



Connecting to the Jewish People through Singing

A Report on the Impact of *HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir*
on the Jewish Lives of Current Singers and Alumni

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The logo for Research Success Technologies (ReST). It features the word 'ReST' in a stylized, blue, sans-serif font. The 'R' and 'S' are larger and more prominent than the 'e' and 'T'. The 'e' is a simple, lowercase letter. The 'T' is a simple, uppercase letter.

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Executive Summary

HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir is a network of 39 choral chapters across the United States and Israel which provides Jewish teens from 8th to 12th grade with a high level choral experience in a Jewish environment. In the 2017/18 school year there are 450 singers. The Teens meet weekly during the school year and have opportunities to participate in regional and national HaZamir sponsored events and a national teen leadership seminar. HaZamir seeks to give "teenagers a valuable and rare trans-denominational experience as an opportunity to forge close bonds and unite in a common goal: music."

The mission of HaZamir is to:

- Strengthen Jewish identity
- Perform at the highest musical standard
- Build pluralistic Jewish community
- Facilitate leadership skills
- Forge strong ties to Israel.



The research questions:

1. How do HaZamir alumni and current singers perceive the impact of HaZamir on their Jewish and musical lives?
2. Based on the alumni and participant reports, to what extent is HaZamir effectively implementing its mission?
3. How might HaZamir further maximize the impact of participation?

The data in this report draws on an Internet survey administered in October and November 2017 of HaZamir alumni and current participants in both Israel and the United States. 219, representing 52% of the current participants and 180, representing 25% of the alumni completed the survey. The alumni analysis is limited to those whose last year of participation was between 2006-2017. HaZamir's current format, in terms of recruitment and educational program, was set in 2006.

Phase 2 of the study included seven exploratory in-depth telephone interviews with alumni. These interviews enabled a qualitative understanding of the nature of HaZamir's long-term impact on participants' Jewish lives, to complement the quantitative survey results. Those interviewed are college graduates, with their last year of participation between 2006 and 2010, with diverse Jewish backgrounds, who indicated that HaZamir had a strong impact on their lives.

The Findings

From the perspective of the current participants and alumni, HaZamir is a highly impactful program. The impact is seen across the following key measures:

- Experience of "flow" when singing
- Internalizing standards of excellence and high expectations

- Self-confidence
- Commitment to Jewish pluralism
- Integration of Jewish and musical self
- Personal connections across oceans
- Connections to Judaism
- Connections to Israel
- Increase in Jewish knowledge

Engaged with Jewish Life

HaZamir participants and alumni are engaged with Jewish life. 98% report that they are interested in Judaism or Jewish life. Approximately two-thirds (69%) report a strong commitment to Jewish life, while the rest report being curious and experimenting. HaZamir alumni are involved in Jewish leadership at very high levels, with 43% of alumni reporting leadership involvement. Jewish leadership is present among both day school and non-day school attendees at much higher levels than one would reasonably expect in the general Jewish population.

An Excellent Educational Experience

HaZamir provides a highly sophisticated experiential educational environment. The singers report a high level educational experience involving the interaction of social enjoyment and the acquisition of Jewish and musical skills and knowledge. The education is experiential. The teens are pulled into an intensive experience of Jewish socialization and knowledge acquisition without the resistance they are likely to feel in school-based settings.

A Common Love for Singing Enables Impactful Jewish Education

For the teen, a common love of singing, not Jewish education is at the center of their HaZamir experience. The result, is an intensive and impactful Jewish education that includes a variety of impacts for the large majority of participants, including:

- A strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connection to Israel
- Motivation to pursue Jewish singing and their personal Jewish growth.
- Confidence in their ability to work with peers and lead a group
- A pluralistic worldview in which the teens views Jews who are different from themselves as sharing in and communicating a common Jewish heritage.

Impact Reported by almost all HaZamir Participants and Alumni

A number of impacts were found to be part of the core HaZamir experience, which almost all of the HaZamir singers and alumni report: their sense of self confidence, the experience of flow when singing, the integration of music into their Jewish lives, and the formation of their pluralistic Jewish worldview.

Broader Impact Reported by Two-Thirds

In addition to core impacts, two-thirds also report broader impact, including a spiritual connection to Judaism, exposure to the breadth of Jewish tradition, interest in Jewish texts and a strengthened connection to the Jewish people, Israel and Israelis. Three factors distinguish those who report “broad impact” from the “core impact group.”

A. Time Involved with HaZamir

The more years an individual is involved in HaZamir the broader the impact they report on their Jewish lives. Whereas 81% of the five-year participants report a broad impact, that number drops to 66% for those in their second year and 25% for those in their first year. We learn there is a significant impact as a result of participation over time. For those singers who extend their

participation beyond one year, at least two-thirds are reporting broad impact on their lives that strengthens their Jewish identity and sense of belonging to the Jewish people, an impact that only intensifies with each additional year of participation.



B. Day school education and greater exposure to Israel

There is a relationship between other Jewish involvements, such as day school and Israel travel and the extent of impact of HaZamir on a participant’s Jewish life. Respondents who report that HaZamir has had a broad impact are less likely to have attended day school and are also less likely to have visited Israel two times or more.

Based on the interviews and a reading of the data we learn that for approximately half of the teens with higher levels of involvement in Jewish life, HaZamir’s impact is primarily on excelling in Jewish singing, an increased sense of self confidence and the exposure to Jews who are different than them. Due to their relatively greater Jewish knowledge and exposure to Jewish life and Israel, these alumni attribute their stronger Jewish identity to these other involvements, and not to the HaZamir experience. Yet, there are as many with similar background characteristics who do report that HaZamir had a broad impact on them. Why?

The answer is found in the extent of leadership involvement and interaction with Israelis.

C. Leadership Involvement and Interaction with the Israelis

We learn that those reporting broad impact are more likely to report interaction with Israelis being part of their HaZamir experience and are also more likely to report meaningful friendships with them; they are also more likely to report impact on their leadership abilities. These factors are partially due to the structure of the HaZamir educational program. Thus, it

stands to reason that changes to the educational program, to increase HaZamir participants' exposure to Israelis and to leadership opportunities, might lead to broader Jewish impact on those who currently are not reporting it.

Summary and Recommendations

We learned that:

- HaZamir provides a highly sophisticated experiential educational environment
- The singers report a high level educational experience involving the interaction of social enjoyment and the acquisition of Jewish and musical skills and knowledge
- The education is experiential. The teens are pulled into an intensive experience of Jewish socialization and knowledge acquisition without the resistance they are likely to feel in school based settings
- A common love of singing, not Jewish education, is at center; the result is an intensive and impactful Jewish education.

Almost all report what we term the “core HaZamir” impact: increased sense of self confidence, the experience of flow when singing, the integration of music into their Jewish lives, and the formation of their pluralistic Jewish worldview. Approximately two-thirds report even broader impact. By looking at the difference the third who report “core impact” and the two-thirds who report “broader impact,” we offer the following recommendations:

- **Longer involvement leads to broader impact. Track and push for multi-year involvement.**
- **Interaction with Israelis leads to broader impact. Provide the American HaZamir participants more opportunities to interact with Israelis.**

Due to the smaller number of Israelis than Americans, only a selected minority of the Americans interact directly with the Israelis in an intensive way when they visit, either in the Mifgash [encounter] program or through home hosting. If HaZamir Israel continues to grow at its current rate, more Americans will likely gain greater opportunities to interact with the Israelis in the future. Until that time, HaZamir might, (a) work to multiply opportunities for interaction with the Israeli singers so that more of the American participants can benefit and/or (b) make sure that each year different American participants get the opportunity for interaction with the Israelis. Over the course of high school all will ideally have an opportunity for meaningful interaction with Israelis.

- **Leadership opportunities lead to broader impact. Provide leadership training and formal leadership responsibilities to more participants, including those who have stronger Jewish background.**

We learn that leadership impact comes from three channels: 1) the natural progression of older singers helping younger ones, 2) receiving formal leadership responsibilities within the local HaZamir group, and 3) participating in the HaZamir Teen Leader program. The latter

two factors are programmatic and can be structured and/or grown to enable more participants to receive leadership opportunities.

HaZamir

HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir is a network of 39 choral chapters across the United States and Israel which provides Jewish teens from 8th to 12th grade with a high level choral experience in a Jewish environment. In the 2017/18 school year there are 450 singers. The Teens meet weekly during the school year and have opportunities to participate in regional and national HaZamir sponsored events and a national teen leadership seminar. HaZamir seeks to give "teenagers a valuable and rare trans-denominational experience as an opportunity to forge close bonds and unite in a common goal: music."

