum and/or having contact with Base staff or volunteers since the outbreak of the Pandemic.

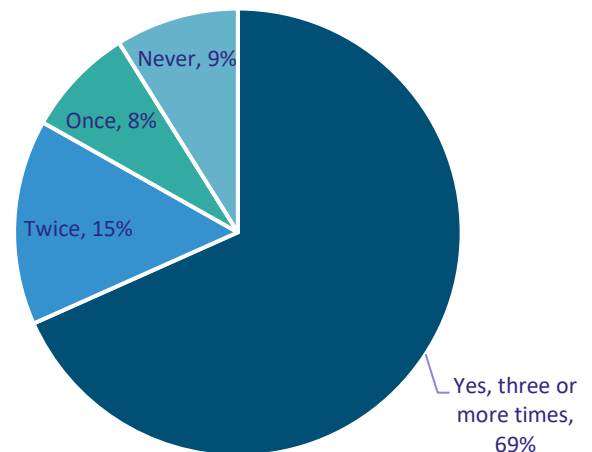
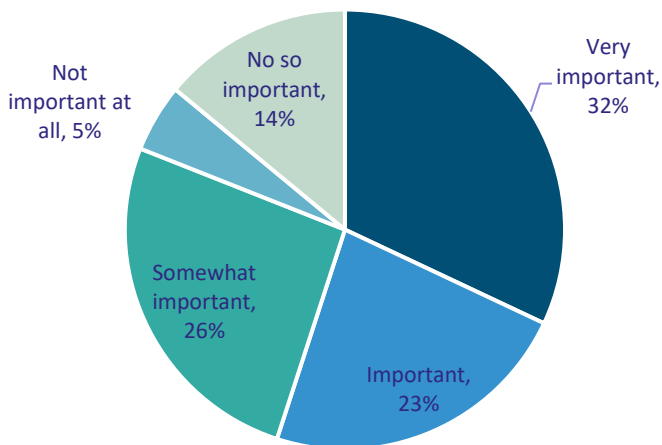


Exhibit 2. Have you participated in any Base online programming or had contact with Base staff or volunteers since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic?



55% stated that the contact with Base was “important” or “very important” for their connection to Jewish life during the Pandemic.

Exhibit 3. How important has Base been for your connection to Jewish life during the Pandemic?

The Benefits and Impact of Base

The following pages will provide an in-depth exploration of the benefits and impact of Base participation in depth. Exhibit 4 below provides an overview. Almost all report an enjoyable experience, while 60% or more cite the benefit of accessing “a space in which I feel comfortable,” “ways to participate in community,” and “meaningful relationship with a Base rabbi.” As we will show below, these core outcomes enable the other diverse Jewish and personal outcomes that follow.

Exhibit 4. Listed below are possible outcomes of your contact with Base. Which of the outcomes, if any, applies to you?

	%
Had an enjoyable experience	88%
Provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable	76%
Provided me with ways to participate in community	74%
Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi or his/her Spouse	61%
Contributed to my spiritual growth	54%
Provided me opportunities to explore who I am Jewishly	54%
Provided me opportunities to find the Jewish space(s) most appropriate for me	53%
Provided me with opportunities to try new things	51%
Connected me to others who share common interests	50%
Contributed to my intellectual growth	50%
Learned useful Jewish knowledge and/or skills	48%
Connected me to others who are now my friends	45%
A safe place to explore who I am	38%
Connected me to a Jewish organization	38%
Increased my engagement with other Jewish initiatives/spaces/organizations	36%
Started to, or increased the frequency with which I celebrate and mark the Jewish calendar (i.e., Shabbat, holidays, rituals, etc.)	30%
Provided me with guidance/counseling	27%
Enabled me to contribute to society	26%
Connected me to a Jewish mentor or leader	26%
Made a change in my Jewish practice	22%
Provided me with ways to bring Jewish involvement to my family	20%
Started to, or increased my hosting of peers in my home (virtually or in-person)	17%
Connected me with a romantic partner	6%

Base Weave

A person who regards Base as a central part of their Jewish life will identify with the following statement, one synthesized from our interviews:

“Base is a meaningful Jewish space in which I feel comfortable, empowered to participate and experience community led by a Rabbinical couple whom I admire.”

Notably this statement is “pandemic proof,” able to occur in the traditional Base space of the rabbinic home and/or through virtual interactions. The five threads in the statement, when together, form the weave that constitutes what those interviewed describe as the ideal experience at Base.

1. **A Meaningful Jewish Space:** The interaction with other Basers and the rabbinical couple at Base is meaningful, in that there is “relevance to my life,” “I find the discussions and learning interesting” and “want to continue” the social and intellectual experience. These interactions occur in an explicitly Jewish space – a social domain that can occur in a physical or virtual space.
2. **Comfortable:** That Jewish space is accessible, in which a person feels secure and able to participate.
3. **Empowered:** A person feels actively encouraged to take ownership of his or her pathway to Jewish engagement, including increased social participation, pursuing learning opportunities and taking on a lay leadership role. The experience is holistic - social and intellectual. The social and intellectual support one another.
4. **Community** arises out of the experience of continued interaction with a group of individuals at different points in time. Even with the pandemic and the primarily virtual nature of interaction this past year, many of Basers report an experience of Jewish community through Base.
5. **Rabbinical Couple:** Central to all the above threads is the presence of the rabbinical couple. The feeling “that there is someone who cares for me enough to reach out, ask how I am and encourage my participation.” Basers report inspiration and/or admiration for the role that at least one member of the Rabbinical couple plays in their lives, as a teacher, guide or confidant.

We formulated the Base Weave hypothesis on the basis of the in-depth interviews. The survey data confirm the validity of the hypothesis. For each strand of the weave, we created an index that compiles answers to a number of questions (see Appendix). Exhibit 5 shows that the indices are highly correlated.* As a person scores positively on any one index, they are also likely to score positively on the other indices. From the perspective of the respondents, the strands of the Base weave support one another, creating a coherent educational, communal, and Jewish experience.

Exhibit 5: Base Weave -The Threads Support One Another					
	Base as Meaningful Space	Comfortable at Base	Contribution to Jewish Growth	Experience Community at Base	Relationship with Rabbinical Couple
Base as Meaningful Space	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
Comfortable at Base	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.6
Empowered for Jewish Growth	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.5
Experience Community at Base	0.6	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.5
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.0

*A correlation of 0.4 is considered strong. In the Base weave, the index scores are all 0.4 or higher.

The Base Weave – Perspectives from Survey Respondents

"Base is one of the most welcoming spaces I've ever been to. I always leave events there feeling like I've made a new friend who I'm excited to see again. I also find Base very meaningful to my Jewish experience because it offers basically everything - Shabbat dinners, volunteering in my local community, learning (religious, cultural, political, and personal), and a social life."

"Base is special because it provides a Jewish community to young adults. I am not at the point in my life or my family to join a congregation, but Base is essentially a congregation for young adults. My favorite thing about Base, though, is that there are so many avenues to connect to Judaism. ... For some people, it's Shabbat dinner, for some people it's music, for some it's services, for some it's text study etc. etc. My favorite programming has been the text study and talmud classes. Base gives me a space to study Torah and Talmud with a beautiful balance of traditional and progressive. I really feel like I belong."

Base as a Meaningful Jewish Space: Both Powerful Determinant & Critical Outcome

At the heart of the “Base Weave” is the sense of Base as a meaningful Jewish space. Those who feel that Base is their primary Jewish space, or at least an important Jewish space, differ dramatically from those who see Base as only one of their Jewish spaces at best. Representing 49% of the respondents, they are far more likely to engage socially with other Basers, to find Base participation comfortable and enjoyable, and to develop meaningful rabbinic relationships. The differences are especially pronounced with respect to attributing Jewish growth to their Base participation (exhibit 7).

