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Title: "*Gomel Nafsho*" [1]: A Study of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout among American Rabbis

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[1] Proverbs 11:17 The Merciful One does Good to their Own Soul

Chapter I: Introduction

Burnout and compassion fatigue are pervasive challenges facing those in helping professions across the United States (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Rabbis in particular also face unique challenges in navigating the demands of clergy work and the difficulties presented by rising antisemitism (AJC Report 2025). For years, studies have highlighted the emotional, physical, and spiritual toll that the demanding nature of clergy and pastoral work can have on individuals (Kinman et al., 2011). From offering counseling to congregants in times of crisis, to presiding over life-cycle events, and providing leadership within a broader community context, rabbis carry significant emotional burdens. These demands, if left unaddressed, can lead to a gradual erosion of a clergy member's well-being—impacting not only their professional capacity but also their personal health, relationships, and sense of spiritual fulfillment.

Proverbs 11:17 says, *"The merciful one does good to their own soul."* This biblical wisdom underscores an important truth that is often overlooked in the culture of pastoral work: the act of caring for others must be balanced with caring for oneself. Rabbis, like all clergy, are called to be merciful and compassionate toward others, but I believe this call must not come at the expense of their own well-being. If rabbis are to thrive in their roles, they must learn to integrate practices that support their own emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Without such care, the consequences of burnout and compassion fatigue not only diminish the personal quality of life of the rabbis but can also diminish the quality of care they offer to their congregants and communities (Fulmer et al., 2023)

In recent years, American rabbis have experienced increasing challenges related to burnout and compassion fatigue, conditions that are often exacerbated by external factors such as rising political tensions, the global rise in antisemitism, and the ongoing conflict in Israel (AJC, 2025). In a landscape where emotional exhaustion and disengagement are becoming more common,

this study seeks to explore the unique experiences of American rabbis. The research will examine how burnout and compassion fatigue affect their sense of health, well-being, and professional responsibilities, and identify the coping mechanisms and self-care strategies that some rabbis are adopting to navigate these challenges.

Why This Study Is Needed

Despite the growing awareness of burnout and compassion fatigue among clergy, much of the existing literature focuses primarily on Christian clergy, with limited research dedicated to the experiences of Jewish rabbis. This gap is significant because, while rabbis face many challenges similar to those of Christian pastors, they also navigate distinct stresses and burdens that may contribute to the development of burnout. Rabbis, for instance, frequently serve as community leaders and spiritual guides within contexts that can involve added issues such as antisemitism, intergenerational trauma, and political unrest surrounding the State of Israel.

This project aims to address these gaps in the literature by focusing specifically on American rabbis. By exploring the perceptions of rabbis themselves about their burnout and compassion fatigue, this study will add nuance to the broader conversation about clergy well-being. In doing so, the research hopes to provide valuable insights into how the Jewish professional world can create structures of support that better address the mental health and spiritual needs of rabbis. Also, by grounding this exploration of rabbinical burnout and compassion fatigue in Jewish sacred texts and traditions, this study also aims to frame self-care not merely as a personal responsibility, but as an ethical and spiritual imperative from within the tradition.

The Significance of Exploring Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

The implications of burnout and compassion fatigue are not confined to the clergy member alone. These issues have a direct impact on the communities they serve. When a rabbi experiences burnout or compassion fatigue, their ability to offer effective pastoral care, lead congregational activities, and fulfill their professional duties is compromised (Fulmer et al., 2023). Congregational life and spiritual guidance are deeply dependent on the emotional and psychological well-being of the rabbi, and when the rabbi is overwhelmed or disengaged, the entire community feels this ripple effect (Fulmer et al., 2023). Furthermore, a burnt-out rabbi may struggle to maintain positive relationships with family, colleagues, and fellow community members, which can lead to a breakdown in community trust and cohesion (Burns, 2013)

As the demand for emotional labor arises—especially in times of crisis, such as during natural disasters, community tragedies, or the above mentioned challenges related to Israel and antisemitism—the pull on rabbis is likely to grow. Rabbis who feel unprepared, unsupported, or emotionally drained may feel disconnected or even disengage from their roles, not only hurting their own well-being but also diminishing the spiritual and emotional care they are able to provide. This study therefore holds significance not only for the rabbis themselves but also for the Jewish communities they serve.

Surveying the Landscape of Rabbi Well-Being

In order to address the prevalence of burnout and compassion fatigue among American rabbis, this study will gather data through an online survey distributed via leading rabbinical organizations such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA), Chovevei Torah, and Aleph: Alliance Jewish Renewal as well as snowball sampling. These organizations were chosen due to their broad reach and diversity within the rabbinical community, ensuring a range

of experiences from various backgrounds from across the different movements of American Judaism.

The survey will ask rabbis to reflect on a variety of factors, including their self-reported physical health status, their emotional and psychological well-being, and the strategies they use to cope with the pressures of their work. It will also explore how the rabbis perceive the effectiveness of existing support structures and what additional resources they feel would help to address their mental health needs.

Through this data collection, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the specific ways burnout and compassion fatigue manifest in the lives of American rabbis and how these challenges affect their roles within the Jewish community. This survey data will form the foundation for subsequent analysis, helping to uncover trends and correlations between specific factors (such as years in the profession, denominational affiliation, or community size) and the level of burnout or compassion fatigue experienced by rabbis.

A Call for Institutional Change

The overarching goal of this research is to inspire meaningful change within the rabbinical profession by highlighting the importance of supporting rabbis in their work. Burnout and compassion fatigue are not issues that can be solved through individual effort alone; institutional and organizational change are required. As such, this study aims to provide evidence-based/data driven recommendations for how rabbinical organizations can develop policies, practices, and supportive ideas that foster the long-term well-being of rabbis. This may include recommendations for sabbaticals, mental health resources, peer support networks, and the establishment of more sustainable work-life balances for clergy.

Also, by grounding this exploration of rabbinical burnout and compassion fatigue in Jewish sacred texts and traditions, this study also aims to frame self-care not merely as a personal responsibility, but as an ethical and spiritual imperative from within the tradition. Just as the merciful person in Proverbs 11:17 does good to their soul, so too must rabbis learn to show mercy to themselves in order to preserve their capacity for compassion toward others. In this way, the study is not merely an examination of burnout but its results and recommendations will be a spiritual call to action—an invitation to build a culture of care that nurtures both the souls of rabbis and the communities they serve.

Chapter II - Literature Review

Burnout

Burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Initially described by Freudenberger (1974) and Maslach (1976), burnout has since become a significant concern in various fields, particularly in healthcare, education, and organizational settings. Over the past few decades, extensive research has explored its antecedents, consequences, and potential interventions. This literature review summarizes key findings on the conceptualization, causes, and effects of burnout in general, drawing from a variety of studies and theoretical perspectives, as well as specifically in the realm of clergy burnout. Maslach and Jackson's Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (1981) remains one of the most widely used tools for measuring burnout. The MBI identifies three core dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (a sense of detachment from one's work), and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is often seen as the central component of burnout, reflecting feelings of being drained and overwhelmed. Depersonalization reflects a cynical, negative attitude toward one's work or

clients, and reduced personal accomplishment indicates a diminished sense of competence and effectiveness (Maslach et al., 2001).

More recently, scholars have expanded the conceptualization of burnout. The “Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory” (Hobfoll, 1989) posits that burnout occurs when individuals perceive a threat to their resources, or when there is actual resource depletion. Resources can include emotional energy, time, and social support. As individuals lose these resources, they may experience burnout as a form of stress reaction. This theory has been used to explain why burnout can develop gradually and persist even in the absence of clear stressors (Hobfoll, 2011).

Burnout among clergy has garnered increasing attention in both the academic and religious communities (Adams, 2017). Clergy members, particularly pastors, priests, rabbis, and imams, face unique stressors that may contribute to emotional, physical, and spiritual exhaustion, ultimately leading to burnout (Clarke et al., 2023). Burnout in clergy can be understood through the broader framework of burnout literature, which points to the three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment first theorized by Maslach and Jackson (1981) mentioned above. However, burnout among clergy often involves additional, context-specific elements related to their role as spiritual leaders.

1. **Emotional Exhaustion:** Clergy burnout frequently begins with emotional exhaustion, which arises from the emotional toll of caring for others and addressing the spiritual needs of congregants. The clergy's responsibility for offering spiritual guidance, counseling, and emotional support places them in roles where high levels of empathy and emotional labor are required (Ellison, 2006). This prolonged emotional engagement can lead to a sense of depletion and fatigue (Doolittle, 2007).

2. **Depersonalization and Spiritual Distress:** While depersonalization is a classic feature of burnout, in the clergy context, this may manifest as spiritual distress or a disconnection from one's faith. Clergy members may experience a loss of passion or meaning in their work, which may be exacerbated by the pressure to maintain a constant image of spiritual strength (Kinman et al., 2011).
3. **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment:** Clergy burnout often involves a diminished sense of personal accomplishment or a perception that their efforts are not making a meaningful impact. For clergy, this is often tied to feelings of inadequacy in fulfilling their vocational calling or perceived failures in the spiritual or emotional welfare of their congregations (Berry et al., 2012).

Generalized Causes of Burnout

The causes of burnout are multifaceted and result from individual, organizational, and societal factors.

1. **Workplace Factors**: A significant body of research emphasizes the role of work-related stressors in contributing to burnout. Job demands (high workload, time pressures) combined with low job control (lack of autonomy) have been shown to increase the risk of burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

2. **Social Support and Resources**: The availability of social support at work is a critical buffer against burnout. Employees who perceive higher levels of support from colleagues and supervisors are less likely to experience burnout, as social support can mitigate stress and help preserve resources (Halbesleben, 2006).

3. **Personality and Individual Differences:** Research suggests that certain personality traits may predispose individuals to burnout. For example “perfectionism,” “neuroticism,” and “high achievement orientation” have been linked to higher levels of burnout (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). On the other hand, traits like resilience and optimism can act as protective factors (Angelini, 2023).

4. **Cultural and Societal Factors:** Organizational culture and national culture also play a role in burnout prevalence. Cultures that emphasize individualism and competition (typical in Western societies) may have higher rates of burnout compared to cultures with a stronger emphasis on collectivism and work-life balance (Pines et al., 2022).

Causes of Burnout Among Clergy

A variety of work-related and personal factors contribute to clergy burnout. These factors are often intertwined, reflecting the unique nature of religious work.

1. **Workload and Emotional Labor**: The nature of clergy work involves high levels of emotional labor, as clergy are expected to provide pastoral care during crises, perform rites of passage (such as weddings, funerals, coming of age ceremonies), and offer long hours of service, including pastoral counseling, preaching, and administrative duties (Grosch & Olson, 2000). The emotional demands of this work are complicated by the often unpredictable nature of pastoral care, which can lead to feelings of overwhelm and burnout (Hileman 2008, Lee, 1999).
2. **Lack of Support and Isolation**: One of the most frequently cited causes of burnout among clergy is the lack of social and professional support. Clergy members often work feeling unable to disclose their feelings of burnout due to congregational expectations and fear around perceptions they would be unable to perform their duties. This isolation

can lead to emotional exhaustion, particularly when clergy members feel unsupported or disconnected from their faith communities or denominational structures (Proeschold-Bell, 2011).

3. **Role Conflict and Ambiguity**: Clergy members frequently face “role conflict”, wherein the expectations of their religious duties collide with their personal needs or with administrative or organizational demands. Additionally, there can be “role ambiguity”, as clergy members are asked to serve in multiple roles—spiritual leader, counselor, administrator, and community leader—sometimes without clear boundaries or sufficient training in each area (Edwards et al., 2021). This strain can contribute significantly to burnout (Proeschold-Bell, 2013).
4. **Congregational Expectations and Criticism:** High expectations from congregants regarding pastoral performance can lead to stress and burnout. In some cases, clergy are expected to be available at all times, leading to long work hours and personal sacrifice. Furthermore, negative feedback or criticism from the congregation can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and contribute to emotional exhaustion (Barnard & Curry, 2012). An expectation to be a "perfect" spiritual leader, coupled with criticism from congregants, is a unique stressor not found in other professions (Lee & Iverson, 2003)
5. **Spiritual Factors and Vocation Conflict:** In contrast to so called “secular” occupations, clergy burnout is often compounded by potential internal spiritual conflict. The disillusionment that can happen when a clergy person feels disconnected from their calling, or experiences doubts about their spiritual effectiveness, can lead to spiritual burnout. This can be further exacerbated by perceived tension between a clergy person’s personal needs and the expectations of religious organizations and institutions (Foss, 2002).

Consequences of Clergy Burnout

The consequences of burnout among clergy are both personal and organizational/institutional. Clergy burnout can have significant effects on both the individual and the faith community.

1. **Mental Health Issues:** Clergy experiencing burnout are at higher risk of developing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Proeschold-Bell, 2013). Emotional exhaustion can lead to a sense of hopelessness and despair, both for the clergy member and their family. Mental health problems are often underreported due to stigma within religious communities or a concern of "appearing not in control."
2. **Physical Health:** Chronic stress from burnout can lead to physical health issues, including cardiovascular problems, sleep disturbances, and immune system suppression (Melamed, 2006). Clergy members often experience burnout as a result of neglecting their own bodily health needs in favor of attending to the needs of others, which can further exacerbate stress-related illnesses.
3. **Impact on Work and Congregational Health**: Clergy burnout also affects the overall functioning of the religious community. Congregations may experience reduced spiritual vitality, diminished leadership, and a breakdown in community cohesion (Fulmer et al., 2023). Burned-out clergy may also experience a reduced ability to connect with their congregants, deliver meaningful sermons, or provide effective counseling (Burns et al., 2013) When clergy experience burnout, it can lead to a disengagement not only from their own work but also from the very congregation they lead. Congregational members often look to their clergy for emotional and spiritual support. A burned-out clergy person however, may have diminished emotional availability, which can lead to a decrease in congregational engagement (Burns et al., 2013). Congregants may feel unsupported or disconnected, which can erode the sense of community within the congregation. This

breakdown in relational dynamics can lead to lower participation in congregation activities and a general decline in attendance (Fulmer et al., 2023).

4. **Higher Turnover and Attrition:** High rates of clergy burnout contribute to turnover and attrition in religious organizations. Research indicates that workers who experience burnout are more likely to leave their work or take extended breaks (Maslach et al., 2001). This turnover can destabilize congregations and lead to a loss of spiritual leadership within communities.

Interventions and Prevention Strategies

Given the negative consequences of clergy burnout, many researchers have proposed various interventions to mitigate its effects and prevent its onset.

1. **Self-Care and Resilience Training:** Programming focusing on self-care and resilience training have been shown to help clergy manage stress and prevent burnout. These programs typically emphasize the importance of maintaining a work-life balance, developing healthy coping strategies, and seeking professional help when needed (Trihub et al., 2010). Mindfulness-based practices such as meditation and relaxation techniques have also been recommended as ways to reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation (Carroll, 2006).
2. **Peer Support Networks:** Clergy support networks, including peer groups and spiritual direction, have proven effective in providing clergy with the emotional and professional support they need to combat burnout. These networks create safe spaces for clergy to discuss their experiences, share concerns, and seek advice from others who understand the unique challenges of their vocation (Galek et al., 2011). Mentorship programs within religious organizations have also been shown to reduce isolation and provide guidance.

3. **Organizational and Structural Changes:** Some researchers advocate for organizational changes within religious institutions to reduce burnout. These changes may include adjusting workloads, providing clearer role definitions, and fostering a more collaborative work environment (Proeschold-Bell, 2015). Research by Ferguson et al. (2015) also highlights the positive impact of sabbaticals on clergy well-being, noting that time away from the pressures of day-to-day pastoral work allows clergy to recharge spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Congregations that prioritize sabbaticals can help prevent burnout by signaling to clergy that self-care and rest are essential components of effective clergy work.
4. **Spiritual Formation and Support:** Clergy burnout can also be mitigated through intentional spiritual formation, where clergy members are encouraged to deepen their own spiritual practices and connection with their faith. Spiritual retreats, regular prayer, and spiritual direction can serve as vital resources for clergy facing burnout (Proeschold-Bell 2018, Bloom, 2019). These activities help restore spiritual vitality and reduce feelings of disconnection from the clergy's calling.