The mission of HaZamir is to:

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This report presents the educational logic of HaZamir as it plays out from the perspective of alumni and current singers and the impact of the program on the singers' Jewish lives. We learn how HaZamir builds on Jewish singing as an experience that evokes positive emotions and feelings of Jewish belonging, connecting young Jews to one another, to Israel, to Jewish tradition and Jewish history. We will gain an understanding of how alumni and current singers perceive the impact of HaZamir on their Jewish lives. We will also explore the differences between those who perceive different types of impact on their Jewish lives, with the goal of gaining insight into what HaZamir might do to maximize the impact of participation on the singers' Jewish lives.

The Research

The research questions:

- 1. How do HaZamir alumni and current singers perceive the impact of HaZamir on their Jewish and musical lives?
- 2. Based on the alumni and participant reports, to what extent is HaZamir effectively implementing its mission?
- 3. How might HaZamir further maximize the impact of participation?

To answer these questions the following research was undertaken:

Internet survey administered in October and November 2017 of HaZamir alumni and current participants in both Israel and the United States. 219, representing 57% of the current participants and 180, representing 25% of the alumni completed the survey. The alumni analysis is limited to those whose last year of participation was between 2006-2017. HaZamir's current format, in terms of recruitment and educational program, was set in 2006.

Phase 2 of the study included seven exploratory in-depth telephone interviews with alumni. These interviews enabled a qualitative understanding of the nature of HaZamir's long-term impact on participants' Jewish lives, to complement the quantitative survey results. Those interviewed are college graduates, with their last year of participation between 2006 and 2010, with diverse Jewish backgrounds, who indicated that HaZamir had a strong impact on their lives.

Responses to the survey included alumni and participants from 28 American and 6 Israel HaZamir chapters. Eight-two percent of the survey respondents were from the United States and 18% from Israel.

	%
Israel	18%
United States	82%
Total	100%

Table 2 .In which country is your HaZamir chapter?

Current participants were distributed over all five possible years of participation with a majority in their second and third years.

Table 3 .For how many school years have you participated in HaZamir?

	%
This is my first year in HaZamir	8%
Second year	35%
Third year	28%
Fourth year	19%
Fifth year	10%
Total	100%

Alumni are represented from all years from 2006, with the majority reporting their last HaZamir year from 2014 through the present.

Table 4 .What was the last year you participated in HaZamir?

	%
2006	3%
2007	4%
2008	4%
2009	5%
2010	7%
2011	5%
2012	9%
2013	8%
2014	9%
2015	11%
2016	18%
2017	17%
Total	100%



Key Findings

Two Levels of Impact

1. Core Impact

Almost all the singers report HaZamir shaping their Jewish worldview by helping them integrate their Jewish and musical lives, and the experience of musical excellence and Jewish pluralism.

2. Broader Impact

Fifty-seven percent report broader impact on their Jewish lives, beyond the core impact. Those who sing for more than one year are the most likely to report a broader impact, rising to 81% of the 5th year participants.

Table 5: Impact Groups	Core Impact Only	Core + Broader Impact	Total
This is my first year in HaZamir	75%	25%	100%
Second year	34%	64%	100%
Third year	41%	59%	100%
Fourth year	29%	71%	100%
Fifth year	19%	81%	100%

Examples of Impact

This alum is from an affiliated family trying to find his place in Jewish life. He continues to be involved. HaZamir provided inspiration.

"Here I am as a Jewish teen trying to figure out what my Judaism is going to look like, trying different things on for size, arguing with my parents about it, and here comes a whole group of people ... who exuded a self-confidence in their Jewish personalities that was inspiring for me to see, even if their choices were not mine. ... Coming into contact with kids who had gone to Day School and had that background, and how natural and effortless it was for them to be Jewish. It was inspiring to me to live that out myself."

Another alumna provided observations about her friends who are less involved Jewishly and the importance of Jewish singing for them:

"For me, I came into HaZamir already being observant and having a connection to Judaism, but I really strongly feel that for the people who didn't, it was their Jewish connection. I've seen a lot people from HaZamir who went on to sing in Jewish A Cappella groups or get involved in Jewish choirs. It really does fill a need. I think for a lot of people that I know today, both HaZamir Alumni and in Zamir Noded – the fact that they are still practicing Jews to the extent that Judaism means something to them, to the extent that they are involved in the Jewish world and dating Jews could definitely be attributed to HaZamir."

Jewish Singing: The Experience

Singing in a Choir Provides an Experience of “Flow”

Heightening the specifically Jewish impact of singing in HaZamir is the power commonly experienced by those singing in any choir. Do HaZamir alumni and participants agree that singing in a choir is a powerful experience for them? To answer this question, respondents reacted to the following statement:

“In a choir, I can make sound, focus the mind, enjoy myself and forget myself, all at once...It is a kind of listening without hearing. Perhaps this combination of experiences is as common as what psychologists call flow, a state of complete absorption in an activity... I mean that I forgot myself. I forgot that I had a self.”

Sarah Maguso. “Letter of Recommendation: Choir” New York Times. October 20, 2016

Almost all (89%) of alumni and current participants agree that this statement describes their experience singing in a choir to “an extent” or “to a great extent.”

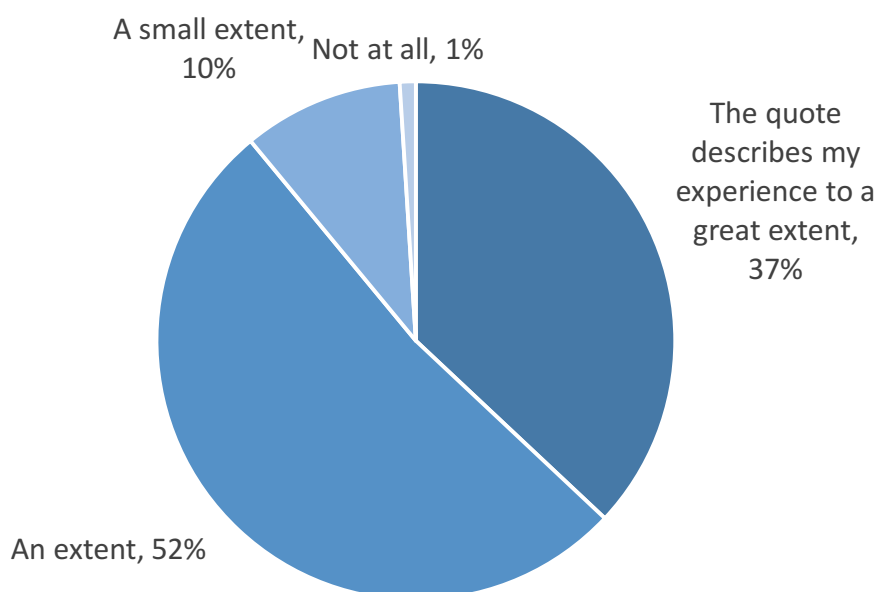


Figure 1 .For 89% of respondents, singing in a choir is a powerful experience.