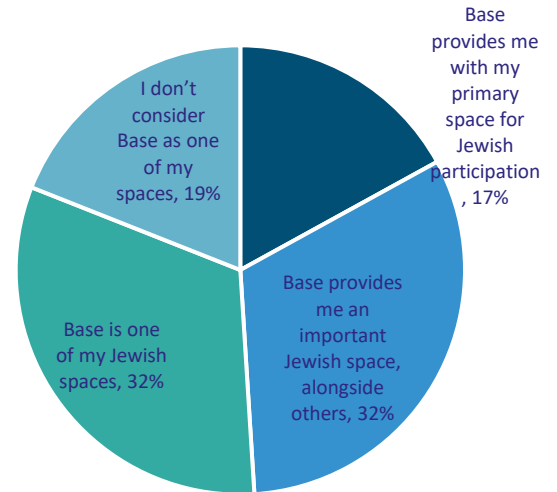
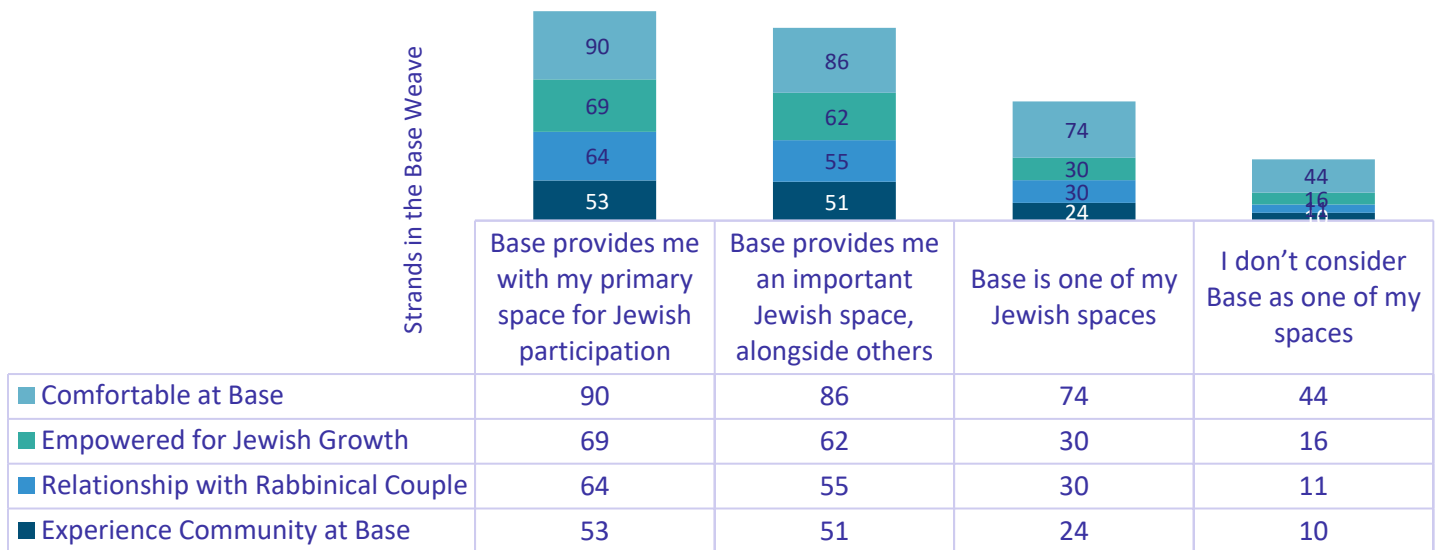


Exhibit 6: Which of the following best describes your relationship to Base?

Exhibit 7: Base Weave Measures by Relationship with Base

Which of the following best describes your relationship to Base?

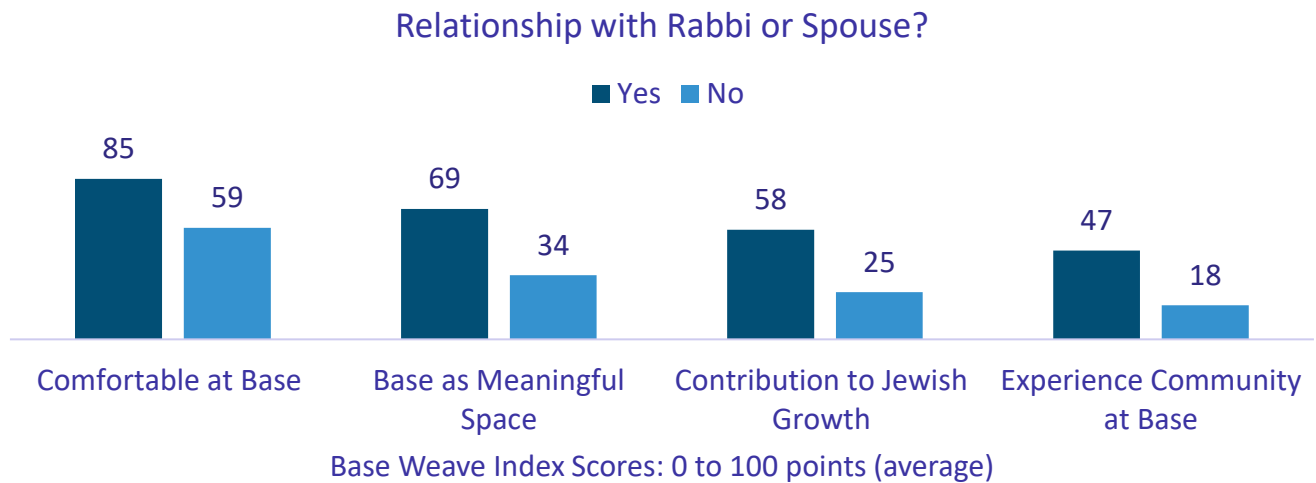


Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)

Rabbinical Relationship at Center

While all five strands of the Base Weave support one another, the role of a relationship with the Base Rabbi and Rabbi's partner stands out as a dominant thread. Those who report a meaningful relationship with the Rabbi and/or Rabbi's partner are the most likely to score substantially higher on all the other measures of the Base Weave (exhibit 8). In fact, in terms of meaningfulness, Jewish growth, and experiencing community, those who report such a relationship with the Rabbi or Rabbi's partner scored at least double the levels reported by those without such a relationship.

Exhibit 8: Base Weave Measures by Relationship with the Rabbi or Spouse



The Rabbinic Couple's Presence – A Survey Taker's

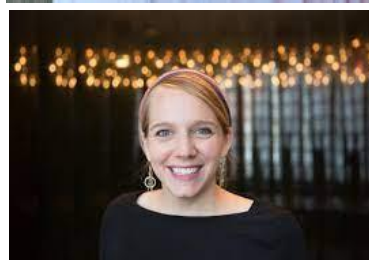
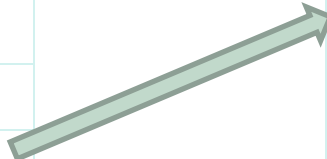
"I cannot say more positive things about Base, especially Rabbi Adam and Jessie Gindea. They have fostered an incredibly warm and thoughtful community, where I always leave feeling good, inspired, and hungry for more Jewish engagement and knowledge. Their passion for our community and the Jewish people is truly inspiring. During Covid, Base provided me with the only Jewish space that I felt safe in and continued to enrich my Jewish life and learning."

Among respondents to the survey, 63% developed “a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi and his or her partner.” Of these Basers, 61% stated that the relationship with the Rabbis and Partners is unique to Base: they could not have easily found such a relationship elsewhere. This was the only item in which a majority report Base as unique.

[Selecting from the outcomes they chose]
Please select those that you feel are unique to Base, which you could not easily have found elsewhere.