Section III- Self Care and Burnout in Jewish Texts

Genesis 9:6[2] underscores the sanctity of the human body and soul, and thus, the importance of self-care. From a religious perspective, the human body is considered a divine creation, entrusted to each person as a responsibility to nurture and protect. Several aspects of Torah law and ethics speak to the significance of physical health, emotional well-being, and mental clarity as essential to spiritual fulfillment including a commandment to rest, rabbinic wisdom about speaking to others when we are challenged, and knowing the importance of sharing the burden of leadership.

[2] Whoever sheds human blood, By human [hands] shall that one's blood be shed;For in the image of God Was humankind made. https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.9.6?lang=bi&aliyot=0

The Commandment of Rest: Shabbat and the Cycle of Work and Rest

The concept of rest is central to Jewish practice, most notably enshrined in the commandment of Shabbat, the day of rest. In Genesis 2:2-3, God is described as resting on the seventh day after creating the world, sanctifying it as a day of rest. The injunction to observe Shabbat is not merely a suggestion, but a divine command: "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). Shabbat is a day to cease from work, to focus on spiritual rejuvenation, and to reconnect with the divine and community. Judaism teaches that "rest" on Shabbat includes both physical rest and mental respite, offering individuals a chance to re-energize. Even during the period of enslavement in Egypt, Moses fought for the Israelites to be able to enjoy a period of rest. In Shemot Rabbah 1:28, “These are your slaves. If you do not allow them to rest one day a week they will die.’ He (Pharaoh) said to him: ‘Go and do with them whatever you say.’ Moses went and instituted the day of Shabbat for rest.”

In a Talmudic tale, Avodah Zarah 3b, we also read of God’s own personal practice of stepping away from daily work when necessary in order to recuperate and relax. “Yet Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: 'The day consists of twelve hours; during the first three hours, the Holy Blessed One, is occupied with the Torah, during the second three, God sits in judgment on the whole world, and when God sees that the world is so guilty as to deserve destruction, God transfers Godself from the seat of Justice to the seat of Mercy; during the third quarter,God is feeding the whole world, from the horned buffalo to the brood of vermin; during the fourth quarter God is playing with the leviathan, as it is said, "There is leviathan whom Thou hast formed to play with'? (Psalm 104:26)

This mandate to rest speaks directly to the need for self-care. The Jewish tradition teaches that rest is not only a physical necessity but also a spiritual one. By ceasing work and allowing

ourselves to recharge, we open ourselves to experiencing divine presence (through the emulation of God) and preserve our physical and emotional well-being.

The Commandment To Care for One's Physical and Mental Health

Another central principle found in the Torah is the obligation to take care of one's health. In the book of Leviticus, God commands the Israelites to keep God's laws and mitzvot, which are meant to guide them in living healthy lives. Leviticus 18:5 states, "You shall keep My statutes and My laws, which a person shall do and *live* by them." The phrase "and live by them" suggests that the commandments are meant to preserve and enhance life, including physical health.

The Torah further elaborates on this idea in Deut 4:15 where it states, "You shall guard yourselves." Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, also known as the Netziv, writes on this verse in his commentary Haamek Davar that this injunction from the Torah refers to the body, that we have a duty to look after our body just as much as our soul. This commandment affirms the principle that self-care includes seeking appropriate treatment and taking steps to maintain good health. In Talmud Shabbat 129b:2:

> "It was Rav and Shmuel who both said: With regard to one who performs the practice of bloodletting, let him wait a bit and then let him rise, as the Master said: There are five matters that render one closer to death than life, and they are these: If one ate and immediately rose, if one drank and rose, if one slept and immediately rose, if one let blood and rose, if one engaged in conjugal relations and rose."

From this the rabbis understood that the work we do and our day to day lives can result in incredible strain on our bodies. Here they advise that it is ok and certainly even preferable that one be diligent in taking care of one's own body by giving it appropriate care and plenty of rest.

Judaism does not view self-care as indulgence, but rather as an integral part of fulfilling one's responsibilities to God. In Midrash Vayikra Rabah 34:3:

> “Here it is written, "The merciful man does good to his own soul (Proverbs 11:17)," this [refers to] Hillel the Elder, who, at the time that he was departing from his students, would walk with them. They said to him, "Rabbi, where are you walking to?" He said to them, "To fulfill a commandment!" They said to him, "And what commandment is this?" He said to them, "To bathe in the bathhouse." They said to him: "But is this really a commandment?" He said to them: "Yes. Just like regarding the statues of kings, that are set up in the theaters and the circuses, the one who is appointed over them bathes them and scrubs them, and they give him sustenance, and furthermore, he attains status with the leaders of the kingdom; I, who was created in the [Divine] Image and Form, as it is written, "For in the Image of G-d He made Man (Genesis 9:6)," even more so!...

Here we see that even simple actions such as bathing can be considered a genuine practice of self care. In fact, in Mishnah, bathing is mentioned again as a way of coping with the stress of grief:

> Mishnah Berakhot 2:6 [Rabban Gamaliel] bathed on the first night after the death of his wife. His disciples said to him: Master, have you not taught us, that a mourner is forbidden to bathe. He replied to them: I am not like other men, I am very delicate.

Our rabbinic sages understood that taking care of oneself, even when it sometimes requires us to step outside of our normal routine, or perhaps the demands of our jobs speaking in the context of burnout, is ultimately ok if needed to preserve one’s health either physically, mentally, or spiritually.

Jethro’s Advice to Moses: A Lesson in Self-Care and Delegation

One of the most poignant stories in the Torah that highlights the need for self-care is the account of Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18. In this narrative, Moses is overwhelmed with the burdens of leadership. He is acting as the sole judge for the people of Israel, resolving disputes and offering guidance on every matter that arises, doing so all day. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, observes this and recognizes that Moses is at risk of burning out.

Jethro's advice continues to remain relevant for contemporary community leaders in its understanding of the dangers of overwork and the importance of delegation. He says to Moses:

> "What you are doing is not good. You and the people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Exodus 18:17-18).

Jethro's words are both practical and profound. He understands that Moses' role as the leader of the Israelites is important, but it is unsustainable for one person to bear the entire burden alone. Instead, Jethro advises Moses to delegate responsibility by appointing capable leaders to handle smaller matters, so that Moses can focus on the most important decisions and avoid exhaustion.

Jethro's counsel highlights an important aspect of self-care: recognizing one's limitations and seeking help when necessary. In Judaism, my understanding is that leadership is not about individual heroism or solitary achievement, but about sharing the burden and maintaining balance. The advice given by Jethro can be seen as an early form of stress management and self-care, teaching the principle of seeking support and delegation to preserve one's health and efficacy.

Having Self Compassion

In *Likutei Moharan* (282:2-1-6) Rabbi Nachman's teaching emphasizes the crucial role of self-compassion in personal growth and spiritual health. His insight, "A person has to judge themselves favorably and find in themselves some remaining good point, in order to give themselves the strength to avoid falling completely," underscores the power of self-reflection guided by kindness, rather than harshness. In moments of struggle or self-doubt, it is easy to focus only on our flaws or sense of failure. However, Rabbi Nachman encourages us to seek out even the smallest spark of goodness within ourselves, recognizing that these fragments of positivity can be transformative.

The act of judging oneself favorably is not about ignoring weaknesses or evading accountability. Rather, it is about reframing our inner dialogue to include self-compassion and hope. When we acknowledge the good in ourselves, it becomes a source of strength, a foundation from which we can rise. It can inspire perseverance, reminding us that even in times of challenge, we are not defined solely by our mistakes, but by the potential for growth and redemption.

Moreover, Rabbi Nachman teaches that this self-compassion brings joy to the soul. Recognizing the positive aspects within us creates a sense of gratitude and lightness, fueling our spiritual journey. By nurturing this inner well-being, we are better able to receive life's challenges with resilience and optimism. Ultimately, Rabbi Nachman's message encourages us to be our own supporters, offering ourselves the grace and encouragement needed to flourish rather than falter.

It is a Great Mitzvah to be Happy

Proverbs 17:22 also offers us insight into the connection between mental well-being and physical health: "A joyful heart makes for good health; Despondency dries up the bones." This

verse highlights the powerful impact that emotional states—specifically joy and despair—can have on our overall health. The idea that a joyful heart leads to good health is rooted in the understanding that emotional well-being influences our physical condition. From a biological perspective, joy promotes the release of endorphins, the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals, which can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and enhance immune function. A person who maintains a positive outlook is often better equipped to navigate challenges, recover more quickly from illness, and live a more balanced, energized life.

In contrast, the verse also warns that despondency, an overwhelming sense of hopelessness or sadness, can have a detrimental effect on the body. The phrase "dries up the bones" suggests the physical toll that persistent negative emotions can take. Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression can weaken the body's immune system, impair sleep, and lead to various health issues, from fatigue to heart disease (Columbia, 2023). Our text here highlights the importance of addressing mental health to preserve physical vitality.

I believe Finding joy in life, even in small moments, is crucial for maintaining both emotional and physical well-being. Whether through engaging in activities that bring pleasure, cultivating meaningful relationships, or practicing gratitude, nurturing joy is a vital component of self-care. Proverbs 17:22 reminds us that our emotional state isn't just an internal experience, rather, it can shape our health in profound and lasting ways.

A Tip from the Rabbis

"Talmud Yoma 75a:2 The Gemara explains another verse in Proverbs: "If there is anxiety in a man's heart, let him quash it [yashḥena]"(Proverbs 12:25). Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi dispute the verse's meaning. One said: He should forcefully push it [yasḥena] out of his mind. One who worries should banish his concerns from his thoughts. And one said: "It means he should tell [yesiḥena] others his concerns, which will lower his anxiety."

Here our Talmudic text provides rabbinic wisdom on managing anxiety and mental health. In Yoma 75a:2, the Gemara discusses the verse from Proverbs 12:25, "If there is anxiety in a man's heart, let him quash it," and presents two interpretations of how to handle anxiety. One perspective suggests that a person should forcefully push the anxiety from their mind, while the other emphasizes the importance of speaking to others about it.

The second interpretation holds particular relevance in today's world, as it highlights the therapeutic and cathartic value of sharing one's thoughts and feelings with others. Modern psychology affirms this, recognizing that open communication and social support networks are essential components of mental health. Talking about personal struggles, whether with friends, family, or professionals, can provide relief by offering a sense of connection,understanding, and new perspective. This act of speaking allows individuals to externalize their frustrations and worries, making them more manageable and potentially less isolating or overwhelming (Harandi, 2017).

Social networks, whether in-person or online, serve as platforms for this needed connection to be "seen" and "heard." They offer individuals a space to find solidarity, express vulnerability, and receive emotional support. The simple act of verbalizing one's concerns can be a form of self-care, reducing the internal pressure of bottled-up emotions and fostering a sense of shared humanity. In a world where mental health challenges are increasingly recognized, speaking to others remains an essential tool in alleviating anxiety and nurturing psychological well-being (Harandi, 2017).

Judaism and its sacred texts place a profound emphasis on the importance of mental well-being and self-care as essential components of living a fulfilling and balanced life. From the sanctity of the human body and soul as outlined in Beresheit, to the literal commandment of rest through Shabbat, Judaism encourages individuals to nurture both their physical and mental health. The

Torah's laws are not merely external guidelines, but divine wisdom aimed at preserving life in all its dimensions—spiritual, emotional, and physical. Sacred wisdom from the Talmud, the Tanakh, and from individual rabbinic sages reinforce the vital role of self-compassion, joy, and the therapeutic value of human connection in alleviating anxiety and promoting a sense of personal resilience. By prioritizing rest, seeking joy, and practicing self-reflection with kindness, Judaism provides us with a blueprint for holistic self-care that transcends mere survival and fosters thriving. These teachings remind us that tending to our mental health is not some luxury, but a genuine religious obligation and a pathway to deeper spiritual fulfillment. The holistic care of the body, mind, and soul reflects a deeply ingrained understanding in Jewish tradition that, in order to serve God, however one might understand that, and to live meaningfully, one must first care for oneself. Through these practices, we find not only the strength to overcome personal challenges, but also the wisdom to live lives of greater joy, health, and spiritual purpose. This understanding is incredibly important for everyone, but most certainly for our spiritual leaders whose work requires them to give so much of themselves and perhaps ignore their own well being.

Section IV - The Survey

The creation of the survey instrument for my research project on rabbinic mental health involved the integration of well-established measurement tools alongside targeted questions that specifically addressed the experiences of burnout among rabbis. Key to my instrument was the inclusion of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely utilized and validated tool in burnout research. My decision was motivated by the MBI's proven effectiveness in capturing the core components of burnout, which include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or detachment), and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). These dimensions of burnout are highly relevant to understanding the challenges faced by religious

leaders such as rabbis, in their professional roles. In addition, relevant demographic data was also captured to explore what role they might play, if any, in a respondents' feelings of burnout.

The Development of Survey Questions Based on MBI

The MBI includes a set of items designed to assess the extent of burnout in individuals. These items measure the three primary dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment—each of which was incorporated into my survey. To ensure that the survey instrument was not only appropriate for rabbis but also reflective of the specific challenges they face, I adapted the MBI questions to focus on themes particularly relevant to religious leadership, such as feelings of frustration with congregational demands, emotional distance from the community, and a diminished sense of purpose or personal effectiveness in their work.

For example, the original MBI items addressing emotional exhaustion were modified to reflect the emotional burden that rabbis might feel after long hours of pastoral care, counseling, and community service. Questions like "I feel emotionally drained from my work" were utilized from Maslach's original research. Similarly, for depersonalization, I focused on questions that capture the sense of detachment from congregants or disconnection from the sacred aspects of their role, such as "I feel detached from my congregants or treat them as objects." These questions were slightly re-phrased to allow the respondents to reflect on their emotional experiences with their work, while also ensuring that the survey remained relevant to their unique contexts as spiritual leaders.

In addition, I used a combination of sliding scale questions and multiple-choice questions to measure the extent to which respondents identified with the statements. The sliding scale questions allowed respondents to rate their experiences on a continuous spectrum, such as from "Never" to "Often or Daily," offering a nuanced view of their mental health status. For

example, a sliding scale might ask, “How often do you feel that your work is no longer meaningful to you?” with six (6) options spanning “Never,” “A few times per year,” “Once a month,” “A few times per month,” “Once a week,” “A few times a week,” to “Often/Daily.”

The multiple-choice questions were designed to capture the frequency with which certain feelings or experiences occurred. For instance, a question might ask, “How often do you feel frustrated with the demands placed on you by your congregation?” with options like “Not at all,” “A little,” “Moderately,” and “A great deal” of the time. This type of question helped to quantify the prevalence of burnout-related emotions in the sample, creating a clearer picture of the rabbinic mental health landscape.

Effectiveness of the MBI in Capturing Relevant Data

The inclusion of Maslach’s Burnout Inventory in the survey instrument allowed for a comprehensive approach to understanding burnout within the rabbinic profession. The MBI is widely regarded as the gold standard in burnout research and has been successfully applied across various professions, including healthcare, education, and social services (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Its effectiveness in capturing the multidimensional nature of burnout is well-documented, and it has been shown to correlate with both individual and organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, intentions around leaving, and overall well-being.

Research in the field of religious leadership has demonstrated the relevance of burnout scales, such as the MBI, in understanding the mental health challenges faced by clergy. For instance, studies have shown that clergy members are particularly susceptible to burnout due to the emotionally taxing nature of their work, which often involves long hours, high emotional labor, and a sense of responsibility for the spiritual well-being of their congregants (Pargament, 2007). Applying the MBI in the context of rabbinic work helps to shed light on how these professionals cope with the unique pressures of their profession, making it an invaluable tool for this study.

The MBI's multidimensional framework enables a deeper exploration of how emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment interplay in the rabbinic context. These elements align closely with the experience of burnout in clergy. A sense of disconnection from one's work (depersonalization), overwhelming emotional fatigue (exhaustion), and feelings of inadequacy or inefficacy (reduced personal accomplishment) are common indicators of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Thus, the MBI provided a solid foundation for the survey, allowing for the collection of data that is both scientifically sound and also relevant to the specific experiences of rabbis.