Jewish Singing is a Positive Experience

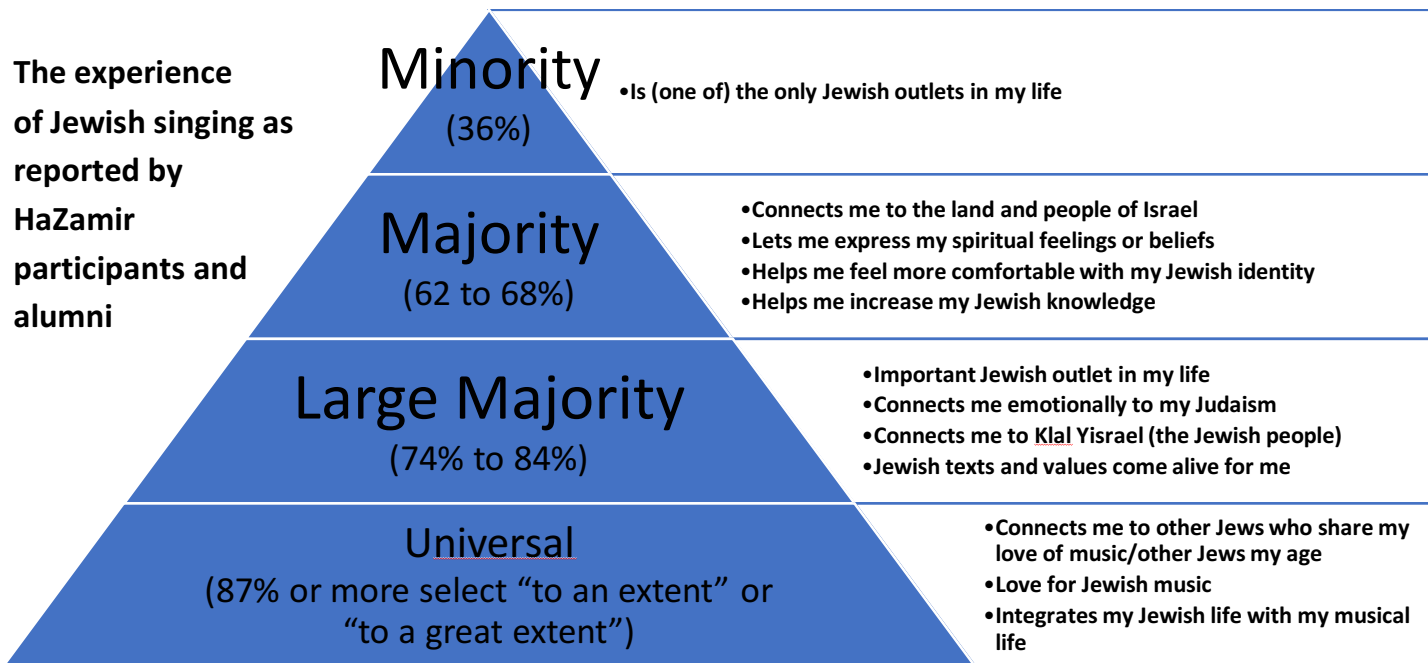
Table 6 and the accompanying graphic depict the experience of Jewish choral singing for current participants and alumni. The core universal experience, reported by almost all (87% or more) of the respondents includes:

- Their **love of Jewish music**
- Their **Jewish social experience** – connecting to other Jews who love music and others of the same age
- The **integration** of their Jewish and musical lives

The large majority agree that Jewish choral singing is an important Jewish outlet in their lives. For the majority Jewish choral singing is one of many Jewish outlets. A minority reports Jewish choral singing as their major Jewish outlet.

Extent of Experience	0 = not at all, 1 = to an extent, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to a great extent	Average
Near Universal Experience (87% + answering to "an extent" or "to a great extent")	Enables me to connect to other Jews who share my love of music	2.6
	I have love for Jewish music	2.6
	Enables me to integrate my Jewish life with my musical life	2.5
	Connects me to other Jews my age	2.5
Large majority report experience (74% to 84% answering "to an extent" or "to a great extent")	Is an important Jewish outlet in my life	2.4
	Connects me emotionally to my Judaism	2.2
	Connects me to Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people)	2.1
	When set to music, Jewish texts and values come alive for me	2.1
A majority report experience (62% to 68% answering "to an extent" or "to a great extent")	Connects me to the land and people of Israel	1.9
	Lets me express my spiritual feelings or beliefs	1.8
	Helps me feel more comfortable with my Jewish identity	1.8
	Helps me increase my Jewish knowledge	1.8
A minority report experience (36% answer "to an extent" or "to a great extent")	Is (one of) the only Jewish outlets in my life	1.1

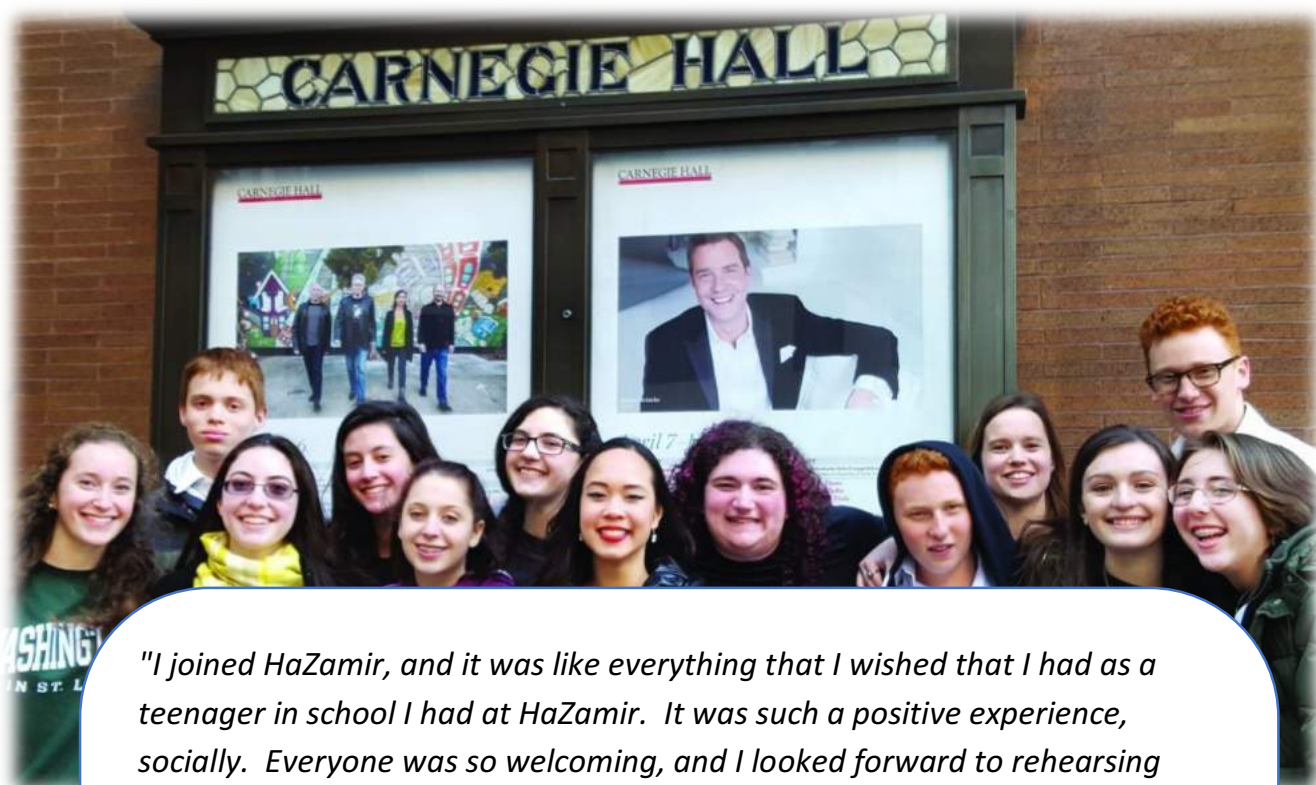
Table 6 .To what extent do the following statements reflect your personal experience with Jewish choral music?



Core Experience of Jewish Singing

The core experience of Jewish singing, as shown in the previous page, is both musical and social, occurring as a result of singing with others in an organized group. In so doing, the singers report that they integrate music into their Jewish lives.

"When you are singing something that was written thousands of years ago, and you are sitting amongst 400 peers from across the country, and you are singing in a way that evokes certain undeniable emotions, and doing it all at the same time. I think that is the recipe for what makes this connection happen. I feel very strongly that I feel very connected to the other people that I've sung with. ... And also, definitely to the words that I'm singing and the meaning of the words that I'm saying."