Outcomes of Your Contact with Base	
	%
Had an enjoyable experience	91%
Provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable	79%
Provided me with ways to participate in community	77%
Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi or his/her Spouse	63%
Provided me opportunities to explore who I am Jewishly	56%
Contributed to my spiritual growth	56%
Provided me opportunities to find the Jewish space(s) most appropriate for me	54%
Provided me with opportunities to try new things	53%
Contributed to my intellectual growth	52%
Connected me to others who share common interests	51%

	%
Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi or his/her Spouse	61%
Provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable	42%
Provided me opportunities to find the Jewish space(s) most appropriate for me	34%
Provided me opportunities to explore who I am Jewishly	31%
Contributed to my spiritual growth	29%
Provided me with ways to participate in community	28%
Had an enjoyable experience	22%
Provided me with opportunities to try new things	21%
Contributed to my intellectual growth	21%
Connected me to others who share common interests	19%



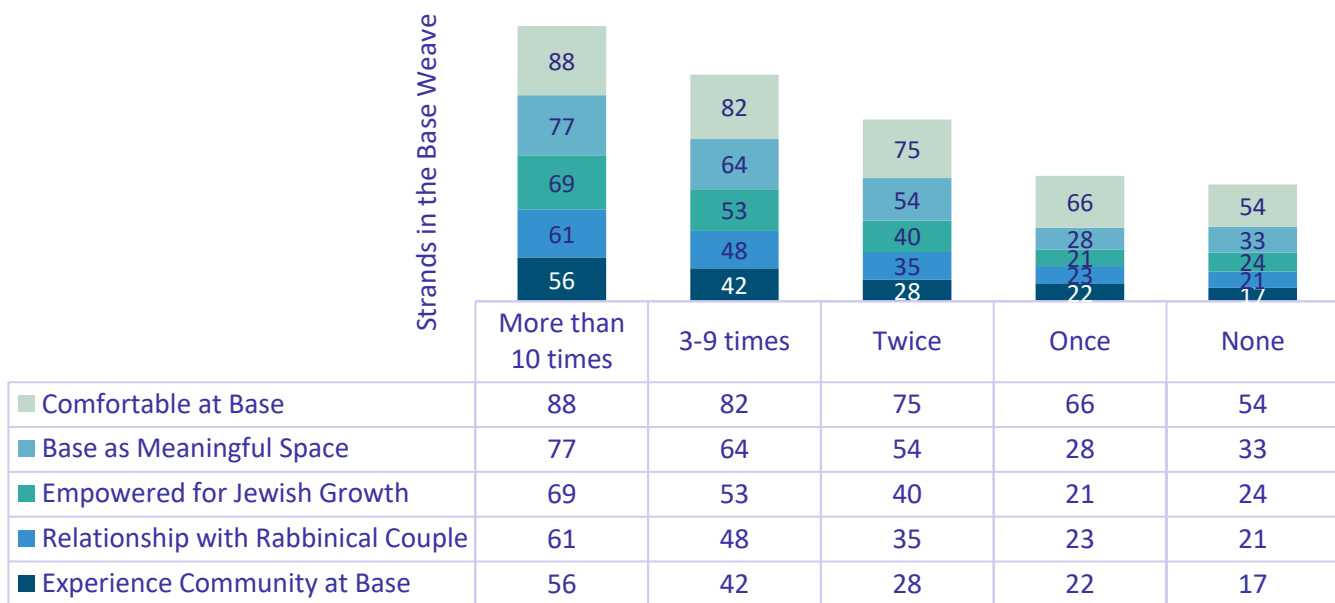
Participation Matters – More is More

The frequency of participation in Base strongly predicts the strength of the strands in the Base Weave. With increased participation, a Baser is more likely to report experiencing community, will feel more comfortable at Base, develop a close relationship with the Rabbi or Partner, and feel that Base constitutes a meaningful Jewish space. And, the more one participates in Base, the more one is likely to report growing Jewish Empowerment.

The real “take-off” starts with the transition from one to two appearances at Base, and then continues upward with increased participation. Likely, those who went once and never returned decided that Base wasn’t all that appealing. Those who returned, in effect, began their climb to higher levels on all the measures of Base engagement and personal Jewish involvement. **The implication: effective follow-up to encourage a second visit is a critical best practice.**

Exhibit 9: Base Weave Measures by Number of Times Participated in Past Year

About how many times have you participated in Base events of any kind since Spring 2020?



Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)

An Experiential Learning Community

Base is an “Experiential Learning Community.” Base differs from a synagogue, yeshiva or Jewish Community Center.

- Many of those who are seeking out a multi-generational community may well join a synagogue and turn to Base as a place to engage in meaningful peer learning with peers.
- Many who seek traditional forms of text-learning, with a focus on halacha and religious practice, will likely seek a religiously-focused learning program to complement their Base experience.
- Those who want only to socialize, without much intellectual challenge and learning, are unlikely to remain involved in Base for the long term.

Learning in the Context of Community

Allison is 32 years old and married. She and her husband participate in Base learning programs. Allison describes her personal Jewish journey intensifying in college where she met intellectually engaged, observant Jews in a pluralistic setting. *“If not for Base, the experience of a learning community would be missing in my life. It is hard to find learning opportunities for the sake of learning. At Base, I can go to a few sessions or one, and not be tied into whole thing. It is a good balance, for learning in a manner that I can’t find in other places. I love learning with Elizabeth and Matt. KI [Conservative Synagogue] does offer learning opportunities. There is Torah and text study, but it’s a small group who go pretty consistently, without the diversity in terms of who is participating and the ability to choose that Base offers.”*

Basers who regard Base as central to their Jewish lives look for – or learn to appreciate -- the interplay between social and intellectual dimensions. If the Base experience is all intellectual, without a positive social experience, then a person will feel “out of place” at Base. If the experience at Base is purely social, without intellectual fulfillment, then a person is unlikely to regard Base as an important Jewish space in their lives. Some involved Basers do focus on the social, and are less interested in the learning aspects, but in almost cases view the discussions – for example at a Shabbat meal – as interesting and central to their Base experience.

A Unique Mix in which the Intellectual and Social Interact

At the core of an experiential learning community is the interplay between intellectual and social experience. **Learning enhances the power of socializing, and socializing enhances the power of learning with their combination leading to an explosive surge in levels of Jewish growth.**

Exhibit 10 shows the growth curve. Basers who participated in a formal learning activity and reported an experience of community at Base, scored a 73 on the Empowered for Jewish Growth Index. Those who report neither learning nor community report just one-third the level of Jewish Growth (26 points). Those who only report experiencing Jewish community, without the formal learning, report approximately half the level of Jewish growth (39 points).

Exhibit 10: Influence of Participation in Formal Learning + Experience Community on Jewish Growth

Participation in Formal Learning Activities	Experience Community at Base	Empowered for Jewish Growth
Did not participate	Did not experience	26
	Experienced	39
Participated	Did not experience	48
	Experienced	73

Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)

The Base Learning Community Continuing Pathways for Intensifying Involvement

Michael: *“The community resonates most with me. At the Jewish Federation, the focus is fund raising, and that is ok. At Base, the focus is learning and community. At Federation, it’s more one-off events, such as cooking for a food pantry. Base’s programs follow on each other. There is a continuing social experience through learning with others. At Federation, it’s more individual, I don’t have the same connections and continuity and pathways for intensifying involvement.”*

The experience of learning at Base includes: 1) the straightforward study of Jewish texts and source material, 2) the experience of Jewish life, and 3) conversations with Rabbi and Rabbi's partner. Basers report this as a unique mix that is not easy to find in other places, in the context of a peer community.

