

Monday March 18, 2013

Newsletter Tuesday February 26, 2013

### Survey shows Israeli Jews becoming more superstitious

In the past 15 years, the number of Jews who profess belief in irrational concepts — defined as beliefs ungrounded in science — has grown from 44 percent to 50% • Israeli Jews becoming less supportive of state religious institutions.

Israel Hayom Staff



Though Israel is the hyper-connected, high-tech savvy start-up nation at the forefront of technologies that are shaping modern life, it seems that a growing number of Israelis are becoming more superstitious, and believe that science brings more harm than good, a study released by the [Samuel Neaman Institute](#) for Advanced Studies in Science and Technology has revealed.

The institute is an independent public-policy research body established at Haifa's Technion University in 1978 to help search for solutions to national problems in science and technology, education, economy and industry, and social development.

According to the study, in the past 15 years, the number of Jews who professed belief in irrational concepts — defined as beliefs ungrounded in science — grew from 44 percent in 1998 to 50% in 2012.

The number of Jews who believed in the impending arrival of the Messiah grew from 33% in 1998 to 44% last year.

Belief in the "evil eye," as well as in the existence of an afterlife in heaven or hell, grew from 42% to 46%. The number of those who believed that certain people, especially rabbis or other spiritual leaders, possessed mystical powers grew from 22% to 29%.

The number of people who believed that knowledge caused more harm than faith to society grew from 25% to 26%.

"These findings should arouse consternation for those worried about Israeli society's rationalism, especially because the data show an increasing trend," said **Professor Efi Yaar**, who conducted the study with **Professor Yasmin Elkalai**.

Along with the growing belief in mysticism and superstition, the study found a decrease in Jews' adherence to traditional religious principles, including the belief in God. It compared the results of a separate study published by Keren Avi Hai and the Israel Democracy Institute in 2009 with the current results, and found that the number of Jews who had always believed in God fell from 69% in 2009 to 64% in 2012, while the number of number of Jews expressing support for conducting business and allowing public transportation on Shabbat rose. Some 72% said they supported opening movie theaters on Shabbat, compared with 68% in 2009; 66% wanted public transportation on Shabbat, compared with 59% previously, and 61% wanted malls and shopping centers to remain open, compared with 58% in 2009.

The number of people who wanted the government to recognize civil marriages outside the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbinate rose from 59% in 2009 to 70% in 2012. The study's authors emphasized that the rise in those seeking a weakening of state religious authority came mostly from the secular community, with ultra-Orthodox and religious communities mostly recording the opposite trend.

The surveys questioned between 550 and 600 Israeli Jewish adults, including some living in kibbutzim and settlements in the West Bank.