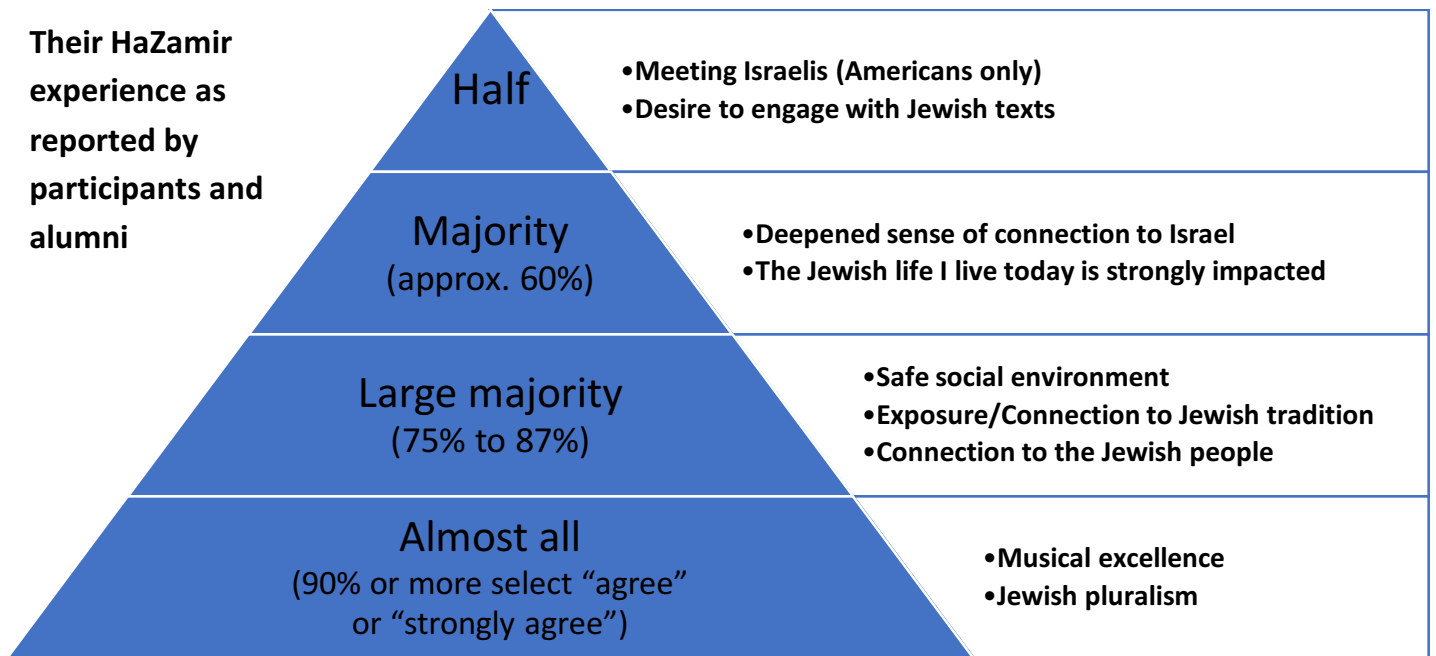
"I joined HaZamir, and it was like everything that I wished that I had as a teenager in school I had at HaZamir. It was such a positive experience, socially. Everyone was so welcoming, and I looked forward to rehearsing every week and to going away on the big rehearsals and meeting new people. When I was in school, I had Judaism forced down my throat, and I really didn't like it. I don't know if it was so much the texts as the religion and the people, because the experience that I had in high school: I didn't like Jewish people. I didn't like being around Judaism because it had this negative connotation for me because I had such a bad experience. But HaZamir was very different. I wanted to be there. I was open to learning and listening and being a part of it, and it just rejuvenated my fixation, my culture, my people. There were good Jewish people out there who had values, who liked the same things that I did, that treated me with dignity. It was such a different experience."

Singing in HaZamir: The Experience

Participation in HaZamir is a holistic experience. At least half of the respondents agreed with all the statements about their HaZamir experience (table 7), with at least 75% agreeing with 10 of 14 statements. The accompanying graphic depicts the HaZamir experience and the impact of it as reported by current participants and alumni. The universal experience, which almost all report (90% or more) touches on experiencing musical excellence and Jewish pluralism.

Extent of Agreement	Average score: 0 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree	
Near universal agreement (Israelis only)	A significant part of the HaZamir experience for me is meeting Americans (Israelis only)	3.6
Near universal agreement (90% plus)	At HaZamir, I experience a culture of musical excellence	3.6
	Based on my experience, anyone who identifies as Jewish, no matter their religious affiliation, will feel welcome at HaZamir	3.5
	As a participant in a HaZamir chapter I am very committed to making my musical performance top-notch	3.5
	A significant part of the HaZamir experience includes interacting with Jews who were different from me in terms of their Jewish background	3.5
	My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Jews who live outside of Israel (Israelis only)	3.4
Large majority agreeing (75% to 87%)	I feel that HaZamir offers a safe social environment for me to grow as a Jewish teen	3.3
	HaZamir exposes me to a broad breadth of the Jewish tradition	3.1
	Through music, HaZamir deepens my feeling of connection to the Jewish people	3.1
	My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Judaism	3.0
Majority agreeing (approx. 60%)	My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Israel	2.8
	The Jewish life I live today is strongly impacted by my participation in HaZamir	2.7
Approx. half agreeing	A significant part of the HaZamir experience for me is meeting Israelis (Americans only)	2.4
	The experience of Jewish music at HaZamir raises my desire to engage with Jewish texts	2.3

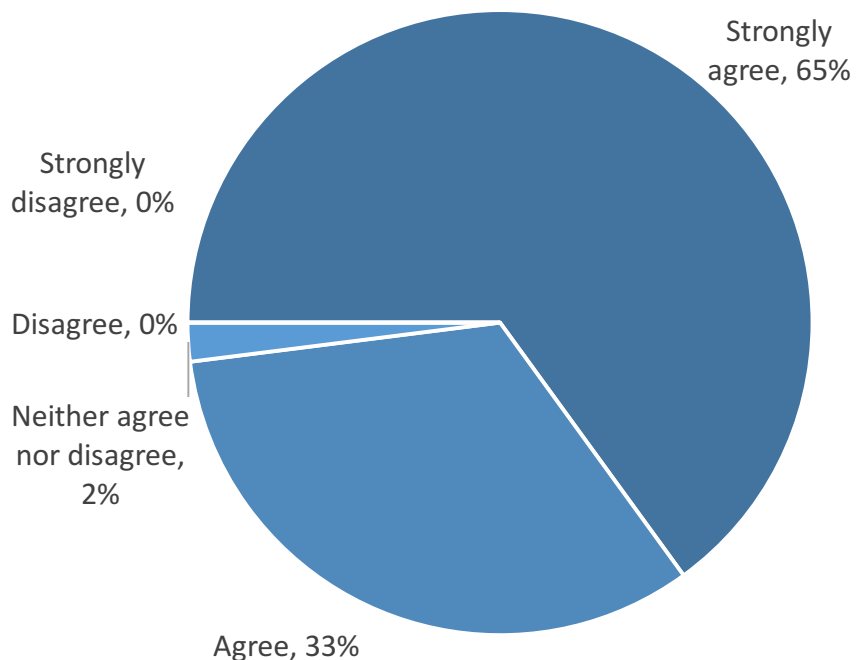
Table 7 .In thinking about your experience in HaZamir, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements



Musical Excellence

The experience of musical excellence is common to almost all the current participants and alumni, with 98% agreeing. Of those 65% strongly agree.

Figure 2 .At HaZamir, I experience a culture of musical excellence





Question: What does a “culture of musical excellence” mean to you, and how did the HaZamir directors inspire the participants in the choir to meet that standard?

"I would say from Day 1 we were told that this is like a professional choir. We are not just some synagogue choir. We were told from Day 1 that we have to sit up, backs straight, pay attention to the conductor, hold up our binders when we sing. There is a standard of excellence from the minute you walk in. It's fun, it's there to be fun, but when rehearsal starts, we get serious. We are on time. We are professional. We are good, and we are going to hold you to this high standard because that's what this is. And that translates throughout all of HaZamir."

Self Confidence

Current participants and alumni report HaZamir participation contributing to their self-confidence. Seventy-nine percent agree that their HaZamir experience boosted their sense of self-confidence, with 41% strongly agreeing.