On the Unique Aspects of Experiential Learning Community at Base

Rebecca, 24, sought out her adult Jewish community and found it at Base. She is also involved in other Jewish venues. Rebecca describes Base is her “gateway into Jewish life.” She grew up in a Reform synagogue where she was “super involved.” She sought out a similar “community of peers” when she went to Northwestern University. “I wanted the same community, religion on my terms, without my parents driving me. I got really involved *with Hillel throughout college. Then I graduated college and wanted to find a similar strong community, it’s not so easy once you are finished with college, with options divided along strong distinctions between Conservative, Reform and Orthodox. Base is special because of the feeling of pluralism, inclusion and caring beyond prayer ritual.*”

Rebecca was referred to Base by staff at Northwestern Hillel, as well as by way of events she attended at JUF. In both cases the message was, “*If you are interested in deep learning and social justice, Base is the place to go.*” She began by participating, in a 10-week learning cohort in Fall 2019. “*I knew nobody going in, but by the end liked a lot of people. I met two of my best friends there. For me, Base is an entrance way into the Jewish community and then remains there for you. There is so much to explore in Jewish life. Base is my gateway. I tell others it’s kind of like a Chabad, but more inclusive and justice oriented.*”

Rebecca is particularly drawn to Rabbi Megan’s infusion of social justice and feminism throughout the learning and draws inspiration from Rabbi Megan’s social justice work in the greater community. She also turns to Rabbi Megan for guidance regarding her own social justice work. Rebecca is on the Base programming committee, helping the woman who leads the committee. She also serves an “Ambassador,” taking part in her Base’s fundraising efforts.”

Inclusive Learning – Successes and Challenges

A key element in the experiential learning community is the experience of inclusive learning, which Basers describe **as an intimate experience** that is interesting, comfortable, relevant, motivating, and empowering (Exhibit 11).

With a focus on formal learning, Basers who were active two years ago and remain so, report an inclusive experience, followed closely by newcomers to Base in the past year. Those who are no longer active (the dropouts) are far less likely to describe their Jewish learning experience in such glowing terms.

Exhibit 11: Of the Jewish learning you participated in at Base, to what degree do each of the following describe your experience?

Average Score: 100 = To a great degree, 0 = Not at all	Newcomer Started in past this year (44 Basers)	Veteran (148 Basers)	Dropout Did not participate in past year (46 Basers)
Inclusive - I felt that I had a place at the table	82	87	66
Interesting	78	87	69
Socially comfortable	77	86	63
Intimate - I could share my thoughts and feelings	77	86	61
Relevant to my life	75	83	65
Motivated me to want to engage in more Jewish learning	73	82	57
Empowering	72	75	54

The inclusive strategy to Jewish learning, with a strong focus on intimacy brings Base both success and challenge. Clearly, Basers who intensify their engagement with Base find the inclusive style of learning a compelling experience, as is reinforced throughout this report. However, others do not connect. Exhibit 12 (next page) and the quotes from survey respondents that follow, show that significant percentages do not feel fully comfortable, with explanations as to reasons why.

Exhibit 12: To what extent do you feel comfortable with each of the following?

Row %	Not at all comfortable	A small extent	To an extent	Comfortable to a great extent	Total
Participating in a Base-sponsored social event, such as a Friday night dinner or holiday celebration	8%	8%	20%	64%	100%
Participating in Jewish learning at Base	7%	10%	24%	59%	100%
Walking into the Base home (in-person or the virtual experience)	9%	7%	27%	57%	100%
Participating in a Base-sponsored social action/tikkun olam event	9%	9%	29%	52%	100%
Approaching the Rabbi and/or partner to talk about something personal	13%	12%	28%	47%	100%
Making friends at Base	8%	17%	34%	40%	100%

Challenges for Inclusivity at Base

Socially Demanding

"Sometimes it can be awkward if everyone already has a connection/knows each other, or if you don't necessarily connect with the other guests. Sometimes the connections come easily, and other times 'your people' just aren't there. Such is life."

"I think it's more about my own social anxieties than about anything Base does or doesn't do."

Not in-depth enough

"The learning is not geared towards me and that's ok! As someone who reads Hebrew and wants to do close text study, there are many places for me to learn. Base learning is geared towards people who have very little Jewish literacy. It is important for them to have spaces! I would love if Base offered some opportunities for pluralistic learning that were a bit more substantive and text-heavy because it can be hard to find non-Orthodox in-person spaces for that kind of learning, but I completely understand why this isn't Base's focus!"

Religious differences

"The rabbis at Base Chicago have a strong Conservative Judaic background--as a Reform Jew, there were some aspects that were new and perhaps somewhat intimidating. However, I was also able to learn from these experiences and it exposed me to a deeper level of Judaism."

"More Orthodox observance, people who live in the city don't necessarily want what I want or think about some things the way I do."

Too political

"I wish Jewish programming was more separated from political programming not specific to Judaism, Jewish culture, Israel, etc. Base can be a great resource for people who align with a couple's specific political beliefs, but I wish more Jewish holiday events focused on those actual Jewish holidays."

"While I share the same politics as most people there, it can kind of feel shoved in my face. Not a big fan of using religion to justify my position on every political issue. Sometimes I avoid social action events because I fear getting shut down by people who are on more extreme ends but leading the programs."

Religious Identification and Learning Community

The religious upbringing of a Baser influences the role of the experiential Jewish learning community in their lives.

Exhibit 13: Childhood and Current Religious Identification

	Raised	Now
Orthodox	11%	8%
Conservative	32%	28%
Reform + Reconstructionist	30%	20%
Other Jewish	5%	24%
Secular + Post-denominational + Just Jewish + Not sure	14%	20%
Not Jewish	8%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Across the Spectrum

Base seems to engage Jews across the religious identification spectrum. **Even those raised non-Jewish seem to feel as comfortable and participate as much as their raised-Jewish counterparts.**

Jewish Growth for the Newly Initiated

The extent of a Baser’s Jewish growth distinguishes those with more vs. less traditional Jewish upbringing. **Those who did not grow up in the context of an affiliated Jewish community or engaged Jewish family are far more likely to report Jewish growth from their Base participation.** As we move from the most traditional to the least traditional, from the Orthodox-raised to the non-Jewish-raised, reports of Jewish growth resulting from Base participation steadily rise. For the Empowered Jewish Growth scale, the Orthodox raised receive a score of 35, followed by Conservative raised (41) and Reform or Reconstructionist raised (46). In comparison, we see a sharp jump among those raised out of a denomination (58) or not-Jewish (60).

Exhibit 14: Base Weave Measures by Childhood Religious Affiliation

Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)	Childhood Religious Identification				
	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform + Reconstructionist	Secular + Post-denominational + Just Jewish + Not sure	Not Jewish
Comfortable at Base	78	76	75	77	79
Base as Meaningful Space	55	55	55	62	58
Empowered for Jewish Growth	35 ↓	41 ↓	46 ↓	58 ↑	60 ↑
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	48	36	43	42	45
Experience Community at Base	42	34	33	44	39

Learning Community for Those Who Did Not Grow Up in a Jewish Community

Converting to Judaism

The largest Jewish growth is reported by those who did not grow up engaged in a Jewish community or did not grow up Jewish (Exhibit 13). These individuals view the **Base learning community as a critical gateway into embracing Jewish life.**

Meeting a Convert's Desire for Learning + Community

Robert is 29 years old and single. He is converting to Judaism and describes finding Jewish community for the first time at Base. He had tried a conversion course elsewhere but felt disconnected from Jewish community. Through Jewish friends he connected with Rabbi Adam at Base Miami, right as the Pandemic hit. *“Base Miami is an incredible concept. Rabbi Adam is Modern Orthodox, which is the conversion path I am taking. I like the diversity of people there. I attend most of Rabbi Adam’s weekly Torah sessions and kabbalah sessions and other social events. The opportunity for the virtual experience during the Pandemic is so important, and the mix they have offered of socially distanced in-person events with the virtual is also really good. The connection is so authentic, especially Rabbi Adam’s family. I have even met his grandparents. Base gives me a model for Jewish family.”*

The other interview we conducted with a person who did not grow up Jewish points to the intense need that a person converting may have for Jewish learning in the context of community. In Sarah’s case, she reports learning but is struggling to feel comfortable in the Base community.

Feeling Out of Place

Sarah is 34 years old, single, and is converting to Judaism. Prior to the Pandemic she started attending KI, the Conservative synagogue that runs Base BSTN and where Rabbi Elizabeth Bonney-Cohen works. There, Sarah started attending the daily minyan and became observant. She attends classes there, including classes with Rabbi EBC. Sarah describes herself as a “wandering Jew and feeling lost. I haven’t really made friends. I feel very different from the rest of the Basers. Everyone is very welcoming and inclusive; but I am always acutely aware in the conversations that I am providing a different perspective. But it is still nice to be part of community.”