Survey Distribution: Snowball Sampling and Social Media Engagement

Once the survey instrument was created, it was time to distribute it to participants. Initially the hope was to utilize rabbinic organizations to help spread the survey. However some rabbinic organizations such as the CCAR and RA were not able to share the survey directly and suggested engaging people directly. To maximize the response rate and ensure diverse representation, I employed a snowball sampling method. This strategy involved utilizing my personal network of rabbi colleagues who could share the survey with others in their communities. This approach capitalized on the interconnected nature of rabbinic work, wherein many rabbis are part of larger professional or social networks, thus facilitating the spread of the survey through word of mouth–or rather via online message.

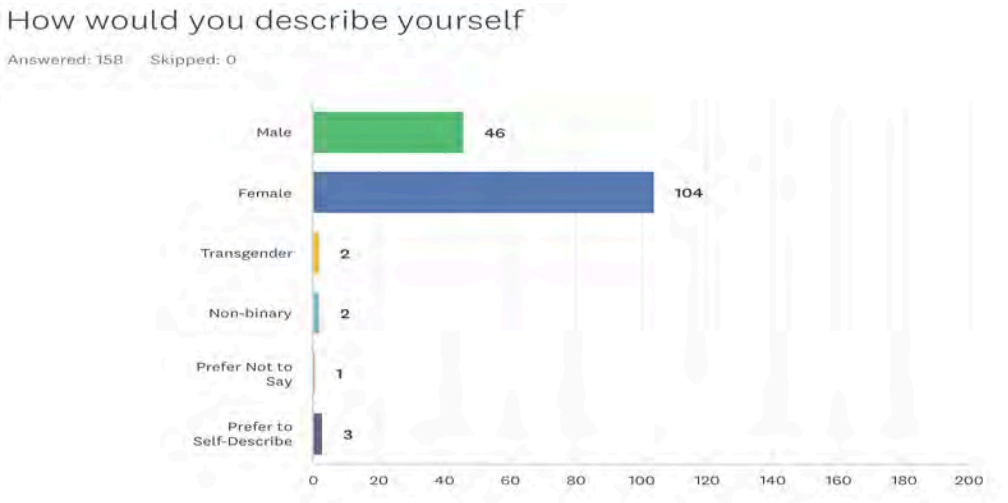
Additionally, I utilized social media platforms, particularly Facebook, to reach a broader audience. Many rabbis participate in Facebook groups or online communities dedicated to Jewish leadership, where they exchange advice, resources, and support. By sharing the survey in these groups, I was able to engage a larger sample of rabbis, including those who might not have been directly connected to my personal network.

Both methods aimed to distribute the survey to a wide range of participants, ensuring that the data captured reflected a broad spectrum of rabbinic experiences. The combination of snowball sampling and social media outreach provided a way to reach participants from various Jewish movements, geographical locations, and professional backgrounds, contributing to the diversity of my data, all with the aim of having a comprehensive picture of rabbinic mental health across the country.

Section V - Survey Results and Data Analysis

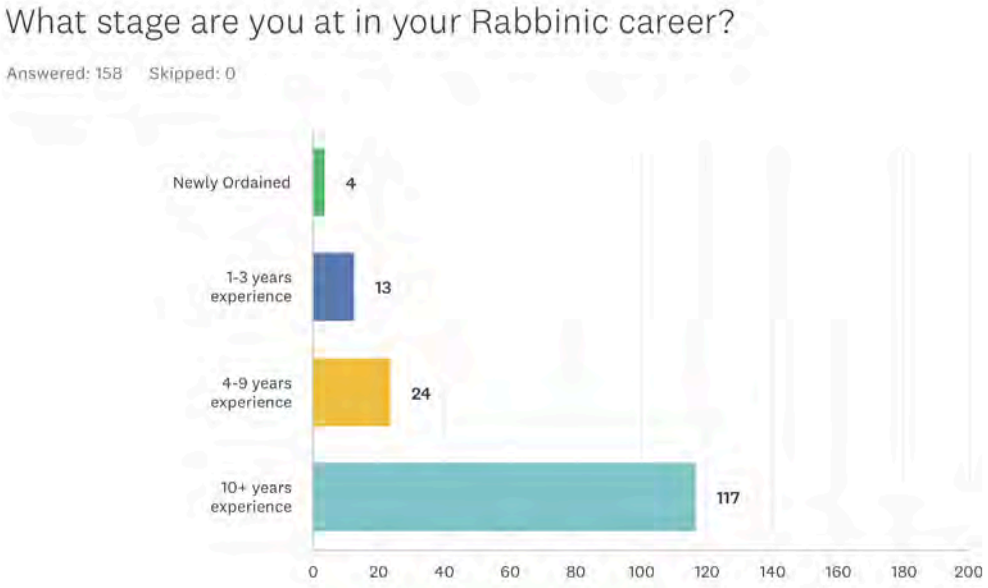
The survey was shared via snowball sampling methods across social media and email networks during the month of January and February 2025 with a total of 158 respondents taking the survey. The majority of the respondents were female identified and working full time, and the majority also reported having been in the field working for 10+ years primarily in congregations. 3 respondents from **Figure 1** who self identified, identified as categories already listed; transgender, non-binary, and male. In **Figure 3** those who mentioned working in other locations typically worked as chaplains, as independent rabbis, or for nonprofits such as Hillel.

(**Figure 1**)



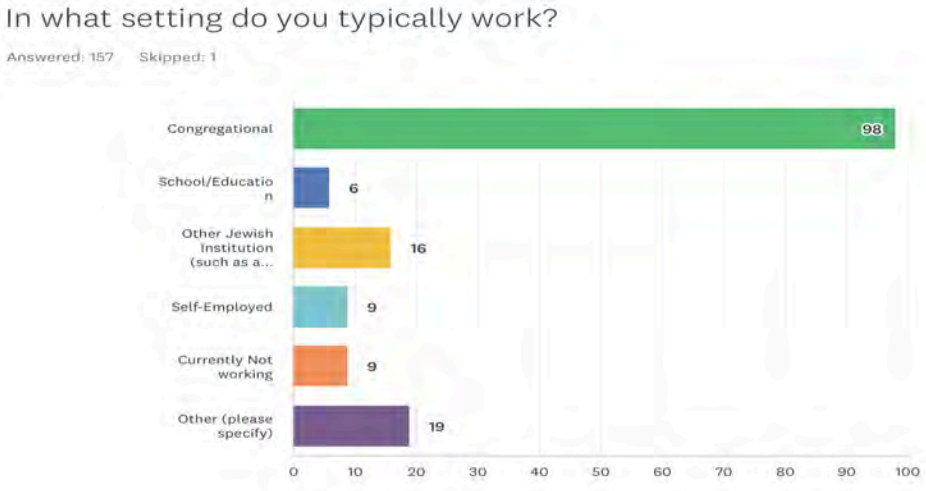
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Male (1)		29.11%	46
Female (2)		65.82%	104
Transgender (3)		1.27%	2
Non-binary (4)		1.27%	2
Prefer Not to Say (5)		0.63%	1
Prefer to Self-Describe (6)	Responses	1.90%	3
TOTAL			158

(**Figure 2**)



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Newly Ordained (1)	2.53%	4
1-3 years experience (2)	8.23%	13
4-9 years experience (3)	15.19%	24
10+ years experience (4)	74.05%	117
TOTAL		158

(**Figure 3**)



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Congregational (1)		62.42%	98
School/Education (2)		3.82%	6
Other Jewish Institution (such as a Federation or Jewish Nonprofit) (3)		10.19%	16
Self-Employed (4)		5.73%	9
Currently Not working (5)		5.73%	9
Other (please specify) (6)	Responses	12.10%	19
TOTAL			157

(**Figure 4**)

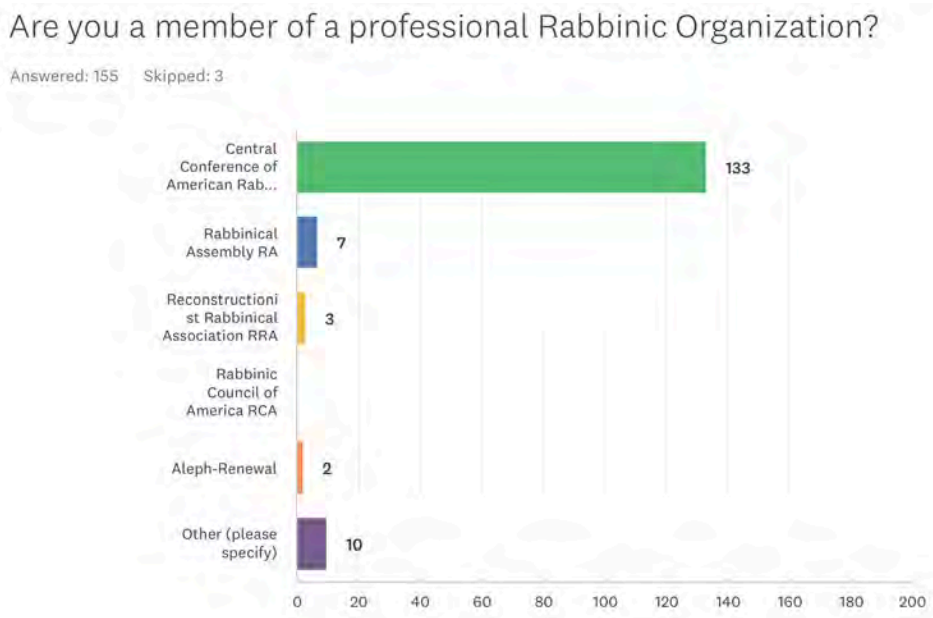
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full-Time (1)	72.15%	114
Part-Time (2)	13.29%	21
Contract or Temporary (3)	0.63%	1
Retired (4)	12.03%	19
Unemployed (5)	0.63%	1
Unable to Work (6)	0.63%	1
Other (7)	0.63%	1
Prefer Not to Say (8)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		158

Although the survey aimed to survey rabbis from across the different American Jewish movements, there were challenges getting connections within different rabbinic organizations to effectively distribute the survey across different memberships. As a result the overwhelming majority of survey respondents are from the CCAR. While all the data captured here is vitally important in terms of providing a snapshot of rabbinic mental health and well being in the U.S. it is important to note that the data here more reflects the experiences of one particular movement and that any subsequent study will need to work to address the disparities in order to fully

assess if the experiences of rabbis in other movements might be different. A breakdown by denomination can be seen below in (**Figure 5).**

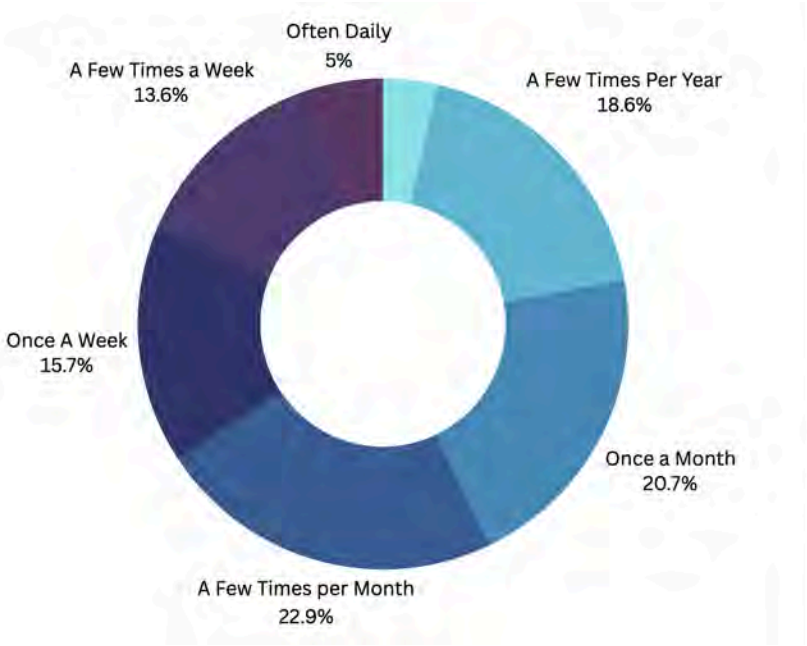
An overwhelming majority of survey respondents for this project were members of the CCAR. Other rabbinic groups were contacted sought out to help but outreach was limited and as a result the survey, while able to provide an interest look into rabbinic mental health, shows mostly the experiences of American Reform Rabbis who might have access to resources different than other rabbinic organizations given the CCAR's size. If there had been larger sample sizes for the other groups it could've been possible to see if rabbis from different denominational backgrounds were having a different experience of burnout than their colleagues. Those who chose "Other" entered multiple options such as CCAR and WRN, or were a member of AJR-CA or Ohalah associated with Renewal Judaism.

(Figure 5)

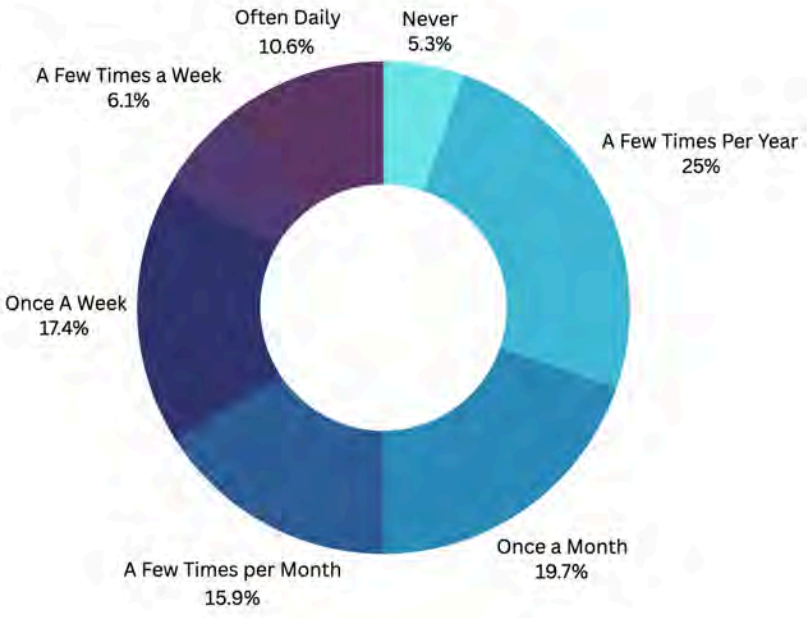


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Central Conference of American Rabbis CCAR (1)		85.81%	133
Rabbinical Assembly RA (2)		4.52%	7
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association RRA (3)		1.94%	3
Rabbinic Council of America RCA (4)		0.00%	0
Aleph-Renewal (5)		1.29%	2
Other (please specify) (6)	Responses	6.45%	10
TOTAL			155

How Often Do You Feel Emotionally Drained? (**Figure 6**)



Working with people all day long required a great deal of effort from me (**Figure 7**)

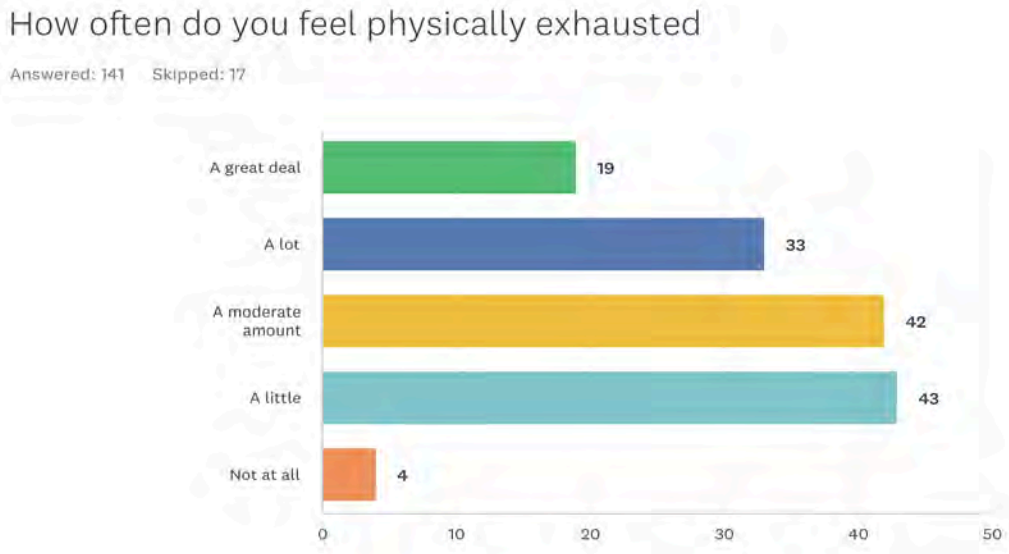


Looking at ***Figure 6*** we can see that a little over a third of respondents are reporting feeling emotionally drained at least one a week. ***Figure 7*** shows similar concerns with a little over a third of respondents also expressing a risk of burnout given that working with people all day is requiring a great deal of effort from them. These numbers track with results from a 2021 Barna study on U.S. pastors in which 38% of respondents to the survey also expressed a risk of burnout in their work (Barna 2021). When asked if respondents felt their work as rabbis was "breaking them down", 38% of respondents in this data reported such feelings at least a few times a month, with some also reporting feeling this way multiple times a week or even daily (see ***Figure 8 below***). In addition, when comparing numbers of years of experience, respondents who had more years of experience were more likely to report feeling emotionally exhausted or that their work was breaking them down compared to rabbis who were more recently ordained according to the data collected here.