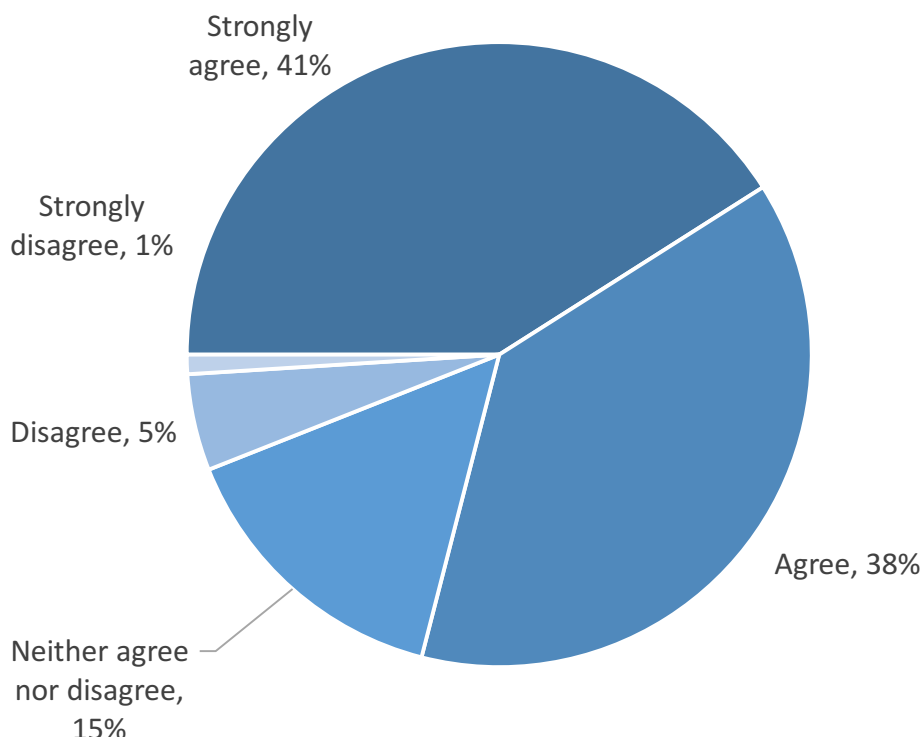


Figure 3 . My experience in HaZamir gave me a greater sense of confidence

One alumna describes how singing enabled her to develop a sense of self-confidence in her ability to succeed.

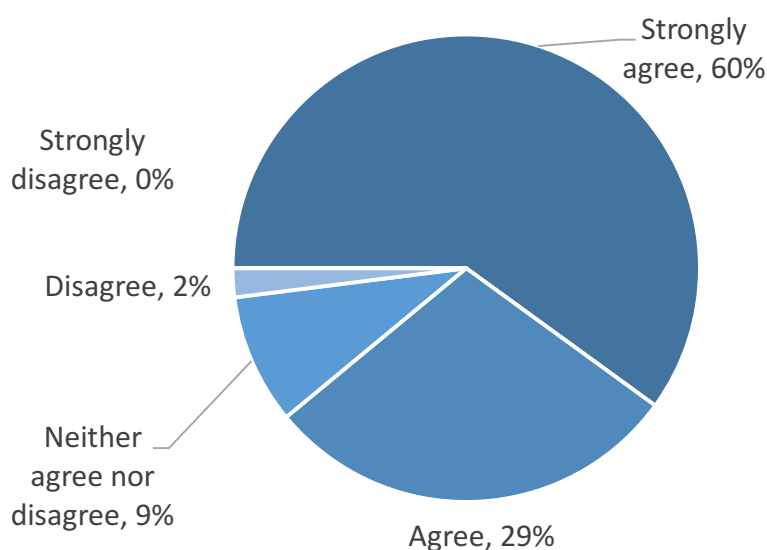
"I feel like HaZamir really helped me form not just who I am Jewishly and who I am musically, but also just a very sound emotional self and believing that I was capable of doing a lot. Part of what I learned from HaZamir is that there are songs that you feel like you will never be able to sing, and there are notes you feel like you will never be able to hit, or you will never be able to hold long enough, and if you try hard enough and you work hard enough, and if you ask for the right help, then you can do it. That message stuck with me in a multitude of ways and not just come out in music, but in other facets of my life and has led to a certain self-confidence in believing that I'm capable that I don't know if I would've gotten anywhere else. And I feel tremendously grateful to have received that and to have really grown up in such a loving, warm, and giving and understanding and meaningful context. I'm very lucky."

Jewish Pluralism

As shown in table 8, HaZamir recruits participants from across the Jewish religious spectrum. They are a diverse group coming into HaZamir and remain so.

	Raised	Now
Orthodox	15%	15%
Traditional	8%	7%
Conservative	44%	33%
Reform	18%	18%
Other	13%	32%
Total	100%	100%

Table 8. Referring to Jewish religious denominations, in which of the following were you raised, and which, if any, do you consider yourself now?

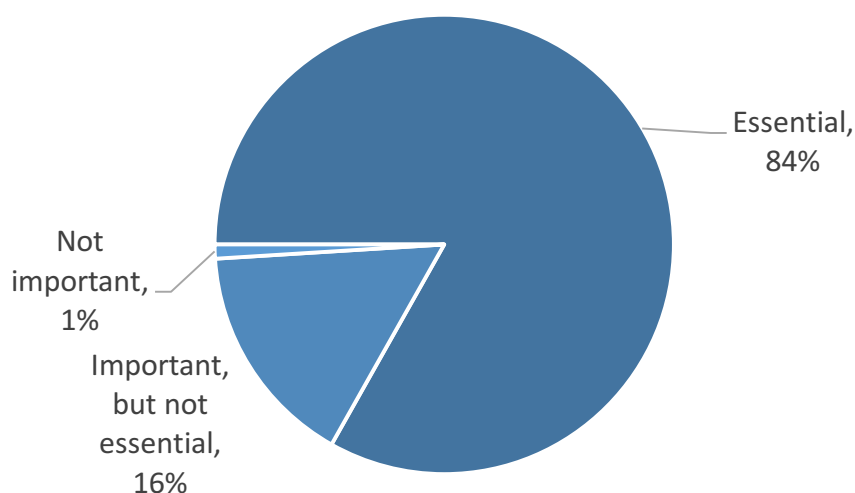


Eighty-nine percent of the respondents agree that interacting with Jews from different Jewish backgrounds was part of their HaZamir experience, with 60% strongly agreeing (figure 5).

Figure 4 .A significant part of the HaZamir experience includes interacting with Jews who were different from me in terms of their Jewish background

Eighty-four percent regard the value of respecting diversity and pluralism in the Jewish world as essential (figure 4). Just 1% of the respondents regarded Jewish pluralism as an unimportant value. The value of Jewish pluralism also outranked all other Jewish values in terms of the importance attributed by the respondents.

Figure 5 .How important is respecting diversity and pluralism in the Jewish world to you?



The exposure to Jewish diversity is not only central to the HaZamir experience, it is also shapes the singers' Jewish worldviews. The formative aspect of Jewish pluralism as it is embodied in the HaZamir experience was raised by all those interviewed. No other topic received as consistent and intensive mention.

Singing Bridges and Unites

For some the focus is on the power of singing together, despite different Jewish backgrounds.

"HaZamir was in my life, the prime example of Pluralism that worked! We have to sing. We have Jewish music that unites us, and we have decided that Jewish Unity is most important. We all come together. We all agree on this and we have decided that this is more important than what we each individually think is right."

Formative for Jewish Worldview

Others stressed how being exposed to Jewish pluralism shaped their understanding of being Jewish. This formative experience was reported by alumni from all the denominations. This alum comes from an active Reform Jewish home.

"I was involved in Hebrew School, I didn't drop out after my Bat Mitzvah because I enjoyed going. My family went to services together every single week for 5 straight years leading up to my Bar Mitzvah, and even after. In HaZamir, everything changed. Not only being exposed to other sects of Judaism so directly, but being exposed to other sects of Judaism who were as clueless about me as I was about them, in the beginning, was what started to open my eyes to what is really going on in the Jewish world. The Pluralistic Community that HaZamir forms, Matti [Lazar] didn't start it as a Pluralistic Organization by accident. He knew that we needed to all bridge the gaps. While we do celebrate Shabbat in separate services, we all have opportunities to share with one another what our beliefs are, and why we practice Judaism the way we do."

Another Alumna reported a similar formative experience, but from an Orthodox perspective:

"I think HaZamir made me more open minded in showing me that there are Jewish people that even though they are not practicing, they care about Judaism and Israel. The text means something to them. Just because they don't keep Kosher or keep Shabbat in the way that I do, doesn't mean that Judaism doesn't mean something to them.for me, I think it was very important to see in HaZamir the diversity of Judaism and the way the teenagers practiced. I found it very inspirational to see that even though there were other Jews who didn't practice Judaism the way that I did, according to Halacha, that they still found meaning through singing Jewish texts. I thought that it was great that in a world where Jews argue about everything under the sun and often find that they can't do things together in a unified way because they are fighting over

different things, that music could bring everyone together. That was the message from HaZamir that stuck with me."

Participants' Jewish Lives: Jewish Engagement and Attribution of Impact

A Snapshot: HaZamir Teens' Jewish Engagement Today

In addition to participants' report of HaZamir's impact on musical excellence, self-confidence, and pluralism, HaZamir participants and alumni are engaged with Jewish life. 98% report that they are interested in Judaism or Jewish life. Approximately two-thirds (69%) report a strong commitment to Jewish life, while the rest report being curious and experimenting. 36% are leaders, working to involve others or working to advance Judaism and Jewish life.