Growing Up Jewish, Without Jewish Community

Basers who grew up Jewish, but without experiencing any Jewish schooling are also those most likely to report not

Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)	Childhood Jewish Education		
	None, other	Hebrew School	Day School
Comfortable at Base	73	75	80
Base as Meaningful Space	58	55	58
Empowered for Jewish Growth	54 ↑	45	42
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	41	41	44
Experience Community at Base	36	35	40

Exhibit 15: Childhood Jewish Education and the Base Weave

growing up in the context of an organized Jewish community. Like those who didn’t grow up Jewish, they, too, report feeling comfortable, finding a meaningful Jewish space, a relationship with the rabbinical couple and an experience of community at similar levels to other Basers. However, they are more likely to report having experienced Jewish growth (Exhibit 15). Those who did not grow up identifying with a denominational community are far more likely to regard Base as their primary Jewish space (Exhibit 16).

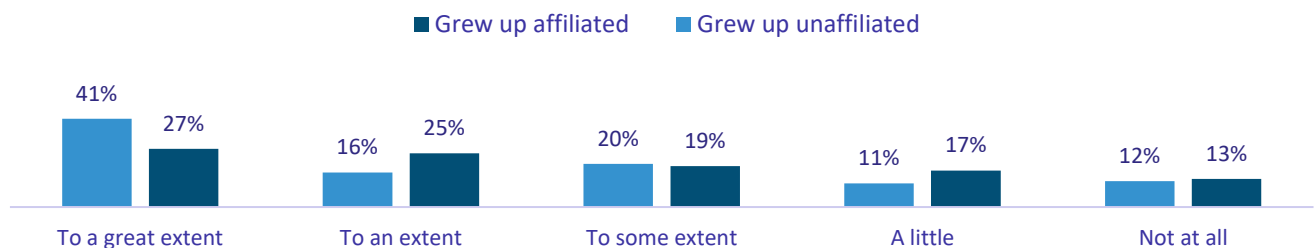


Exhibit 16: To what extent has Base contributed to your finding a Jewish space in which you feel that you belong? by Denominational Affiliation Growing Up

Basers from Weaker Jewish Backgrounds Show Greater Jewish Growth

The previous pages show a major Base accomplishment. Alongside those who grew up engaged in Jewish life, Base also appeals to young adults whose social characteristics are associated with reduced involvement in conventional Jewish life. They may be raised non-denominational or even non-Jewish; they may have been raised by one Jewish parent; they may have received no Jewish schooling in childhood; and/or they may be married to or partnered with a non-Jewish spouse or significant other.

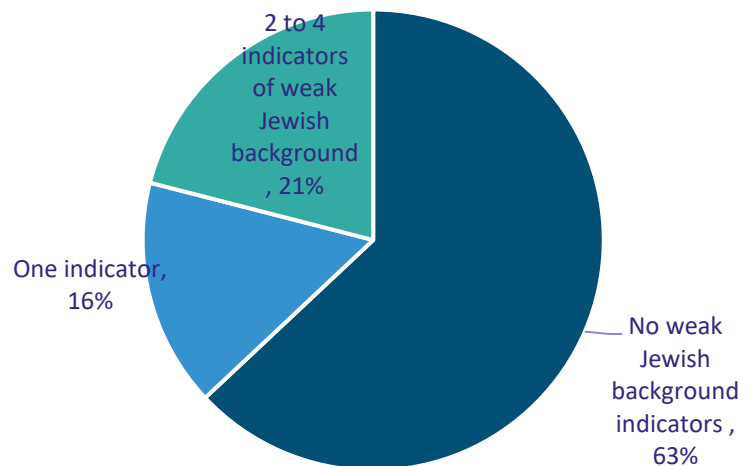
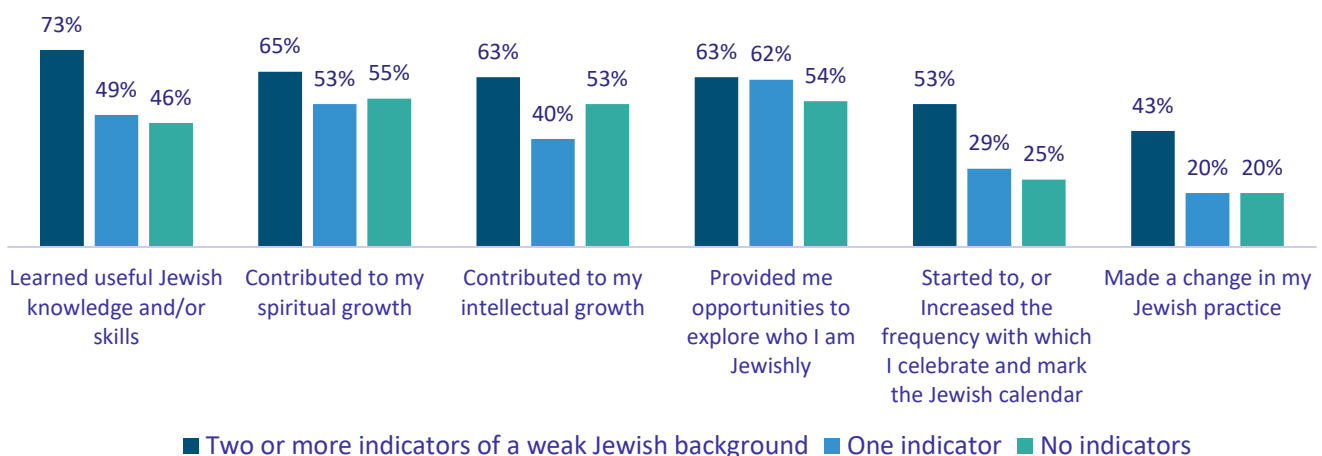


Exhibit 17: Weak Jewish Background Indicators: (1) non-Jewish parent(s), (2) non-denomination raised, (3) no Jewish schooling, (4) spouse not Jewish.

Depending on how one counts, this group comprises between 21% and 37% of the survey respondents (Exhibit 17). The 21% with two or more indicators of a weak Jewish background are far more likely to report the highest levels of Jewish growth, pointing to a distinctive facet of the Base model (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18: Empowerment for Jewish Growth – Individual Measures by Weak Jewish Background

Listed below are possible outcomes of your contact with Base
Which of the outcomes, if any, applies to you?



■ Two or more indicators of a weak Jewish background ■ One indicator ■ No indicators

Finding my Adult Community

The significance of Base for those raised in an affiliated Jewish community is less an expansion of their Jewish engagement. Rather, **Base provides them a communal framework for meaningful engagement as adults.** Those who grow up affiliated, especially Orthodox, but in the other denominations as well, have extensive experience with Jewish community and Jewish learning. The act of learning in the context of a community is not new to them; rather, they are looking for such an experience as adults on their own terms.

Rebecca (see case study on page 17) provides an example of a Baser who grew up in a Reform community and searched for a Jewish communal experience as an adult: *“I wanted the same community, religion on my terms, without my parents driving me.”* Matt also describes purposefully seeking out Jewish community as an adult.

Matt grew up in a Reconstructionist synagogue community, sought out a work life balance in graduate school. He sought out and found at Base a rich social and intellectual experience that reinforce one another. *“Getting back into Jewish life felt natural.”* He has been involved at Base for three years at both Chicago Base locations, including *“taking classes and Rav Ezra’s monthly minyan, plus one-off events, it’s the right mix of social and intellectual.”* Matt is engaged to a woman whom he met at a Base Shavuot celebration. *“My partner is less observant, but we can both find stuff to participate in.”*

We interviewed three Basers who grew up Orthodox. For the one who no longer identifies as Orthodox, Base enables her to stay connected. The other two continue to identify as Orthodox and see Base as complementing and rounding out their Jewish experience in Orthodox circles. They enjoy the pluralism of Base, while also seeking out Orthodox synagogue life and Yeshiva-style learning elsewhere.