(**Figure 8*)***

Overall respondents reported high levels of both physical and emotional exhaustion from their work. **Figures 9** and **10** show that respondents reported feeling physically and emotionally strained at similar rates in terms of frequency and that over 60% of respondents reported feeling at least a moderate amount of physical exhaustion as well as feeling at least a moderate level of emotional exhaustion. **Figure 11** shows the results of a question of whether or not respondents feel they simply can't take it anymore. 30% of those surveyed indicated that they feel this way at least a moderate amount of the time. Half of that group felt that way a lot or a great deal of the time.

(Figure 9)

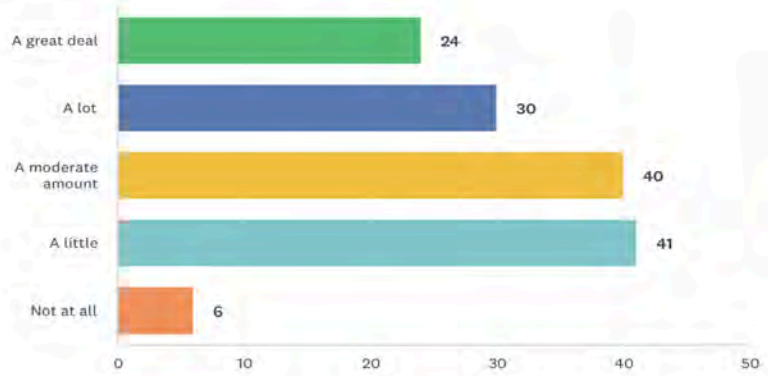


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal (1)	13.48%	19
A lot (2)	23.40%	33
A moderate amount (3)	29.79%	42
A little (4)	30.50%	43
Not at all (5)	2.84%	4
TOTAL		141

(Figure 10 followed by Figure 11)

How often are you emotionally exhausted?

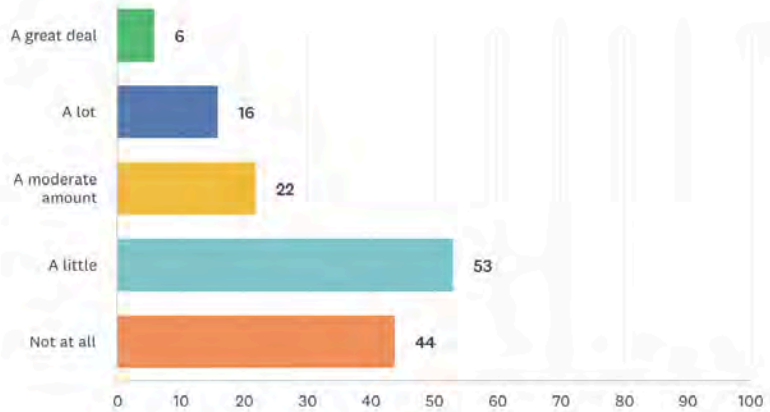
Answered: 141 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal (1)	17.02%	24
A lot (2)	21.28%	30
A moderate amount (3)	28.37%	40
A little (4)	29.08%	41
Not at all (5)	4.26%	6
TOTAL		141

How often do you think I can't take it anymore?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal (1)	4.26%	6
A lot (2)	11.35%	16
A moderate amount (3)	15.60%	22
A little (4)	37.59%	53
Not at all (5)	31.21%	44
TOTAL		141

When respondents were asked how often they felt they looked after people impersonally, as if they were objects, this was one of my most skipped questions in the survey (Qs 16, 20, 21) with 65, 62, and 71 respondents opting not to answer. Clearly respondents felt uncomfortable when faced with these questions. However, 20% of respondents did share that at least once a month, they find themselves looking after people as if they were objects, showing that a sense of burnout is interfering with respondents' abilities to treat people with a sense of dignity (See ***Figure 12*** below). In the following Figure (***Figure 13***) respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they noticed how often they were becoming insensitive to people. Almost 30% of respondents who answered the question reported feeling insensitive to those they were around at least once a month. A little over 21% of respondents say that at least once a month they feel as though their work is making them feel uncaring. (***Figure 13)***

Figure 12 (Q 16 I feel I look after people impersonally, as if they were objects)

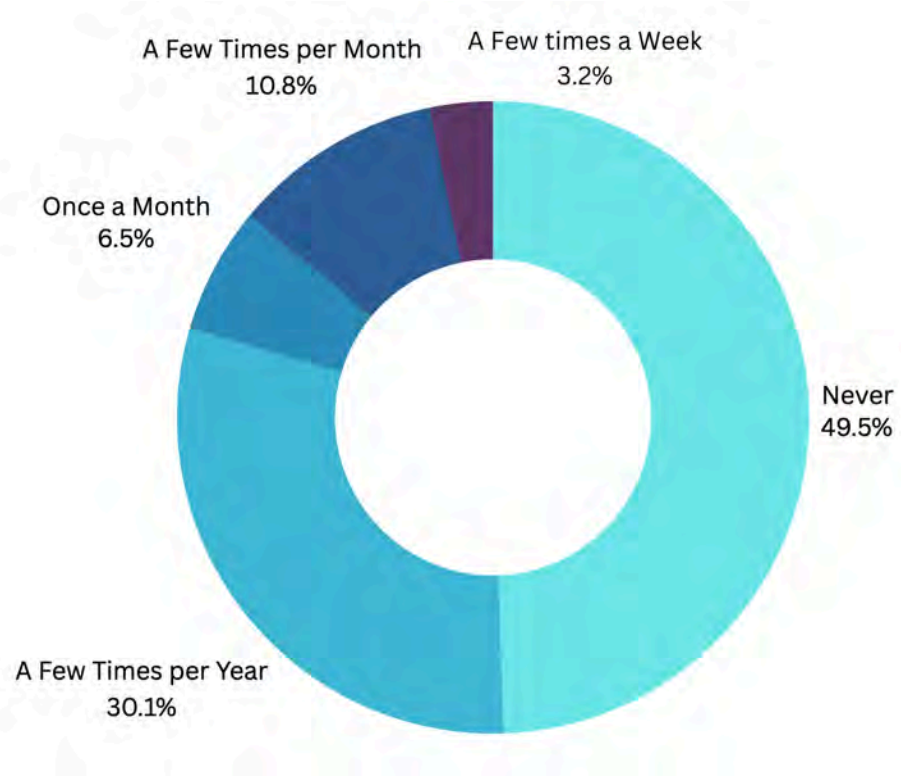


Figure 13 (Q 20 I have become insensitive to people since I have been working)

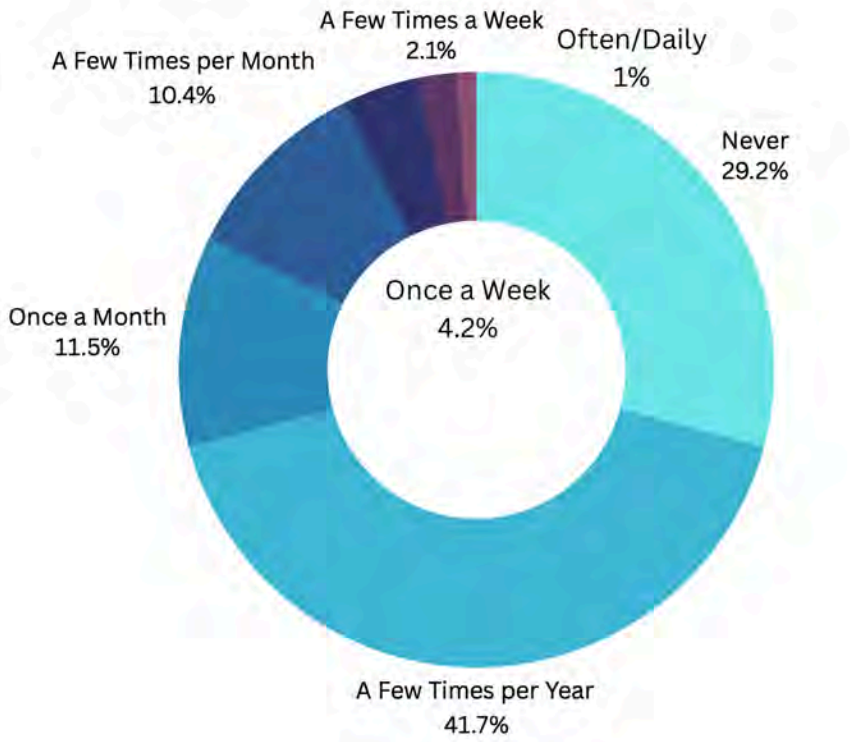
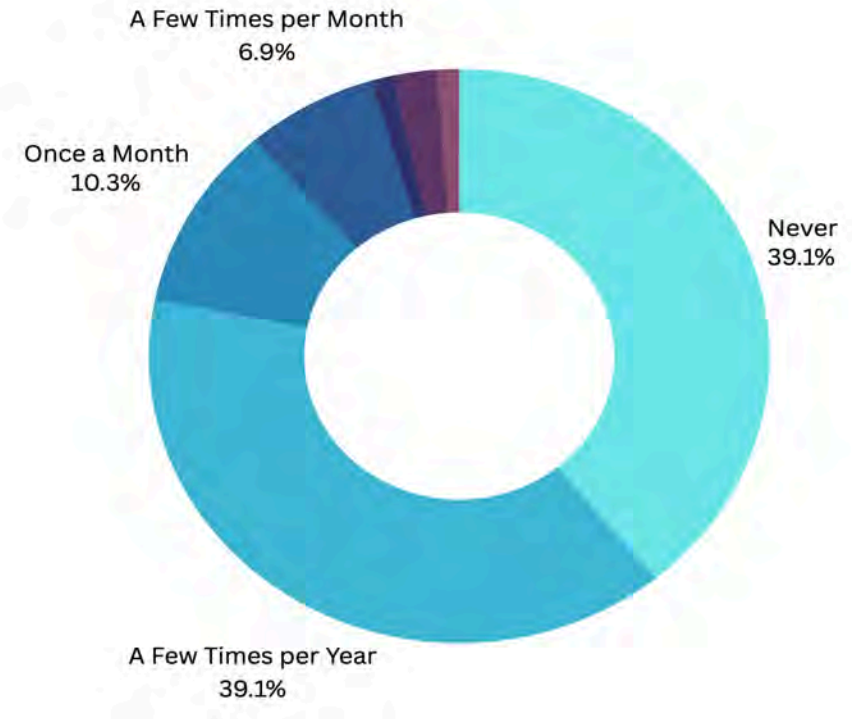


Figure 14 (Q 21 I'm afraid my work is making me uncaring)



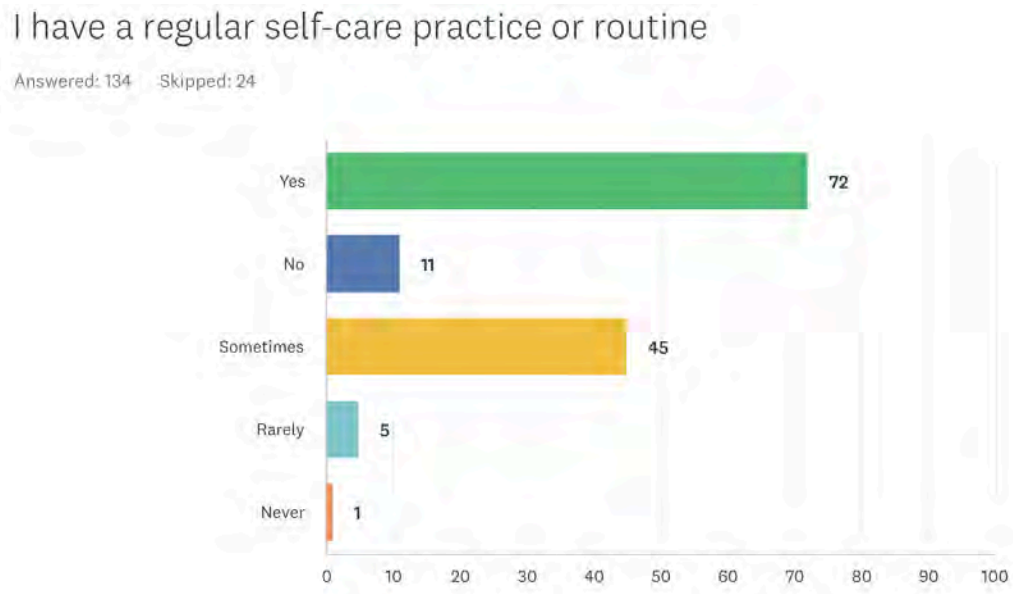
Those serving at larger sized congregations were reported to have higher levels of emotional and physical exhaustion, potentially due to the larger number of responsibilities on their shoulders or number of people with which they interact with. Both of which can be incredibly draining. Female identified individuals also reported higher levels of emotional and physical exhaustion. This could potentially be pinpointed to the barriers female identified clergy continue to face in a male dominated profession that had historically been closed to them. As of 2022, only 36% of the CCAR membership identified as female (Cohen, 2022).