	%
Not interested - I am not interested in Judaism or Jewish life	2%
Curious – I think I want to learn more	9%
Exploring – I am actively exploring my relationship to Judaism or Jewish life	12%
Tentatively committed – I will likely continue to be involved with Judaism or Jewish life in the future, but I'm not 100% sure	7%
Committed personally – I will continue to be involved in the future on a personal basis	33%
Committed and working to involve others – I am committed personally and want to engage others, in order that they will become more strongly connected to Judaism or Jewish life.	18%
Committed and working to advancing Judaism/Jewish life – I work in a leadership capacity to adapt Jewish culture and civilization to our society.	18%
Total	100%

Table 9. In thinking about your involvement with Judaism or Jewish life (broadly defined), which of the following best describe you, today?

Pathway to Jewish Leadership

HaZamir alumni are involved in Jewish leadership at very high levels, with 43% of alumni reporting leadership involvement. Given their intensive childhood Jewish socialization, 62% of those who attended day school pursue Jewish leadership. However, while lower, a high percentage, 35% of the non-day school attendees are also involved in Jewish leadership.

In thinking about your involvement with Judaism or Jewish life (broadly defined), which of the following best describe you, today?*	No Day School	Day School	All
Committed and working to advance Judaism/Jewish life – I work in a leadership capacity to adapt Jewish culture and civilization to our society.	20%	30%	23%
Committed and working to involve others – I am committed personally and want to engage others, in order that they will become more strongly connected to Judaism or Jewish life.	15%	32%	20%
Committed personally – I will continue to be involved in the future on a personal basis	37%	29%	33%
Tentatively committed – I will likely continue to be involved with Judaism or Jewish life in the future, but I'm not 100% sure	2%	2%	2%

Exploring – I am actively exploring my relationship to Judaism or Jewish life	19%	2%	12%
Curious – I think I want to learn more	7%	3%	7%
Not interested - I am not interested in Judaism or Jewish life	0%	2%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

*Chart shows alumni only

Table 10. Involvement in Jewish life By Jewish Education in Elementary School

Impact of HaZamir that Participants' Attribute on their Jewish Lives

Fifty-seven percent agree that "the Jewish life I live today is strongly impacted by my participation in HaZamir," of whom 29% "strongly agree."

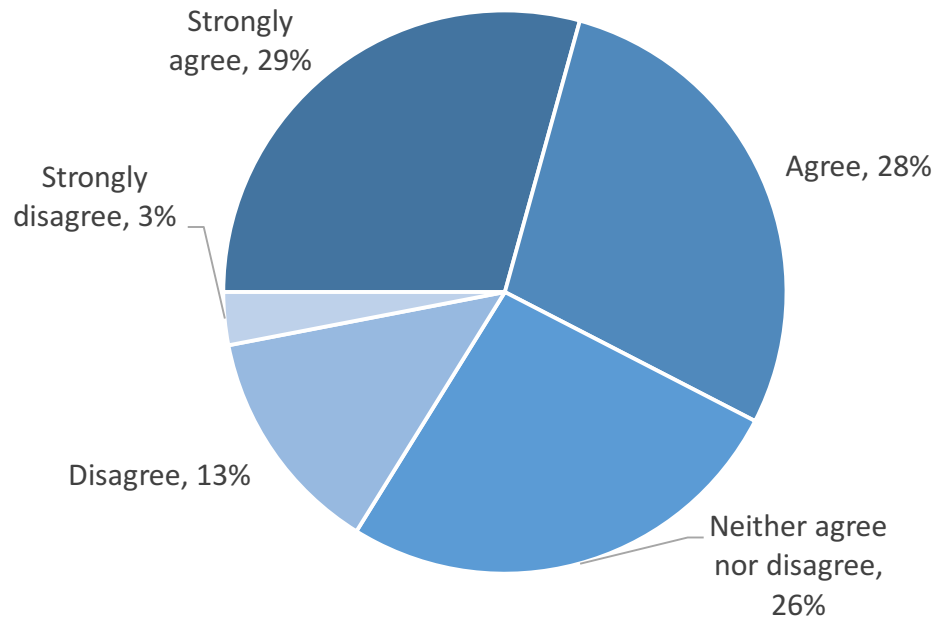


Figure 6 .The Jewish life I live today is strongly impacted by my participation in HaZamir

The Role of Musical Excellence in Promoting a Connection to the Jewish People

In all the interviews, the singers spoke of the role of musical excellence and the accompanying intensity of interaction between music, text of the song and singing connect the singer to the Jewish people and Jews to one another. The following is one representative example:

A higher level of singer will understand, "Whoa, I'm actually singing text that means it's now my responsibility to carry on and remember the miseries that we had, and I have to do it in this moment, but I have to be able to do it effectively every single time I do it." It's for the singers to experience something psycho-emotionally in that moment as well as to perform whatever pitches those are for the audience. We know, not everyone in the audience is going to understand it on that level, but part of what we do in HaZamir is to get every single layer out of the music that we can, because we are not just singing to perform.

Question: What are you singing for?

We come together to sing for a greater understanding of how music bridges the gap in the different sects of Judaism. That's what it is. Above all else, HaZamir come together for the music, but it is not for the music that we come together. It is not because of the music that we come together. It is through our shared learning, not only about the music, but of our shared history, and our shared understanding of what has lead us all to be able to come together and sing this music, and what has gone into the creation of this music. That's what really ends up bringing people together.

In their written responses to the survey, the alumni attest to diverse and highly impactful experiences on their Jewish lives. The following are examples of prominent themes:

Spiritual

- "During my sophomore year, I was undergoing some issues with my faith as a very close friend was dying of cancer. I was absolutely inconsolable and depressed. However, during the reform prayer service I heard everyone around me singing and connecting and I felt at peace with the uncertainty and so connected with my culture, and it sort of saved me a little bit."
- "HaZamir helped me hear, and subsequently sing the song of my soul. Throughout my 5 years, I was encouraged to not only find my voice, but to honor it and share it with the world. Not only was I encouraged to be an individual, but I did so within the context of a supportive community, a group of teenagers that cared about Judaism and Israel and singing Hebrew texts."

Social

- "Finding a Jewish community when coming from a strong Jewish background but in a secular public school. Relating to other kids who also loved music, and not being embarrassed about walking around singing or excitingly participating in Jewish life and activities. Met many good Jewish friends."
- "It was an essential part of my connection to Judaism and how I felt at home w my Jewishness. I made extraordinary friends. 23 years later we are still connected. "

Pluralism

- "Gave me positive exposure me to alternative forms of Jewish religious expression that I was not previously aware of" - HaZamir is one of my only all-denominational activities, and has lead me to understand and appreciate the diverse Jewish community. "
- "Sitting at Mifgash during my junior year, I was sitting across the table from my co-teen leader while facilitating a conversation about how the trans-denominational mission of HaZamir has exposed us to other sects of Judaism. My co-teen leader, a dear friend, admitted that "if it had not been for HaZamir, she never would have considered me, a Reform Jew, to be Jewish at all." HaZamir is a place where you are allowed not only to explore the history of the Judaism that you practice but also to expose you to every form of Judaism across the spectrum of the faith and the culture that it is, all the while creating a unified, pluralistic community by studying the same scores and performing on the same stage as one choir. "

Connecting to Israel

- " For me, the most meaningful aspect of HaZamir was meeting other teens from Israel that were the same age as I was. This was my first real exposure to Israel and the hardships that the country and it's people faced. It was extremely life-changing to see that kids my age were in such a different place in life than I was. They were worried about protecting their country and I was thinking about college. They were putting their lives at risk to make sure that there would always be a safe place for Jews. Meeting these Israeli teens helped to strengthen my connection to Israel and helped me to become the Zionist I am today. "
- " Meeting Israelis stands out as a meaningful aspect of my Hazamir experience. I developed great friendships and a better connection to Israel as a result. "

Strengthened Connection

- " HaZamir allows teens to take ownership of our culture. Instead of instead of singing "the music of the Jewish People," I know I am singing "the music of MY people." this difference cannot be underscored. When I hear a prayer/text HaZamir has sung while in shul, I feel a special connection to that text. "
- "I am a secular Israeli. I don't describe myself as religious, and do not have the strongest connection to Judaism. Hazamir for me, was a great place to learn more about my religion, through my favorite thing- music. Meeting American Jews, people my age that share my religion and love of music, was a very powerful thing that also made me look at Judaism in a different way."