Not a Religiously Charged Organization

Ariel, 29, divorced, arrived in Miami three years ago to pursue a graduate degree. He moved to an area of Miami with a “strong Jewish community.” Besides Base, he is active in a number of Jewish frameworks, including Chabad, where he goes for prayer, and an Orthodox organization called *Yehudi*, which offers Jewish learning and Shabbat meals. He has also tried going to Moshe House events, but *“I didn’t feel such an attachment.”*

Ariel grew up in Teaneck, N.J. attending Orthodox Jewish day schools, including studying in Yeshiva for two years. He graduated from YU and married. For Ariel, his participation with Base is part of an intentional process of taking ownership over his Jewish life. Ariel describes growing up, never having to make a decision, but becoming more conscious of his Jewish decisions after his divorce. At Base, *“I have found a different genre of Judaism, which I find very attractive, it is a new Jewish path in terms of who am I, a process of discovery. It is the first time I have been fully conscious about my Jewish and religious decisions.”*

“Base is not a religiously charged organization, Chabad will push you. Base is very safe, they offer what you want. I would go before Shabbat dinner, to Kabbalat Shabbat. Was it the full service? No, but I didn’t care. It is the perfect fit for me to spend time on Shabbat. I go to Chabad to daven, then meet my friends at Base.” Ariel says that at first he was not aware of Adam and Jessie’s denominational affiliation. *“I simply felt understood.”*

Base for Ariel is a about the Jewish home he feels most comfortable in, but one that sits alongside the ritual Orthodox life he continues to participate in. *“Base is homey, familiar and comfortable. It’s more like family, a taste of what my family Shabbat was like. Familiar, they sing Shalom Aleichim, Eshet Hayil and Kiddush, like what my family did, without that, I would feel upset. Compared to Chabad and Yehudi, Base is more intimate. I sometimes I go to Yehudi instead of Base, because there is davening and zmirot, and sometimes that is what I am in the mood for. I also really appreciate the one-on-one opportunities to talk with Adam and Jessie.”*

Ariel is drawn to the intimacy of Base, which stems from Adam and Jessie’s attentiveness to everyone whom they meet. *“At Chabad, women complain that they don’t feel they are spoken to by the Rabbis. At Base, Adam and Jessie will give everyone hugs. They cater more to the visitors and the community, more so than Yehudi or Chabad which is more take what we give and leave it.”*

Base Works Best up until 35 Years of Age

Age is major factor when engaging with Base’s experiential Jewish learning community. Base participants include an age range from early 20s to participants in their 30s (Exhibit 19).

Base’s target demographic are young adults between 24-35. The data show that Base works as intended, best serving those 35 and younger. The over 35s do report an enjoyable experience and feeling comfortable, but less so than the younger Basers. On all the other Base weaves, these older Basers score low (Exhibit 20). The youngest Basers (under 26) report the highest contribution to their Jewish growth.

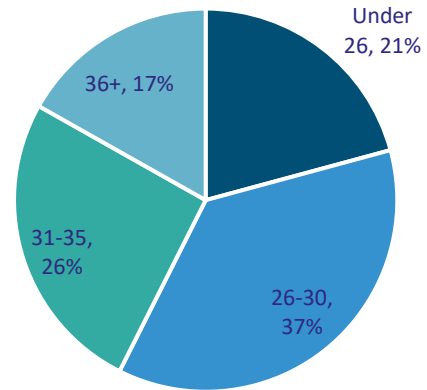


Exhibit 19. Age Groups

Exhibit 20. Base Weave by Age Group

Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)	Age Groups			
	Under 26	26-30	31-35	36+
Comfortable at Base	77 ↑	80 ↑	77 ↑	63 ↓
Base as Meaningful Space	62 ↑	60 ↑	57 ↑	39 ↓
Empowered for Jewish Growth	57 ↑	45	45	35 ↓
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	44	44	43	31 ↓
Experience Community at Base	38	42	32	27 ↓

The personality of the Baser comes into play. On one hand, some of the “over 30s” interviewed indicated that they are not concerned with aging out. They point to already existing age groupings and the ability to intentionally structure programming to enable both peer (by age) or diverse age learning. Some spoke about connecting with a focus intellectual or life-interests. On the other hand, some of the older individuals interviewed and those who wrote comments in the survey expressed a feeling of discomfort regarding their age.

One woman we interviewed grapples with the feeling of age-related discomfort by attending with friends so as not to feel out of place.

Attending with Friends

Martha 31. “Megan and Paige are super nice and welcoming. Rabbi Megan, I will chat with her a little during a program. She is female, accessible, and just very friendly and welcoming. It makes it easier if I don’t know anyone else. I also meet with my friends there at Base-Loop. I have a lot of friends who are involved, which makes it easier. Or I go with friends, as I really prefer to know someone. Base is a little tricky, because of the young professional nature of the crowd. I am getting to the older end of that, and it can feel awkward to be the oldest, so I go with friends.”

One person interviewed, who is new to Jewish community, expressed a feeling of marginalization due to his age.

Feeling on the Margins

Jacob, 38, married with two children, felt that his understanding of Judaism is superficial, and that he didn’t know the basic tenets. He described the first course he took at the Reform synagogue as quite intense and the Rabbis nice, “but nothing near the warmth, engagement and passion he has experienced from Rabbi Elizabeth.” However, Jacob did not attend any of the complementary Base, virtual social gatherings, feeling out of place in terms of age and family status. At that point, “Rabbi Elizabeth reached out to me, inviting me to grab a virtual coffee. I was blown away by that. She said not to worry about age and family, which is why I came back for the second course.” Jacob has since participated in additional learning opportunities, but not in any other social engagement opportunities. He loves the learning but continues to feel out of place in terms community in general, and at Base in particular.

Partners Evolve their Jewish Life Together

Respondents to the survey include both single (55%) and married/partnered, with 37% of all respondents reporting having a Jewish partner and 8% reporting having a non-Jewish partner (exhibit 16). Basers who are partnered experience the Base weave differently than those who are single.

Singles: The “single” person coming to Base represents a diverse group. Some seek an intentional learning community, and others are experimenting or simply dropping in for a one-time experience, perhaps to find friendship or someone to date. There is no single defining characteristic.

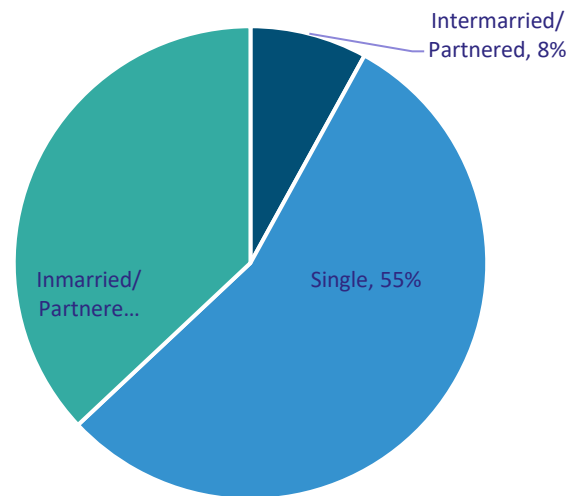


Exhibit 21. Partnership Status

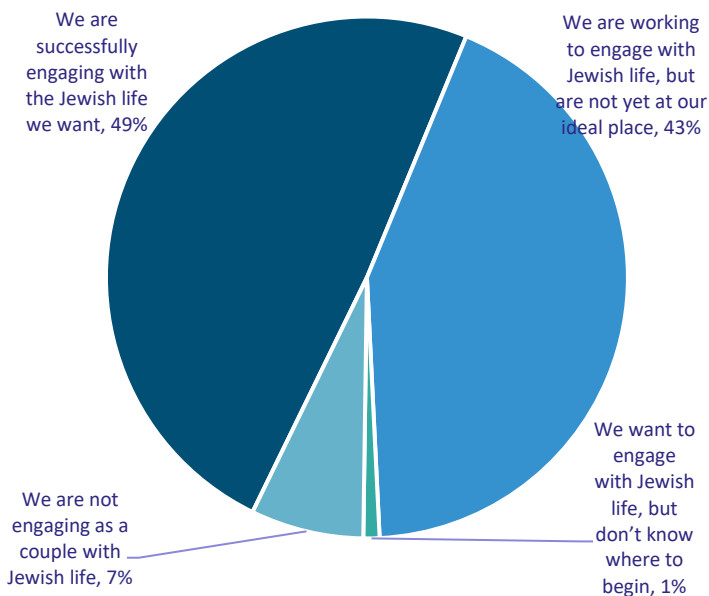


Exhibit 22: Partners Engaging with Jewish Life

Partnered: In contrast, the already “partnered” share a common quality unique to their status. For the partnered, engagement with Base is often part of their personal journey building a Jewish life with their partner.