Sense of Personal Accomplishment:

Tied into survey questions over their own individual sense of well-being, questions around a personal sense of accomplishment or achievement were also asked to understand how respondents might be measuring their own level of success in their work. Overall, respondents to questions asking them to self-assess their own perceptions of how well they were doing their job responded positively with respondents feeling a sense of accomplishment at least a few times a week. When asked about their overall sense that they accomplish worthwhile things in their work, the vast majority of respondents, 75%+ said they responded they felt this way at least once a week, with the bulk saying a few times a week or daily (**Figure 15 below**)

Self Care Practices:

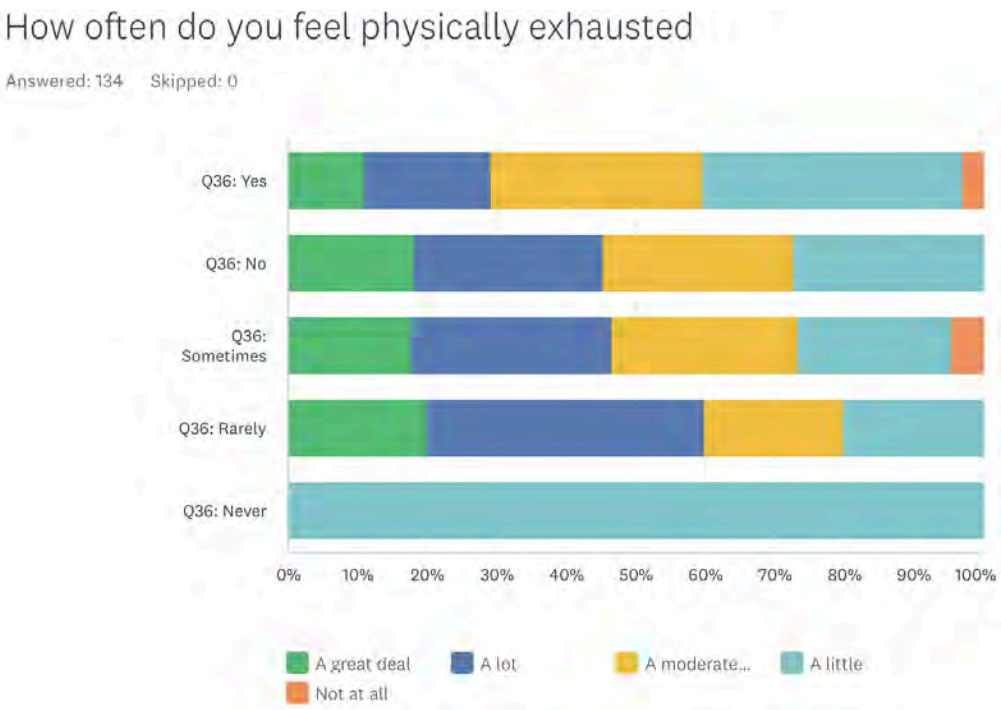
(**Figure 16**)



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (1)	53.73%	72
No (2)	8.21%	11
Sometimes (3)	33.58%	45
Rarely (4)	3.73%	5
Never (5)	0.75%	1
TOTAL		134

Only a little over half of respondents reported practicing regular self-care routines. Comparing the data between respondents who responded yes to having a regular self care practice with those who responded no or to not engaging in regular self care, those who lacked a regular self care practice were more likely to report emotional exhaustion from their work (Questions 10 & 12) and that they perceived their work to be breaking them down. When comparing respondents with self-care practices versus those without regular self-care routines, those without routines were also more likely to report feeling physically exhausted (***Figure 17 Below***)

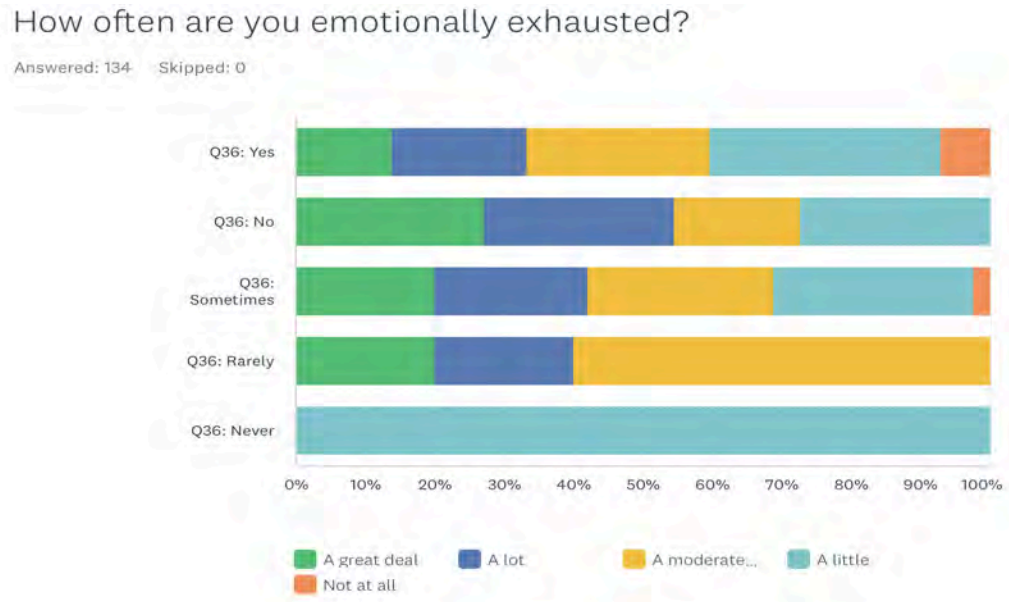
(**Figure 17**) **(Reported levels of Exhaustion compared with Self Care Practice)**



	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q36: Yes	11.11% 8	18.06% 13	30.56% 22	37.50% 27	2.78% 2	53.73% 72
Q36: No	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	8.21% 11
Q36: Sometimes	17.78% 8	28.89% 13	26.67% 12	22.22% 10	4.44% 2	33.58% 45
Q36: Rarely	20.00% 1	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	3.73% 5
Q36: Never	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.75% 1
Total Respondents	19	31	38	42	4	134

Similar results were also seen when asking respondents to assess the number of times they were feeling emotionally exhausted. Respondents without regular self-care practices were more likely to report feeling burned out more often. (***Figure 18 below***)

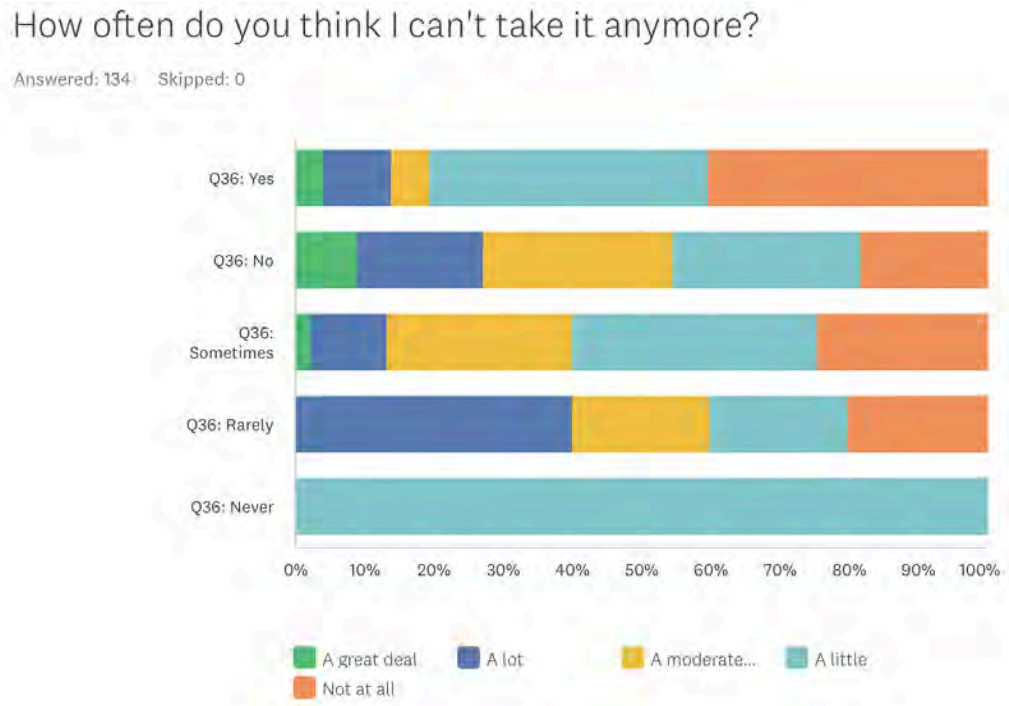
(**Figure 18**) (**Reported levels of Emotional Exhaustion compared with Self Care Practice)**



	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q36: Yes	13.89% 10	19.44% 14	26.39% 19	33.33% 24	6.94% 5	53.73% 72
Q36: No	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	8.21% 11
Q36: Sometimes	20.00% 9	22.22% 10	26.67% 12	28.89% 13	2.22% 1	33.58% 45
Q36: Rarely	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.73% 5
Q36: Never	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.75% 1
Total Respondents	23	28	36	41	6	134

In the figure above, we see that respondents who did not have a regular practice of self-care also reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion than their counterparts with regular routines. The data here demonstrates some evidence for the necessity of having a regular self-care practice as a means of not only taking care of one's self but also preventing burnout and exhaustion both emotionally and physically. Additionally, those without a regular self-care practice were more likely than their counterparts to also say that they could not take it anymore, given their overall complete sense of exhaustion. **(Figure 19)**

(**Figure 19**) **(Reported feelings of unable to take it anymore compared with Self Care Practice)**

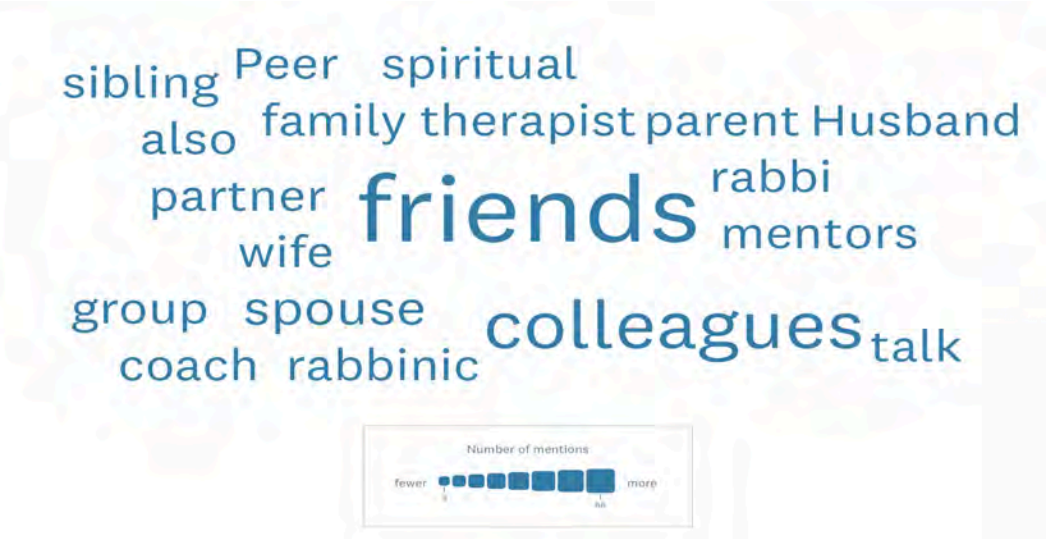


	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q36: Yes	4.17% 3	9.72% 7	5.56% 4	40.28% 29	40.28% 29	53.73% 72
Q36: No	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	8.21% 11
Q36: Sometimes	2.22% 1	11.11% 5	26.67% 12	35.56% 16	24.44% 11	33.58% 45
Q36: Rarely	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	3.73% 5
Q36: Never	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.75% 1
Total Respondents	5	16	20	50	43	134

Respondents who did not have a regular self care practice were reportedly more likely to express concern that they were not able “to take it anymore.” Even among respondents who reported that they sometimes engaged in self care practices, they were more likely than their counterparts with a regular practice to report higher levels of burnout, indicating that consistent self care can potentially be a powerful mitigator against burnout.

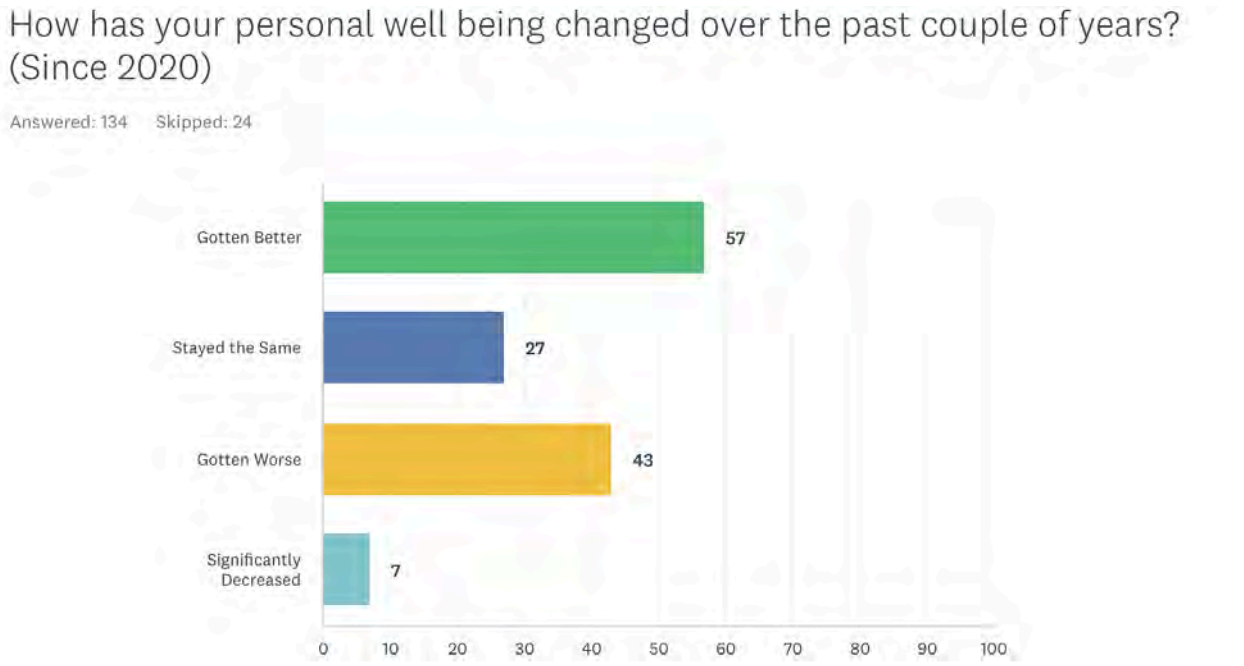
(**Figure 20**)

When asked about their connection to a mental health professional, slightly under half reported working with a therapist or mental health practitioner on a consistent basis. Respondents were also asked about whom they turned to for support in challenging times, and the following word cloud (**Figure 21**) shows that 129 respondents said that friends and rabbinic colleagues were the most sought after for support.



Although half of respondents had therapists, friends, colleagues, and peers made up the bulk of responses as safe persons to turn to when things were difficult, most likely given the unique understanding friends or colleagues in the field might have. Social support, particularly from these three sources has been shown to be effective in maintaining overall well-being (Galek et al 2011, Sarason et al 1987, Beehr et al 2003)

(**Figure 22**)



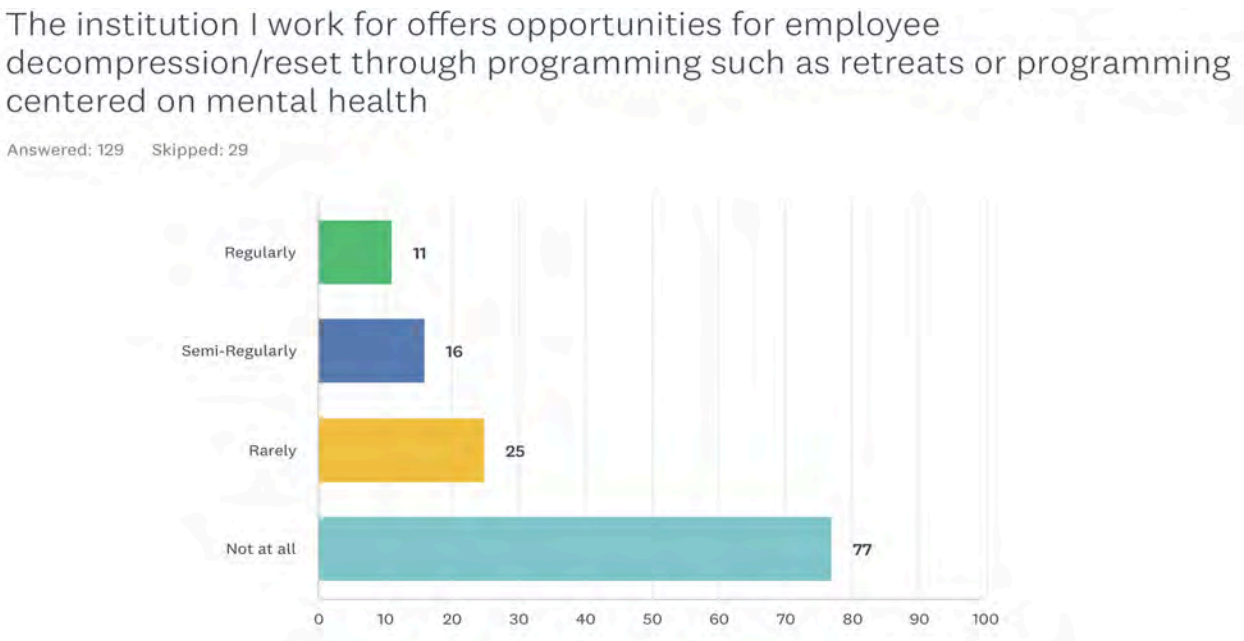
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Gotten Better (1)	42.54%	57
Stayed the Same (2)	20.15%	27
Gotten Worse (3)	32.09%	43
Significantly Decreased (4)	5.22%	7
TOTAL		134

Since the year 2020, 37% of respondents reported that their overall sense of well-being had gotten worse or significantly decreased. 20% of respondents reported that their sense of

well-being had stayed the same in that time period, whereas 42% of respondents reported that their sense of well-being had actually gotten better.