Enabled Connection

- "It gave me a chance to explore my Judaism in ways non-musical methods would not. Music has always moved me, secular or religious."
- "My sense of Jewish identity was formed in HaZamir. Without HaZamir, i would never have found where i belong in the Jewish people, and would never have felt the immense passion I experience listening to our voices blend beautifully. That is how I connect to my Judaism, and HaZamir created that outlet for me. "

Leadership

Sixty percent of the respondents agree that HaZamir helped them to develop as a leader, with 36% strongly agreeing (figure 10).

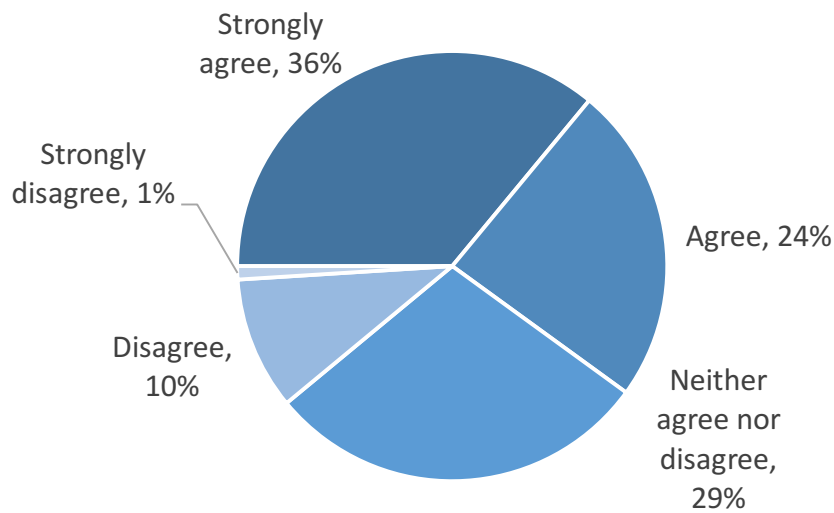


Figure 7 .My experience in HaZamir helped me to develop as a leader

72% of the “broad impact group” agree that HaZamir helped them develop as a leader. (table 11).

Column %	Core Impact	Core + Broad Impact
Strongly disagree	1%	2%
Disagree	21%	2%
Neither agree or disagree	33%	24%
Agree	26%	23%
Strongly agree	19%	49%
Total	100%	100%



In the written comments, respondents refer to the acquisition of confidence to stand up and perform which affects other parts of their lives. They also refer to taking on responsibilities of helping others in their groups; especially, as they get older and are responsible for helping the younger singers.

Some respondents referred specifically to the "HaZamir Teen Leader program". The following are examples of references to the Teen Leadership program:

"Before joining HaZamir, I was never one to step out of my comfort zone. Being a leader in my section at my chapter and in the chamber choir helped me to take initiative. However, the Teen Leadership program was what made me realize I wanted to be a leader, and it made me a better person as a result."

"As I am a Teen Leader in HaZamir, I am given various roles that put me in a place of leadership. In addition to the responsibilities of a singer to learn my music and engage, I must help create an inclusive environment and encourage singers to reach their greatest musical and social potential."

"As a Teen Leader, I have grown into a leadership position in HaZamir and have gained leadership skills through leading activities and exploring workshops with other Teen Leaders."

The majority of HaZamir singers do not attend the Teen Leader program; nevertheless, many still report acquiring leadership skills and experience. For example:

"As a 12th grader, I was given the opportunity to lead warmups, lead sectionals, and occasional conduct a piece. I think this was hugely influential in my decision to become a music teacher and choral conductor myself. I will always be grateful to Cantor Charles Osborne for those opportunities."

"HaZamir helped me grow as a leader because I felt a responsibility to help others learn music and perform their best. I always wanted my chapter to be upstanding and wanted everyone to get the most out of their experience in HaZamir, so I took it upon myself in my last few years to become a section leader and group role model. This taught me a lot about leadership and devotion to what I am passionate about."

"As a teenager, HaZamir helped me come out of my shell and express myself freely - this started through music, but led to a freedom of expression in other areas. In doing so, I felt an ability to corral others in my group to work together as a team of singers."

Connecting Israelis to the Jewish World

The Israeli participants and alumni report high impact on their Jewish identity. Eighty-three percent agree that participation in HaZamir increased their sense of pride in being Israeli; and, 79% agree that participation in HaZamir increased their respect for Jewish life outside of Israel (figure 8).

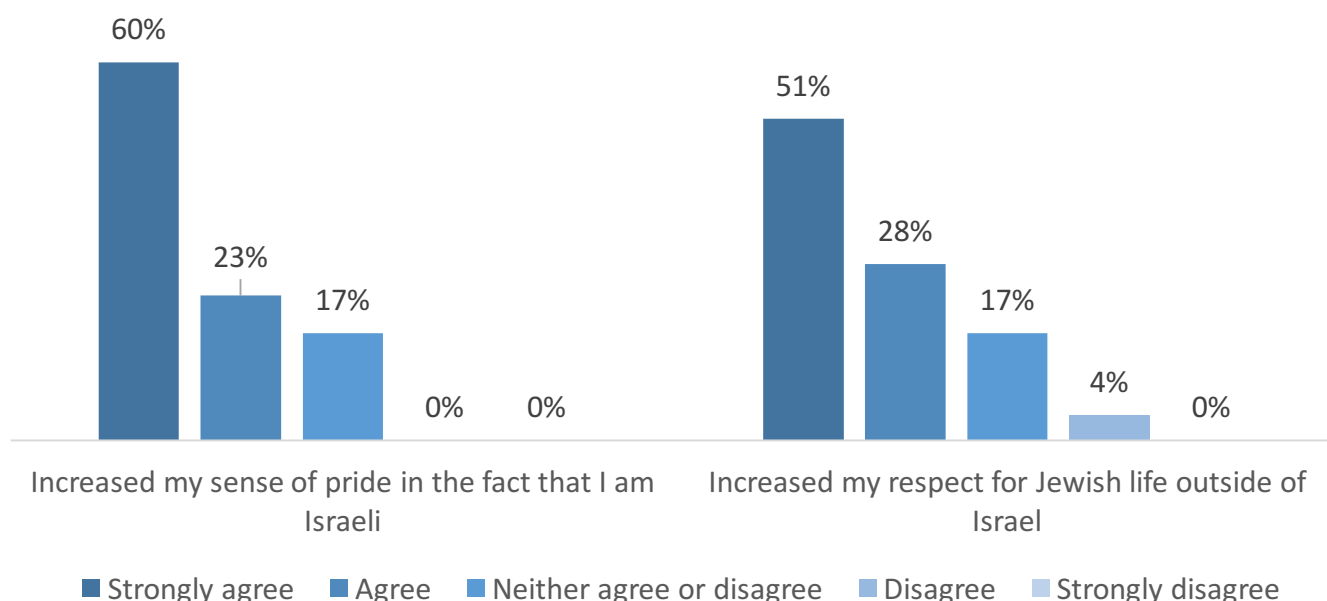


Figure 8 .Impact of HaZamir Participation on Israeli Jewish Identity

For most measures the Israeli participants report a similar HaZamir experience and its impact at similar levels to the Americans. The two exceptions where the Israelis significantly outscore the Americans are "exposure to the Jewish tradition," and "raised desire to engage with Jewish texts" (table 12).

Average score: 0 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree	Israelis	Americans
At HaZamir, I experience a culture of musical excellence	3.7	3.6
As a participant in a HaZamir chapter I am very committed to making my musical performance top-notch	3.7	3.5
A significant part of the HaZamir experience includes interacting with Jews who were different from me in terms of their Jewish background	3.6	3.4
Based on my experience, anyone who identifies as Jewish, no matter their religious affiliation, will feel welcome at HaZamir	3.6	3.5
HaZamir exposes me to a broad breadth of the Jewish tradition	3.5	3.1
I feel that HaZamir offers a safe social environment for me to grow as a Jewish teen	3.4	3.3
My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Judaism	3.2	3.0
Through music, HaZamir deepens my feeling of connection to the Jewish people	3.1	3.1
My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Israel	2.9	2.8
The experience of Jewish music at HaZamir raises my desire to engage with Jewish texts	2.7	2.3

Table 11 .In thinking about your experience in HaZamir, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Organized by Country

Building Connection Between American and Israeli Jews

HaZamir emphasizes developing a strong positive connection to Israel and Israelis. All the interviewees (who are also all Americans) reported strong positive impact from exposure to Israel and Israeli's at HaZamir.