Just seven percent of the partnered report “not engaging as a couple with Jewish life.” 45% report “successfully engaging with Jewish life as a couple,” with the remaining 44% working to engage with Jewish life (exhibit 22).

Engaging with Jewish Life at Base as a Couple

Josh is 32 years old and married. “I am really interested in any Jewish community where my wife [who is converting] can be accepted and feel comfortable. A shul can be intimidating, there are cliques. The shul is a different type of community, it is intergenerational. I think when you take a Jewish group out of a synagogue, focused on age range, creating a social environment which is a little different, not meeting in the shul, but in a home or in a park, it makes it more social.”

Meirav is 26 and engaged. She left Orthodoxy and since arriving in Florida is reengaging Jewishly. Meirav grew up in a modern Orthodox community in Silver Spring Maryland, including attending Jewish day school; but now thinks of herself as self as Conservative. *“My fiancé introduced me to less intensive, Shabbat, holiday and family traditions focused Judaism, which I love.”* They, in particular feel a strong attachment to Rabbi Adam and Jessie. *“We love Adam and Jessie so much, we asked Adam to be our Rabbi at our wedding. We have met up with him for coffee on occasion, the first time we just discussed our background, getting to know each other, with the other conversations on a much more personal level.”*

Couples reporting “successfully engaging with the Jewish life we want,” are more likely to report a relationship with the rabbinic couple. Yet, those who are working to engage are slightly more likely to report Jewish growth as a result of their contact with Base (Exhibit 23).

Exhibit 23. Base Weave by Partners Engaging with Jewish Life

Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)	Partnership Status	
	We are successfully engaging with the Jewish life we want	We are working to engage with Jewish life but are not in our ideal place
Comfortable at Base	83	79
Base as Meaningful Space	59	61
Empowered for Jewish Growth	47	51
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	52 ↑	42 ↓
Experience Community at Base	50 ↑	33 ↓

A comparison between the in-married/partnered and intermarried /partnered shows that in-married/partnered are more likely to report a relationship with the rabbinical couple. While the intermarried/partnered are more likely to report Jewish growth because of their Base participation (exhibit 24).

Base Weave Index Scores: 0 to 100 points (average)	Partnership Status	
	In-married/partnered	Intermarried/partnered
Comfortable at Base	82 ↑	71
Base as Meaningful Space	60	63
Empowered for Jewish Growth	48	58 ↑
Relationship with Rabbinical Couple	48	39 ↓
Experience Community at Base	43	38

Exhibit 24. Base Weave by Partnership Status

We learn from the above two tables, that Basers figuring out their Jewish life in the context of their partner relationship are most likely to report Jewish growth. Yet, those who are relatively settled report greater contact with the rabbinical couple. If Base rabbis were to succeed in creating more relationships with those who “are not yet in their ideal place,” and/or “are intermarried,” it would likely have major added value for these Basers.



Concluding Discussion

This report sought an in-depth understanding of the 2020 Base evaluation finding that Basers conceptualize their involvement as “finding a Jewish home.” We ask: (1) What are people looking for when they encounter Base? (2) What factors contribute to a decision to intensify their engagement? (3) When will young adults come to regard Base as their Jewish Home? (4) What is the impact on their Jewish lives?

The answers to these questions are found by way of the five strands of the “the Base weave.”

“Base is a meaningful Jewish space in which I feel comfortable, empowered to participate and experience community led by a Rabbinical couple whom I admire.”

During the pandemic, we learned that the meaningful space Base creates can be experienced virtually as well as in-person.

At the heart of the “Base Weave” is the sense of Base as a meaningful Jewish space. During the pandemic, we learned that this meaningful space can be experienced virtually as well as in-person. Those who come to Base and find a meaningful Jewish space, will also state that they view Base as their primary Jewish space, or at least an important Jewish space in their lives. They are also most likely to report a relationship with the Rabbi and/or Rabbi’s partner

and as a result will likely report experiencing feeling comfortable, empowered to participate in Jewish life and experience community.

To whom does Base appeal?

The Base Weave appeals to a diverse group of young adults whose common denominator is that Base provides a Jewish space that enables access to Jewish community appropriate to their needs, with three major variations.

- **Trying to Access Jewish Life:** There are those who did not grow up in the context of an affiliated Jewish community, including Basers who did not grow up Jewish. *These individuals view Base’s experiential learning community as a critical gateway into embracing Jewish life. Base provides a safe space to*

Base appeals to a diverse group of young adults, enabling access to Jewish community appropriate to their needs.

learn in a social environment in which normative Jewish life is modeled and enabled.

- **Reconnecting to Jewish Life:** The significance of Base for those raised in an affiliated Jewish community is that Base enables them to continue or expand their Jewish engagement as adults. Those raised Orthodox, seek a pluralistic learning community that either replaces or complements their religious life elsewhere. Those raised in non-Orthodox communities are searching for a stimulating intellectual and social experience that enables them to continue their Jewish journey as adults. Some will seek out Base’s experiential learning community as their primary Jewish space, others will view Base a young adult peer learning community that complements the multi-generational synagogue community or Jewish activities that they pursue elsewhere (e.g., social activism, volunteering for Federation etc.).
- **Partner Relationship.** Basers figuring out their Jewish life in the context of their relationship with a Partner or Spouse are also very likely to report Jewish growth as a result of their Base participation. For many of the partnered, engagement with Base is part of their personal journey building a Jewish life with their partner.

A big accomplishment is that alongside those who grew up engaged in Jewish life, Base also appeals to many whose social characteristics are associated with reduced involvement in conventional Jewish life. They may come from non-denominational or non-Jewish backgrounds; they may have been raised by one Jewish parent; they may have received no Jewish schooling in childhood; and/or they may be married to or partnered with a non-Jewish spouse or significant other. Although they are generally somewhat less likely to participate in Base activities, they are more likely to report Base empowering their Jewish growth, pointing to a distinctive facet of the Base model.

Base manages to appeal to many whose social characteristics are associated with reduced involvement in conventional Jewish life.

Who is not drawn to Base?

The Age Factor: There are substantial numbers of Basers in an age range from their early 20s to their late 30s. The survey data and interviews show that Base best serves those 35 and younger. Many of those aged 30 and older are aware of the age issue.

Some are not bothered by it, others are. Some cite the age gap as their reason for dropping out.

- Recommendation: Base clearly is designed for and works best as a young adult community. Yet, some long-time Basers are well into their 30s and continue participating. For the Base Rabbinical couples who want to include individuals 35 years and over, there should be an effort made to actively nurture “similar age cohorts” of Basers or learning contexts in which mutual interests or life experiences enables people to bridge the age gap.

Cutting Both Ways: The Intimacy Factor and Base’s Experiential Jewish Learning Community

Basers who regard Base as central to their Jewish lives look for the interplay between social and intellectual dimensions that stands at the heart of the Base experience. For Basers, Base is not a synagogue, yeshiva or Jewish Community Center. Rather they come for a social + intellectual experience that includes: 1) the straightforward study of Jewish texts and source material, 2) the experience of Jewish life and 3) conversations with Rabbi and Rabbi’s partner. Learning enhances the power of socializing, and socializing enhances the power of learning with their combination leading to an explosive surge in levels of Jewish growth.