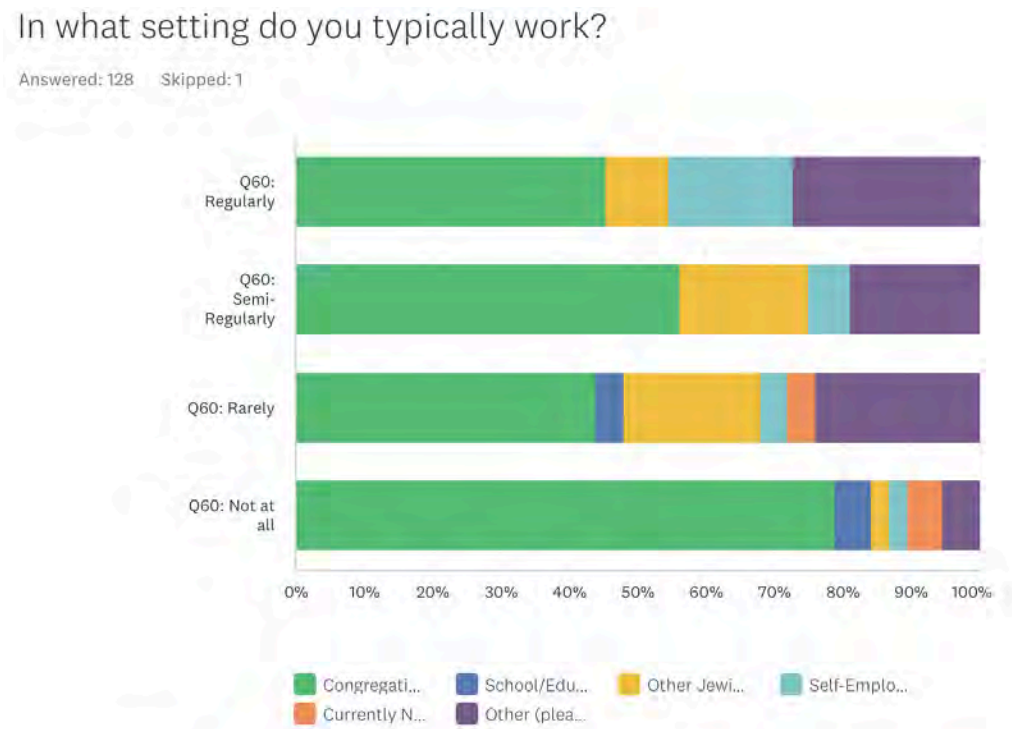
Institutional Policies:

Respondents were also asked about the institutional policies in place at their work (see the figures on the following pages). A significant majority of respondents (60%) indicated that their respective institutions did not offer regular programming or retreats focused on mental well-being (**See Figure 23 below**) The absence of such programs points to the need for more intentional efforts to address mental health and self-care within Jewish institutions.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Regularly (1)	8.53%	11
Semi-Regularly (2)	12.40%	16
Rarely (3)	19.38%	25
Not at all (4)	59.69%	77
TOTAL		129

(Figure 24) Question of Regular Mental Health programing by institution type



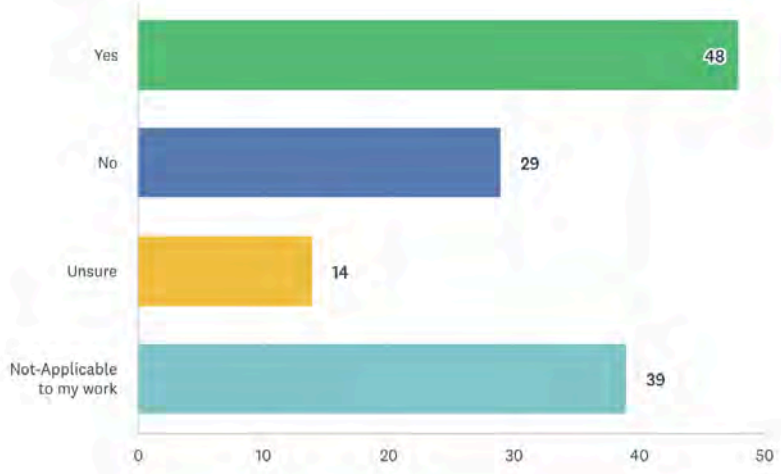
	CONGREGATIONAL (1)	SCHOOL/EDUCATION (2)	OTHER JEWISH INSTITUTION (SUCH AS A FEDERATION OR JEWISH NONPROFIT) (3)	SELF-EMPLOYED (4)	CURRENTLY NOT WORKING (5)	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) (6)	TOTAL
Q60: Regularly	45.45% 5	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	27.27% 3 Responses	8.59% 11
Q60: Semi-Regularly	56.25% 9	0.00% 0	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	18.75% 3 Responses	12.50% 16
Q60: Rarely	44.00% 11	4.00% 1	20.00% 5	4.00% 1	4.00% 1	24.00% 6 Responses	19.53% 25
Q60: Not at all	78.95% 60	5.26% 4	2.63% 2	2.63% 2	5.26% 4	5.26% 4 Responses	59.38% 76
Total Respondents	85	5	11	6	5	16	128

A little over 30% of respondents either answered "no" or were unsure whether their institutions had policies and procedures in place to allow lay members to step in if a rabbi needed a self-care day (**See Figure 25**). This raises concerns about institutional preparedness and the availability of support for rabbis to take necessary time off without fear of neglecting their duties or responsibilities. 30% also responded that the question did not apply to their line of work, with most of these respondents working as chaplains or for organizations like Hillel (**See Figure 26**).

(Figure 25)

My institution has policies and procedures that would allow for lay members to conduct services or voluntarily step into leadership spaces if I, as the Rabbi, needed a "mental health day" or was temporarily unable to fulfill my role

Answered: 130 Skipped: 28

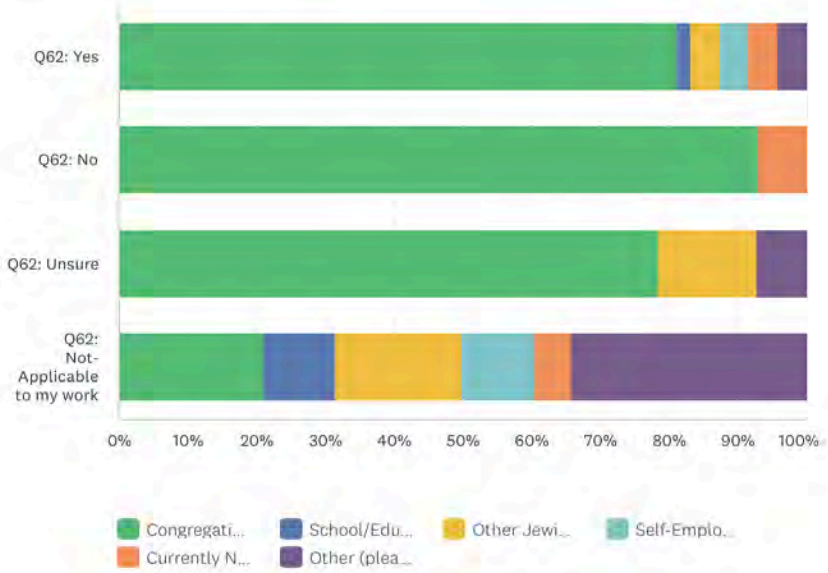


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (1)	36.92%	48
No (2)	22.31%	29
Unsure (3)	10.77%	14
Not-Applicable to my work (4)	30.00%	39
TOTAL		130

(Figure 26)

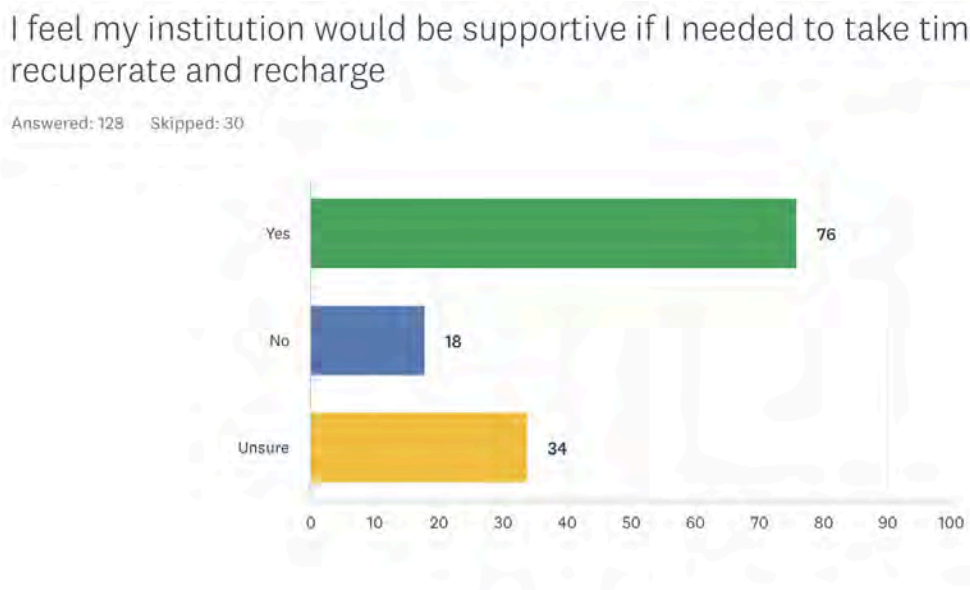
In what setting do you typically work?

Answered: 129 Skipped: 1



	CONGREGATIONAL (1)	SCHOOL/EDUCATION (2)	OTHER JEWISH INSTITUTION (SUCH AS A FEDERATION OR JEWISH NONPROFIT) (3)	SELF-EMPLOYED (4)	CURRENTLY NOT WORKING (5)	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) (6)	TOTAL
Q62: Yes	81.25% 39	2.08% 1	4.17% 2	4.17% 2	4.17% 2	4.17% 2 Responses	37.21% 48
Q62: No	93.10% 27	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.90% 2	0.00% 0	22.48% 29
Q62: Unsure	78.57% 11	0.00% 0	14.29% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	7.14% 1 Responses	10.85% 14
Q62: Not-Applicable to my work	21.05% 8	10.53% 4	18.42% 7	10.53% 4	5.26% 2	34.21% 13 Responses	29.46% 38
Total Respondents	85	5	11	6	6	16	129

When asked if their institution would be supportive if they needed time off to recharge, 40% of respondents either expressed uncertainty or responded no **(See Figure 27 below).** Rabbis may be hesitant to take time off due to concerns about the potential lack of understanding or support from their institutions. This finding underscores the need for clear policies and a culture that prioritizes the well-being of its clergy. On top of that, more than half of the respondents (57%) reported that the responsibilities they bore at their respective institutions were too much to bear (**See Figure 28**). This heavy workload can lead to significant burnout and emotional exhaustion, particularly when adequate support systems are not in place to lighten the load. When looking at whether an institution had policies in place for a mental health day, those places without such policies had rabbis responding in greater numbers that they felt their responsibilities were too much at greater rates suggesting that rabbis do feel overburdened by their workplace policies (or lack thereof) **(Figure 29).**

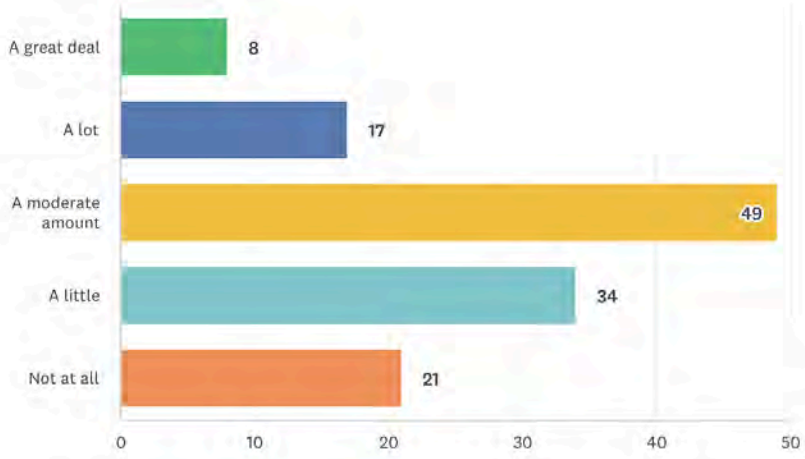


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (1)	59.38%	76
No (2)	14.06%	18
Unsure (3)	26.56%	34
TOTAL		128

(Figure 28)

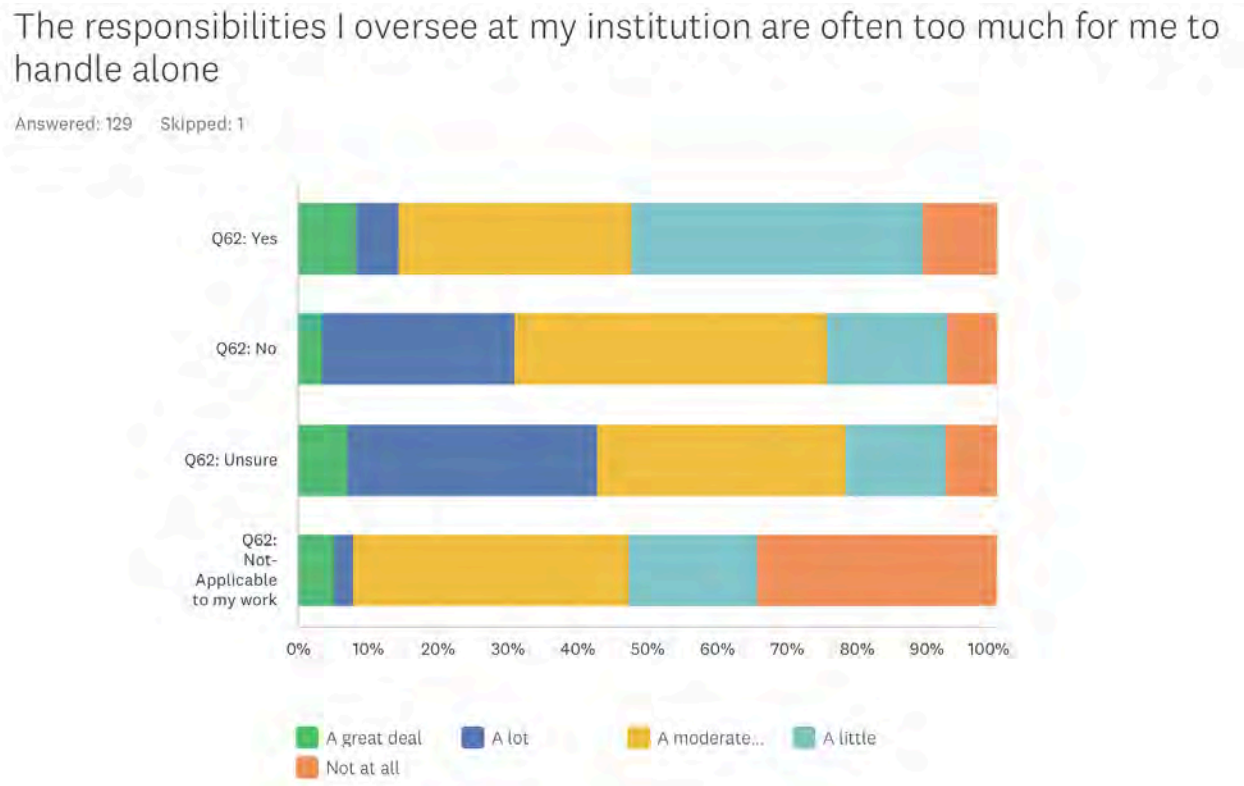
The responsibilities I oversee at my institution are often too much for me to handle alone