A key ingredient for the Base experiential learning community is “intimacy,” based on the ability of individuals to open-up and share who they are, in the process learn from the resulting Jewishly

informed discussion. Basers who engage with Base report this intimate experience, whether it plays out in virtual or physical space. Yet, for all its importance, opening up to intimacy is not easy. Large percentages of Basers report not feeling fully comfortable participating in the different aspects Bases learning community. In the interviews and written survey comments, Basers cite reasons that include: bashfulness or an experience of interaction being socially demanding; religious differences from the Base couple and other Basers; the desire for more intensive Jewish learning; and, what some perceive as a political bend to the learning-community experience.

A key ingredient for the Base experiential learning community is “intimacy,” based on the ability of individuals to open up and share who they are, in the process learn from the resulting Jewishly informed discussion.

-
- **Recommendation:** A key element in the experiential learning community is the experience of inclusive learning, which Basers describe as interesting, comfortable, relevant, motivating, and empowering. The level of intimacy Base strives for begets challenges that are worth contemplating in terms of best practices regarding: (1) enabling less socially intensive learning experiences, at least for newcomers; (2) providing a learning-community experience that includes greater religious and political diversity; and (3) the ability to provide introductory level Jewish learning, alongside more intensive Judaic study. We do not know the right formula, but rather flag these tensions for attention.

The Importance of Follow-up: We learned in this report that the frequency of participation in Base predicts the strength of the strands in the Base Weave. The real “take-off” starts with the transition from one to two appearances at Base where Basers start reporting an intensive Jewish experience and personal growth. The Pandemic highlighted the importance of “follow-up” as best practice. Many veteran Basers would have stopped participating, and newcomers would not have continued past their first Base encounter without direct follow-up by the Base rabbinical couple or other Basers.

- **Recommendation:** Each Base should institute a systematic system for follow-up utilizing both the rabbinical couple and active Basers who trained for the purpose to reach out to their peers.

The Base Engagement Model

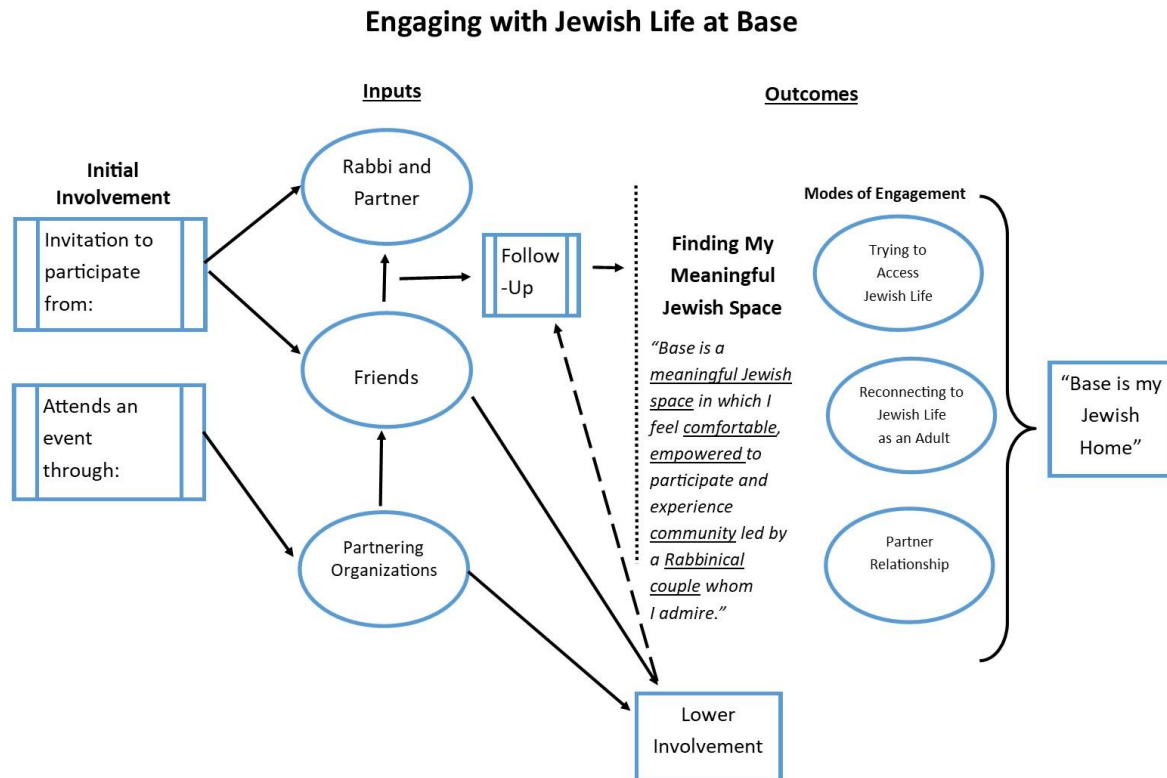
In 2019, we suggested a logic model to guide Base’s educational and community building work, including the assessment of the quality of that work and resulting outcomes. That logic model read:

Basers come to Base by way of invitations from the Rabbinical couple and friends, or through events co-sponsored with partnering organizations. Base moves Basers from initial involvement to higher involvement by encouraging participation in community building activities. These are involvement opportunities that Basers find interesting and enjoyable and include developing

meaningful social relationships with the Rabbi and his or her Partner and other Basers. The following flow chart shows the 2019 logic model.²

Exhibit 25 provides an updated engagement model that integrates (1) the importance of follow-up, and (2) the role of the Base Weave in enabling young adults to find meaningful Jewish space, along three primary modes of engagement: (a) those trying to access Jewish community for the first time, (b) those who are familiar with Jewish community and want to reengage as adults, and (c) partners/spouses who are building a Jewish life together.

Exhibit 25. Base Engagement Model



² From annual evaluation report: "Jewish Involvement at Base Hillel: Base Hillel Annual Participant Survey 2019"
Base Movement Evaluation – 2021 - 35

Appendix: Base Strands - Indices

1. Base as Meaningful Space

- In thinking about your Jewish life in general over the past five years, how significant of a role has Base played?
- To what extent has Base contributed to your finding a Jewish space in which you feel that you belong?
- Which of the following best describes your relationship to Base? (My primary Jewish Space, An important Jewish space, One of my Jewish spaces, Not one of my Jewish spaces)

2. Comfortable at Base

- Walking into the Base home (in-person or the virtual experience)
- Participating in Jewish learning at Base
- Participating in a Base-sponsored social event, such as a Friday night dinner or holiday celebration:
- Participating in a Base-sponsored social action/tikkun olam event:
- Making friends at Base

3. Empowered for Jewish Growth

- Contributed to my spiritual growth
- Contributed to my intellectual growth
- Provided me opportunities to explore who I am Jewishly
- Learned useful Jewish knowledge and/or skills
- Made a change in my Jewish practice
- Started to, or Increased the frequency with which I celebrate and mark the Jewish calendar (i.e., Shabbat, holidays, rituals, etc.) all

4. Experience Community at Base

- Spent time socially in a group or alone (outside of Base)
- Dated anyone
- Developed a deep, ongoing friendship
- Developed a work, or hobby related connection
- Hosted people you have met at Base in your home

5. Relationship with Rabbinical Couple

- Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi or his/her Spouse
- The Base couple models a relationship I can learn from
- I have taken the learning and insights from the conversations and shared them with friends or family
- Approaching the Rabbi and/or partner to talk about something personal
- Has a Base rabbi ever officiated or helped you with a life cycle event, such as a conversion, wedding, or funeral?
- A spiritual mentor / guide
- A mentor / guide in other matters
- Friend

A copy of the qualitative interview guide and the survey questionnaire is available upon request.