Answered: 129 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal (1)	6.20%	8
A lot (2)	13.18%	17
A moderate amount (3)	37.98%	49
A little (4)	26.36%	34
Not at all (5)	16.28%	21
TOTAL		129

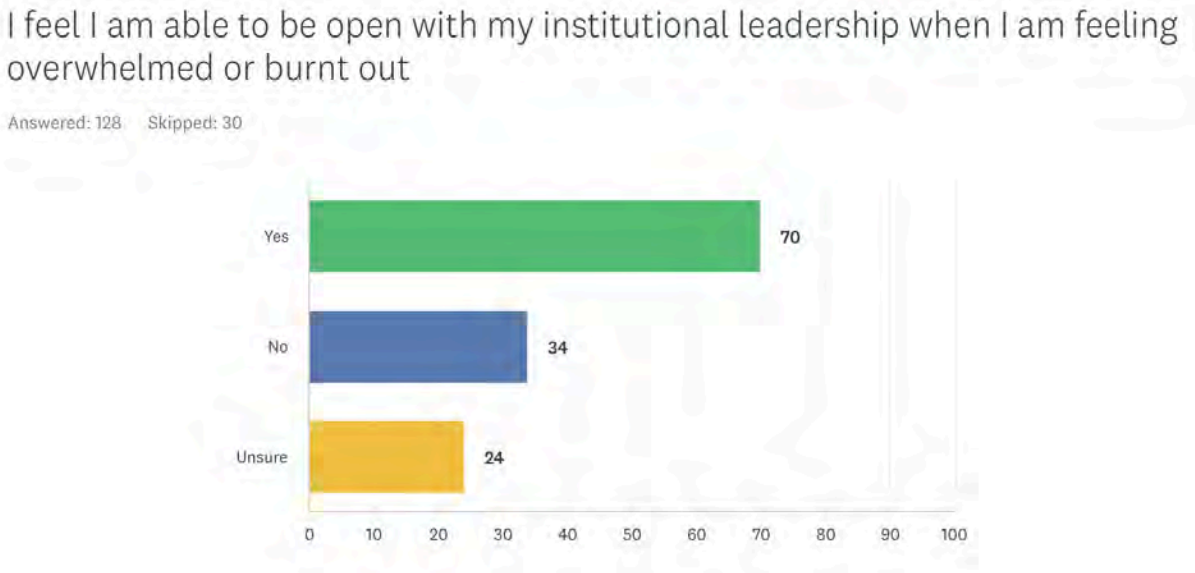
(Figure 29) (Figure shows data comparing Question 62 " My institution has policies and procedures that would allow for lay members to conduct services or voluntarily step into leadership spaces if I, as the Rabbi, needed a "mental health day" or was temporarily unable to fulfill my role" with a question of "The responsibilities I oversee…are too much for me to handle alone" to see a possible correlation between a lack of institutional policy and feelings of being overburdened.



	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q62: Yes	8.33% 4	6.25% 3	33.33% 16	41.67% 20	10.42% 5	37.21% 48
Q62: No	3.45% 1	27.59% 8	44.83% 13	17.24% 5	6.90% 2	22.48% 29
Q62: Unsure	7.14% 1	35.71% 5	35.71% 5	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	10.85% 14
Q62: Not-Applicable to my work	5.26% 2	2.63% 1	39.47% 15	18.42% 7	34.21% 13	29.46% 38
Total Respondents	8	17	49	34	21	129

Lastly, just over half of the respondents (50%) reported feeling confident that they could be open with their institution if they were suffering from burnout (**Figure 30**). This suggests that, despite the importance of mental health, half of rabbis still feel uncomfortable or unsupported when it comes to discussing their struggles with burnout. The stigma surrounding mental health and the perception that taking time off could be seen as a sign of weakness may contribute to this reluctance.

(Figure 30)

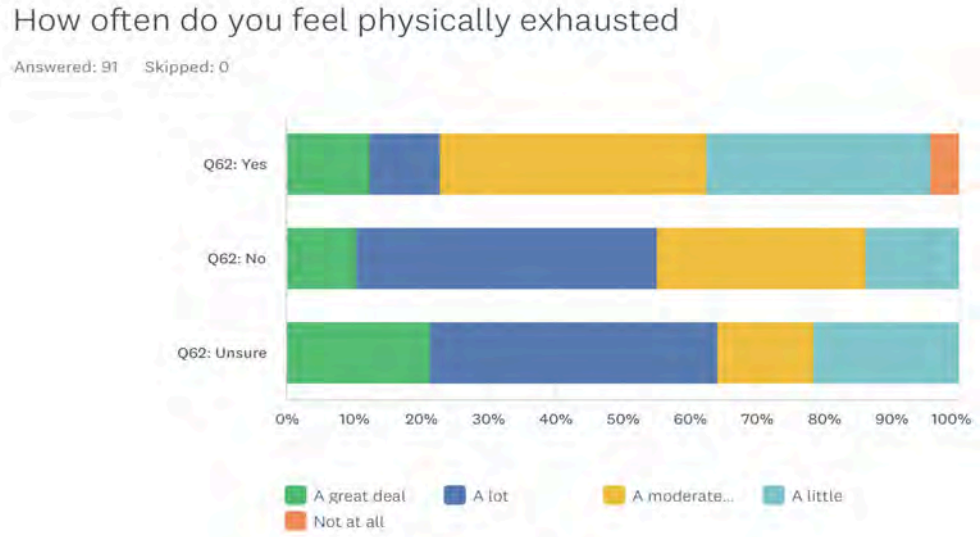


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (1)	54.69%	70
No (2)	26.56%	34
Unsure (3)	18.75%	24
TOTAL		128

When analyzing the results comparing the experiences of those whose institutions had more supportive policies in place versus those that did not, we see that institutions without policies geared towards the well-being of their clergy experienced higher reported levels of physical and emotional exhaustion. **Figures 31 and 32** on the following pages show that respondents whose

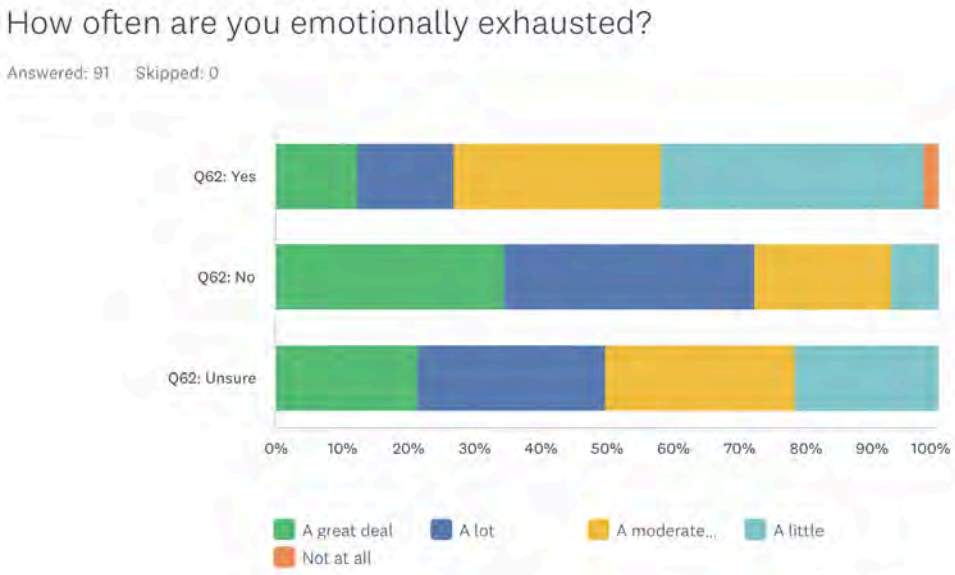
institutions did not have policies in place for mental health days for clergy reported that they felt more physically or emotionally exhausted than respondents whose institutions had such policies in place. **Figures 33 and 34** similarly show that when asked if their institution had regular programming geared towards their mental health, those working in institutions without regular programming were more likely to say they were both emotionally and physically exhausted more often. Both of these examples demonstrate the powerful role institutions can play in working to prevent feelings of burnout among their rabbis by having policies in place that prioritize their well-being and are consistent about relevant programming.

(Figure 31) (Figure shows data comparing Question 62 “My institution has policies and procedures that would allow for lay members to conduct services or voluntarily step into leadership spaces if I, as the Rabbi, needed a “mental health day” or was temporarily unable to fulfill my role” with reported rates of physical exhaustion.)



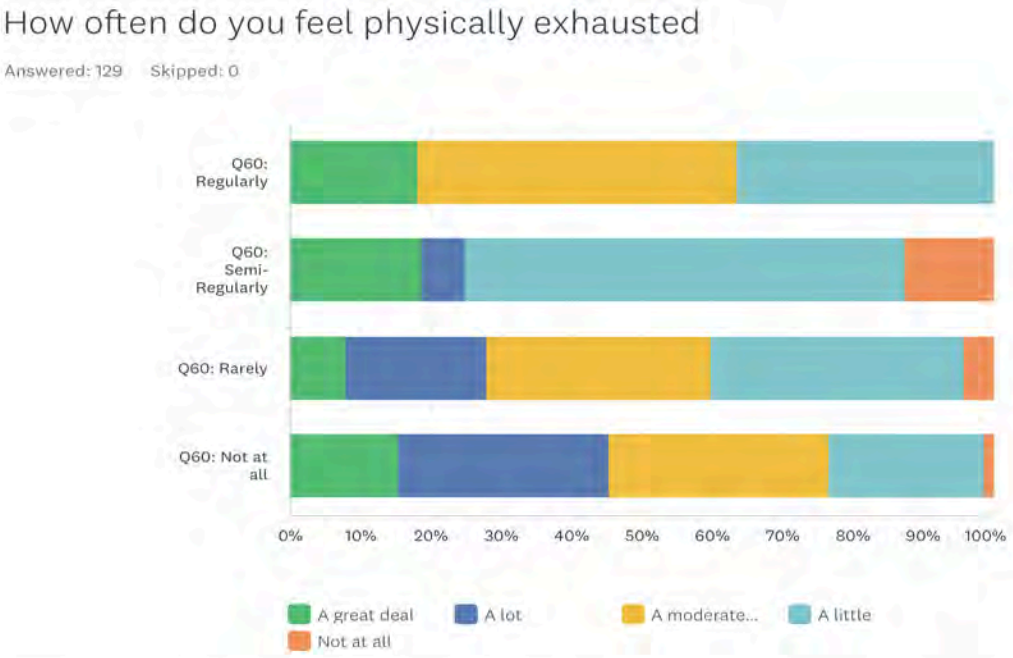
	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q62: Yes	12.50% 6	10.42% 5	39.58% 19	33.33% 16	4.17% 2	52.75% 48
Q62: No	10.34% 3	44.83% 13	31.03% 9	13.79% 4	0.00% 0	31.87% 29
Q62: Unsure	21.43% 3	42.86% 6	14.29% 2	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	15.38% 14
Total Respondents	12	24	30	23	2	91

(Figure 32) (Figure shows data comparing Question 62 “My institution has policies and procedures that would allow for lay members to conduct services or voluntarily step into leadership spaces if I, as the Rabbi, needed a “mental health day” or was temporarily unable to fulfill my role” with reported rates of emotional exhaustion.)



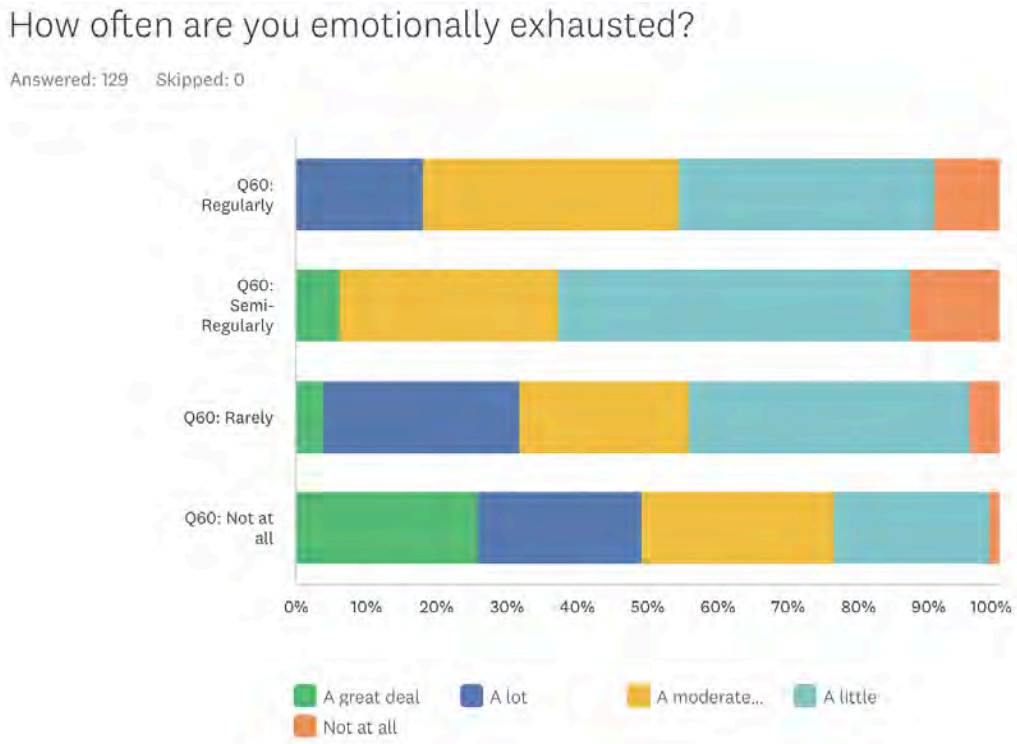
	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q62: Yes	12.50% 6	14.58% 7	31.25% 15	39.58% 19	2.08% 1	52.75% 48
Q62: No	34.48% 10	37.93% 11	20.69% 6	6.90% 2	0.00% 0	31.87% 29
Q62: Unsure	21.43% 3	28.57% 4	28.57% 4	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	15.38% 14
Total Respondents	19	22	25	24	1	91

Figure 33 (Comparing Q60 “The institution I work for offers opportunities for employee decompression/reset through programming such as retreats or programming centered on mental health” with reported rates of physical exhaustion to see if there is a potential relationship between a lack of programming and reported burnout.)



	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q60: Regularly	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	45.45% 5	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	8.53% 11
Q60: Semi-Regularly	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	62.50% 10	12.50% 2	12.40% 16
Q60: Rarely	8.00% 2	20.00% 5	32.00% 8	36.00% 9	4.00% 1	19.38% 25
Q60: Not at all	15.58% 12	29.87% 23	31.17% 24	22.08% 17	1.30% 1	59.69% 77
Total Respondents	19	29	37	40	4	129

Figure 34 (Comparing Q60 “The institution I work for offers opportunities for employee decompression/reset through programming such as retreats or programming centered on mental health” with reported rates of emotional exhaustion to see if there is a potential relationship between a lack of programming and reported burnout.)



	A GREAT DEAL (1)	A LOT (2)	A MODERATE AMOUNT (3)	A LITTLE (4)	NOT AT ALL (5)	TOTAL
Q60: Regularly	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	8.53% 11
Q60: Semi-Regularly	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	31.25% 5	50.00% 8	12.50% 2	12.40% 16
Q60: Rarely	4.00% 1	28.00% 7	24.00% 6	40.00% 10	4.00% 1	19.38% 25
Q60: Not at all	25.97% 20	23.38% 18	27.27% 21	22.08% 17	1.30% 1	59.69% 77
Total Respondents	22	27	36	39	5	129

Section VI - Policy Recommendations and Areas to Address: How the data can guide institutions

Based on the survey results, the following institutional policy recommendations for both rabbinic organizations and institutions themselves could be implemented to address burnout prevention and promote the mental well-being of rabbis in Jewish institutions. In addition some of the policy suggestions below are recommendations for a rabbi to advocate for in terms of protecting their own personal sense of well-being and preventing burnout. It is worth mentioning however that not all policies will be equally applicable depending on the type of institution a rabbi may work for.

1. **Regular Mental Health Programming and Retreats**

- Recommendation: Establish ongoing programming, workshops, and retreats focused on mental well-being, stress management, and self-care.
    - Given that 60% of respondents reported that their institutions do not offer regular mental well-being programming, it is crucial to implement structured initiatives aimed at fostering mental health. Our tradition is clear that rest and rejuvenation are key components of a Jewish practice. These programs should focus on promoting emotional resilience, managing stress, and providing tools for self-care. The inclusion of retreats would allow clergy members to disconnect from their responsibilities and recharge, which would help prevent burnout.

2. **Clear Policies for Time Off and Self-Care Days**

- Recommendation: Develop and communicate clear, written policies outlining how rabbis and clergy can take time off to recharge, with explicit provisions for support from lay leaders when a rabbi needs to step away.

    - With over 30% of respondents reporting that there was not, or they were unsure about the existence of policies allowing lay members to step in when a rabbi needs a self-care day, there is a lack of clarity and preparedness. Institutions should establish formal systems to provide coverage during clergy absences. This could be part of a negotiated contract detailing time off. This ensures that rabbis feel supported in taking necessary breaks without the fear of neglecting their duties.

3. **Create a Supportive and Transparent Culture**

- Recommendation: Cultivate a supportive institutional culture where mental health is prioritized and clergy feel comfortable requesting time off and discussing burnout openly without fear of judgment.
    - The 40% of respondents who expressed uncertainty or lack of confidence in their institution's support for time off highlight a significant barrier. Creating an open, non-judgmental environment where clergy feel supported is crucial. Institutions could introduce regular check-ins with leaders or wellness coordinators to discuss well-being and proactively address concerns about mental health. In addition, having adequate PTO policies in place that encourage regular time off demonstrates a culture of care that an institution can model.

4. **Manage Workload and Delegate Responsibilities**

- Recommendation: Regularly assess and manage the workload of clergy members to ensure it is reasonable and sustainable. Additionally, provide systems for delegating responsibilities, particularly during peak periods or when clergy members experience high stress levels.

- The finding that over half of the respondents (57%) felt their workload was too much to bear suggests a pressing need for institutions to assess and adjust expectations. Our own Torah reminds us of the importance of not overburdening oneself and that delegation and empowering others is the best approach to leadership modeled by Yitro. Workload management strategies, such as reducing non-essential tasks and creating clearer role definitions, can help alleviate pressure on clergy and prevent burnout.

5. **Establish Clear Communication Channels for Discussing Burnout**

- Recommendation: Introduce confidential communication channels through rabbinic organizations where clergy can express concerns about burnout and seek support without fear of stigmatization.
    - Although half of the respondents (50%) felt confident they could open up about burnout, there is still a significant portion who may not feel comfortable doing so. Research as well as rabbinic wisdom extol the importance of social networks and being able to speak to others about our challenges. Establishing formal, confidential channels—such as a dedicated burnout helpline or a trusted mental health professional—would encourage more clergy members to seek support when needed.

6. **Offer Peer Support Networks**

- Recommendation: Create peer support groups or networks where clergy can share experiences, challenges, and coping strategies with colleagues facing similar pressures.
    - Given that most respondents mentioned friends as their primary “go-tos” for support, a peer support system could alleviate feelings of isolation, helping clergy members connect with others who understand the demands of their role. These

groups could serve as safe spaces for discussing mental health and burnout without judgment, fostering a sense of community and mutual support.This could be a volunteer run program offered by rabbis who wish to offer support and mentorship for rabbis experiencing challenges.

7. **Provide Mental Health Resources and Professional Support**

- Recommendation: Ensure that clergy have access to long term mental health resources, including counseling services and training in recognizing and managing burnout.This would include ensuring that, where possible, synagogue insurance policies include mental health services.
    - Many clergy may not know where to turn when dealing with burnout or mental health concerns. Some rabbinic organizations do provide short term help but this may not be enough. Providing access to external counseling services and mental health professionals, as well as ensuring that clergy are trained in recognizing the early signs of burnout, can provide proactive solutions and help clergy manage stress before it becomes overwhelming.

8. **Institutional Leadership Role in Promoting Mental Health**

- Recommendation: Institutional leaders should take an active role in advocating for mental health awareness and lead by example in taking time for self-care and acknowledging the importance of mental well-being.
    - Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the institutional culture. When leaders model self-care, prioritize mental health, and openly discuss their own struggles

with stress and burnout, it reduces the stigma and encourages others to do the same.

9. **Regular Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms**

- Recommendation: Institutions should implement regular surveys to gauge the well-being of clergy and identify areas where further support or resources are needed.
    - Rationale: Regular assessments allow institutions to track progress and adjust policies accordingly. Feedback from clergy members can offer invaluable insights into the ongoing challenges they face, enabling institutions to remain proactive in addressing their needs and preventing or mitigating burnout.

Section VII Summary

This project set out with the aim of attempting to capture a snapshot of rabbinic mental health and well-being among rabbis in the U.S. From the available data captured in this project we can see that rabbis are experiencing burnout, with about one third of respondents consistently reporting feelings of burnout across the survey. Compounding these feelings of burnout are a lack of personal self care practices and institutional policies in place to help mitigate or reduce feelings of physical and emotional exhaustion due to work. Respondents without a regular self-care practice and those working in institutions that do not or have not been able to prioritize the mental well-being of their clergy have been consistently shown to be doing less well than their counterparts in terms of overall self assessments on burnout.

This paper aimed to begin to fill in the gap in the research, which has largely been focused on Christian clergy. While rabbis share in much of the same responsibilities as their non-Jewish clergy colleagues, life as a rabbi can also be made complicated by antisemitism and the geopolitics of Israel, issues which could become large stressors on the rabbis themselves and

could be areas of focus in subsequent study. However this survey showed that in comparison with the Barna study (2021), rabbis and other clergy experienced burnout at similar rates. Further study will be needed to understand what unique role, if any, these two specific issues might play in exacerbating burnout.

While the project was able to provide a snapshot into the current landscape of rabbinic well-being, the project itself was limited by certain factors. The project had a small sample pool, and revisions need to be made to a potential future project to ensure better distribution of the survey so that it is able to better reach its intended targets and capture a larger and more diverse sample. Nonetheless, the project was able to give the rabbinic world a glimpse into two underlying issues making life challenging for our rabbis; a lack of consistent self-care and a lack of supportive institutional policies. While these two are not likely to be the sole issues underlying the full experience of burnout, they do stand out as two areas of concern where rabbinic organizations can mobilize to increase efforts. Working with rabbis and even rabbinical students to develop self-care routines, and engrain the importance of regular and consistent self-care would likely have a significant impact on the overall well-being of rabbis. This can include programming teaching rabbis about how to recognize signs of burnout as well as practices that can alleviate work related stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the results of this project also draw attention to the desperate need for institutions themselves to be more cognizant of their expectations of their clergy and how their policies (or lack thereof) might end up burning their rabbis out. Working with groups such as the CCAR or RA, institutions can work on developing policies and procedures that can be utilized to help their rabbi function as best as possible, and have a plan of action in place when rabbis are experiencing burnout and might potentially need some time off.

In Judaism, self-care is deeply intertwined with spiritual health, as highlighted throughout various texts and commandments. From the sanctity of the human body in Genesis 9:6 to the

divine command to rest through Shabbat, Jewish tradition emphasizes the need to nurture both physical and mental health as part of fulfilling one's spiritual duties. The Torah teaches that caring for oneself is not indulgence but a religious obligation—through practices such as rest, proper self-compassion, and seeking support when necessary, individuals can preserve their physical and emotional well-being. This is especially crucial for spiritual leaders, such as rabbis, whose roles demand significant emotional and mental labor. Just as Jethro advised Moses to delegate leadership to avoid burnout, Jewish teachings encourage spiritual leaders to recognize their limitations, seek rest, and engage in self-compassion to maintain their capacity to serve effectively. For rabbis, prioritizing self-care allows them to better guide their communities, ensuring they are spiritually and emotionally available to fulfill their vital responsibilities. For institutions, this means making sure that rabbis are able to take care of themselves and that institutions prioritize the well-being of their spiritual leaders through their institutional policies and programing. Ultimately, Judaism affirms that tending to one's well-being is essential not only for personal growth but also for effective spiritual leadership.

In conclusion, this project has provided valuable insights into the mental health and well-being of rabbis in the U.S. highlighting key factors contributing to burnout, such as a lack of self-care practices and inadequate institutional support. The findings suggest that by addressing these issues through proactive self-care initiatives and the development of supportive institutional policies could significantly improve the well-being of rabbis. While the project had its limitations, it points to areas for further exploration and action. Moving forward, it is essential that rabbinic organizations and institutions prioritize mental health support, offering training and resources to rabbis and ensuring policies are in place to protect their well-being. By fostering a culture of care and understanding, both at the individual and institutional levels, the rabbinic community can work to mitigate burnout and enhance the overall health of its clergy. Further research will be necessary to fully understand the impact of specific stressors, including antisemitism and

geopolitical concerns, but overall this project has opened an important conversation about the need for change and improvement within the rabbinic profession.

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Appendix-Survey Instrument

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

Hello Everyone. My name is CJ Mays and I am a 5th year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. You are being invited and asked to please help with my final year rabbinic thesis project which focuses on rabbinic mental health and well-being. My short survey (10-15 minutes) asks respondents to self-assess on a burnout inventory as well as capture a current snapshot of how are rabbis across the U.S. are feeling, what their own personal self care practices look like, and what policies may or may not be in place at the institutions they work for that can accommodate their needs.

The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying information is asked or collected during the survey. The survey is open to any ordained rabbi from any movement, located in the United States.

Your participation in the survey is both greatly needed and appreciated as my project hopes to provide Jewish institutions with data relevant towards developing more programming and potentially increasing funding for programs that help rabbis to alleviate and navigate burnout, develop strategies for greater personal well-being, and also provide policy suggestions to organizations to promote better overall outcomes, ensuring that rabbi's health needs are addressed and able to be accommodated.

Please note that the survey must be completed in one go and cannot be returned to later.
Thank you in advance for your participation. Your support is crucial for the success of this project.

1. Enter your age in Years

2. How would you describe yourself

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Transgender
- ◯ Non-binary
- ◯ Prefer Not to Say
- ◯ Prefer to Self-Describe

3. How would you describe yourself

- ◯ Heterosexual
- ◯ Bisexual
- ◯ Gay or Lesbian
- ◯ Prefer Not to Say
- ◯ Prefer to Self-Describe

4. What is your marital status

- ◯ Married
- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Divorced
- ◯ Separated
- ◯ Single
- ◯ Prefer not to Say

5. What is your current employment status?

- ◯ Full-Time
- ◯ Part-Time
- ◯ Contract or Temporary
- ◯ Retired
- ◯ Unemployed
- ◯ Unable to Work
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Prefer Not to Say

6. What stage are you at in your Rabbinic career?

- ◯ Newly Ordained
- ◯ 1-3 years experience
- ◯ 4-9 years experience
- ◯ 10+ years experience

7. In what setting do you typically work>

- ◯ Congregational
- ◯ School/Education
- ◯ Other Jewish Institution (such as a Federation or Jewish Nonprofit)
- ◯ Self-Employed
- ◯ Currently Not working
- ◯ Other (please specify)

8. If you work for a Congregation, what is the size of your Congregation? (number of members)

- ◯ 1-300
- ◯ 301-599
- ◯ 600-999
- ◯ 1000+
- ◯ Not Applicable

9. Are you a member of a professional Rabbinic Organization?

- ◯ Central Conference of American Rabbis CCAR
- ◯ Rabbinical Assembly RA
- ◯ Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association RRA
- ◯ Rabbinic Council of America RCA
- ◯ Aleph-Renewal
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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10. I feel emotionally drained at work

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

11. Working with people all day long required a great deal of effort from me

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

12. I feel like my work is breaking me down

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

13. I feel frustrated by my work

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

14. I feel I work too hard at my job

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

15. I feel like I'm at the end of my bandwidth

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

16. I feel I look after people impersonally, as if they were objects

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

17. I feel tired when I wake up and have to face another day at work

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

18. I have the impression that people make me responsible for some of their problems

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

19. I am at the end of my patience at the end of each work day

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

20. I have become insensitive to people since I've been working

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

21. Im afraid my work is making me uncaring

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

22. How often do you feel physically exhausted

- ◯ A great deal
- ◯ A lot
- ◯ A moderate amount
- ◯ A little
- ◯ Not at all

23. How often are you emotionally exhausted?

- ◯ A great deal
- ◯ A lot
- ◯ A moderate amount
- ◯ A little
- ◯ Not at all

24. How often do you think I can't take it anymore?

- ◯ A great deal
- ◯ A lot
- ◯ A moderate amount
- ◯ A little
- ◯ Not at all

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

25. I accomplish many worthwhile things in my job

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

26. I feel full of energy

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

27. I easily understand what the people I work with/care for feel

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

28. I look after those I work for/care for effectively

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

29. In my work, I handle emotional problems very calmly

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

30. Through my work, I feel that I have a positive influence on people

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

31. I am able to easily create a relaxed atmosphere with those I work with or care for

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

32. I feel refreshed when I have been close to (had a meaningful connection with) those I work with or care for

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

33. How often do you find yourself feeling inflexible with community members/those you work with?

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

34. The extent to which I feel supported in my work

0-Not feeling supported at all, 1-2 Feeling more Alone/isolated, 3-Neutral, 4-5-Feeling Fully Supported

0 5

35. How often do you think about leaving your current position?

0=Never, 1=a Few Times per year, 2-once a month, 3-a few times per month, 4-once a week, 5-a few times a week, 6-often/daily

0 6

36. I have a regular self-care practice or routine

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

37. I have a therapist or mental health practitioner I work with on a consistent basis

- Yes
- No

38. I have a spiritual advisor or mentor I speak to

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

39. Who do you turn to in times of personal or spiritual crisis? (Such as a friend, colleague, Rabbi, parent, sibling, etc)

40. How has your personal well being changed over the past couple of years? (Since 2020)

- ◯ Gotten Better
- ◯ Stayed the Same
- ◯ Gotten Worse
- ◯ Significantly Decreased

41. I speak to my colleagues about issues at work

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 — 5

42. I feel lonely

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 — 5

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

43. My self care practices: Eat Healthy Foods regularly

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

44. My self care practices: I get enough sleep (6-10 hours) a night

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

45. My self care practices: I practice good personal hygiene

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

46. My self care practices: I go on adventures (hikes, walks, day trips)

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

47. My self care practices: I take time away from media (phone, tv)

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

48. My self care practices: I practice self-reflection

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

49. My self care practices: I express gratitude (through journaling, acts of kindness, etc)

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

50. My self care practices: I meditate or practice breathing exercises

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

51. My self care practices: I have a prayer practice

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

52. My self care practices: I read religious or inspirational texts (Torah, Psalms, etc)

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

53. My self care practices: I ask for help when I need it

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

54. My self care practices: I respect my personal limits and know that it is ok to say No

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

55. My self care practices: I make time for social time with friends

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

56. My self care practices: I am mindful of my own emotions

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

57. My self care practices: I regularly check in with mentors

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

58. My self care practices: I engage in regular breaks during my work day

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

59. My self care practices: I feel I am able to balance my work/professional life and my personal life

0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2 or 3-Sometimes, 4-Regularly, 5-Frequently

0 5

A Study of Rabbinic Mental Health and Well-Being

60. The institution I work for offers opportunities for employee decompression/reset through programming such as retreats or programming centered on mental health

- ◯ Regularly
- ◯ Semi-Regularly
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Not at all

61. I feel my institution would be supportive if I needed to take time off to recuperate and recharge

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure

62. My institution has policies and procedures that would allow for lay members to conduct services or voluntarily step into leadership spaces if I, as the Rabbi, needed a "mental health day" or was temporarily unable to fulfill my role

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure
- ◯ Not-Applicable to my work

63. I feel I am able to be open with my institutional leadership when I am feeling overwhelmed or burnt out

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure

64. The responsibilities I oversee at my institution are often too much for me to handle alone

- ◯ A great deal
- ◯ A lot
- ◯ A moderate amount
- ◯ A little
- ◯ Not at all

65. The healthcare plan offered by my institution covers mental health services

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure
- ◯ Not applicable/No Insurance