This one alumna captured several elements of the way that HaZamir develops the singers' connection to Israel, including: developing a personal connection to Israelis, the experience of singing at the HaZamir Festival with the Israelis and singing in Hebrew.

"Really, a big thing with HaZamir is honoring Israel and honoring the soldiers, so one of our songs that we sing is a Prayer for Peace in Israel. It was always a huge deal and a huge part of HaZamir because we always had Israelis in our choir. We grew to know and love these people and every year, the seniors, we knew that they were going to go off into the army, and everybody would get very emotional that part of our HaZamir family has to go into the army and we just want them to be safe and we send our love to them. So that's such an emotional song every year that all the seniors just get hysterical because our heart is with these people that we know so personally. And some of the songs are just so moving and haunting. There's also something very special about singing in Hebrew. As far as the Jewish texts, most of our songs are in Hebrew, so often times there is an English translation, so we would read through that and talk about it. I don't know if I can put it into words. That's our people's language and to sing anything in that language just gives it this elevated meaning and this special feeling that is really hard to describe, but I've always loved it."

Another alum, who has given a lot of thought to the topic, spoke of the mutual benefits the experience of singing together brings to both the Americans and Israelis.

*"For me, that was a very important part of the program too, just getting to know and interact with and co-create something with the Israelis. **[What was that like for you?]** It was very validating. It really felt in a way, that little elf in the Jewish World does, is really a kind of pure cultural, Zionist project, in that Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews are co-creating the new Jewish-Hebrew culture together and bringing elements of it from themselves, from each of them and sharing it. To me HaZamir really actualizes the Zionist theorist, Ahad Ha'am's, ideal of Jewish culture and the Israel-Diaspora relationship in ways that little else that I've come across really does. ... Israel is not a place where different Diasporas can gather and do their Diaspora thing, but where a new Hebrew culture did emerge, and that gets re-exported to the Jewish Diaspora, and that's what HaZamir is, in addition to things flowing in both directions. Having the Israeli kids encounter and sing this very American Jewish music alongside, and equal in value to music from Israeli composers, I think that's really the fulfilment of a purist cultural Zionist theory. "*

The Social Israel-America Experience

There are fewer Israeli HaZamir chapters, many of which are new. The result is that the Israeli participants have a more intensive social experience interacting with Americans, than is the case for the average American participant interacting with the Israelis. The Israelis are hosted by HaZamir participants' families when they arrive for the HaZamir Festival and also participate in organized dialogue encounters [Mifgashim]. Due to the disproportionate numbers and the structure of the program [the Israelis coming to the United States, rather than the Americans to Israel] the impact on the Israelis is on average higher. For those Americans that do have personal contact with the Israelis and participate in the organized dialogue the impact is also high.

Almost all of the Israelis agree that a significant part of the HaZamir experience is meeting Americans (91%) and that they made meaningful friendships (89%); as opposed to 50% (meeting) and 47% (meaningful) of the Americans (tables 13 and 14).

	[Israelis] Meeting Americans	[Americans] Meeting Israelis
Strongly disagree	2%	7%
Disagree	2%	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%	26%
Agree	19%	23%
Strongly agree	72%	27%
	100%	100%

Table 12 . A significant part of the HaZamir experience for me is meeting Americans / meeting Israelis

	With Americans	With Israelis
Strongly disagree	0%	8%
Disagree	2%	17%
Neither agree or disagree	9%	28%
Agree	30%	21%
Strongly agree	59%	26%
	100%	100%

Table 13. I made meaningful friendships with Americans / with Israelis

Quality of Interaction with Israelis Correlates with the Overall Jewish Impact of HaZamir on the Americans

To the extent that respondents report interaction with the Israelis and establishing meaningful friendships with them, so they are also more likely to report broad impact of HaZamir on their Jewish lives. Thirty-two percent of those who report only core impact report meaningful friendships with the Israelis as opposed to 58% of those who report broad impact.

Column %	Core Impact	Core + Broad Impact
Strongly disagree	14%	2%
Disagree	24%	14%
Neither agree or disagree	31%	26%
Agree	16%	25%
Strongly agree	16%	33%
Total	100%	100%

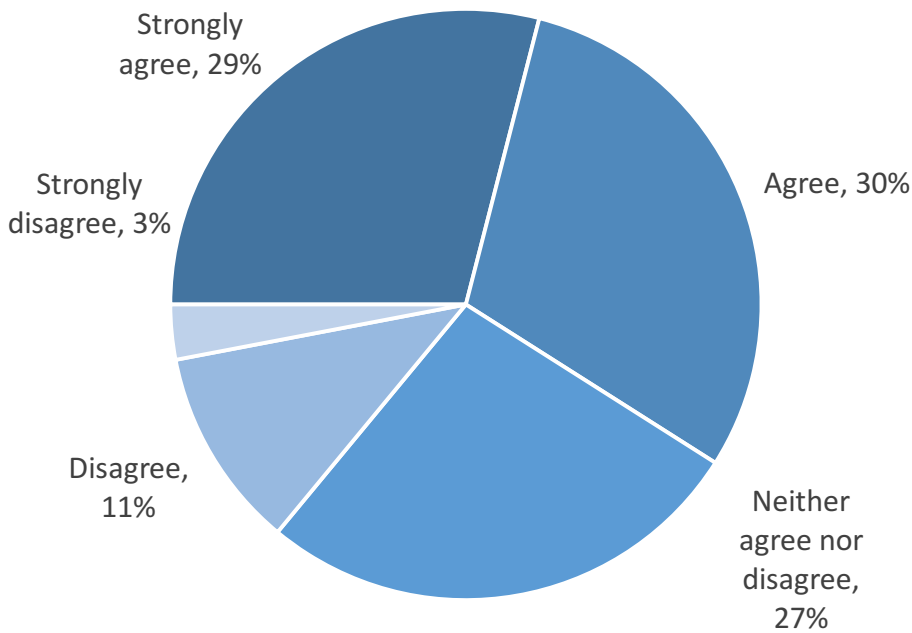
Table 14. I made meaningful friendships with Israelis

Impact on Connection to Israel

Fifty-nine percent agree that their HaZamir experience has deepened their sense of connection to Israel (figure 9)

Between 59% and 67% agree that the interaction with the Israelis has raised their motivation to speak out on behalf of Israel and Israelis, increased their desire for a meaningful connection to Israelis and increased a positive sense of attachment to Israel (figure 10).

Figure 9 .My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Israel



Reported Impact as a Result of Interacting with Israelis

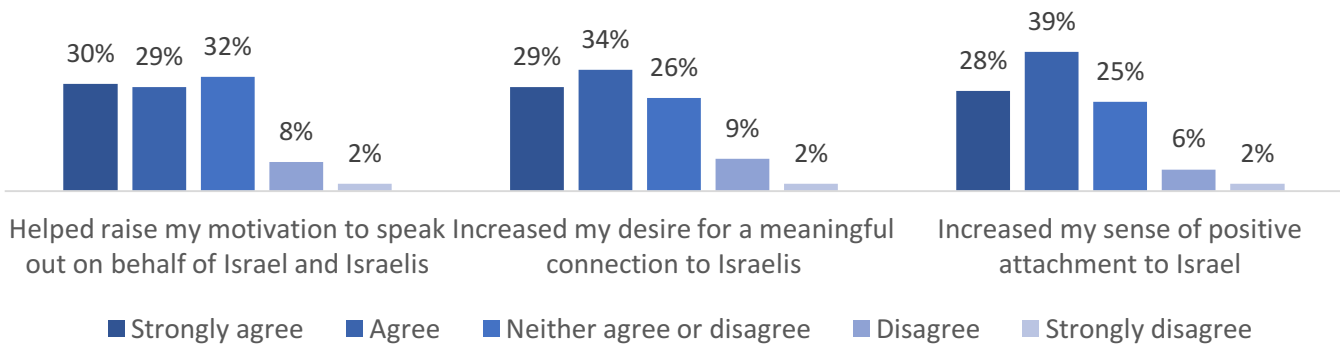


Figure 10. My experience interacting with Israelis at HaZamir has

As we saw in the previous section, those reporting "core impact" are far less likely to report impact from their interaction with Israelis in HaZamir. Table 16 shows 38% of the core impact group agreeing that they have a deepened sense of connection to Israel, as a result of their HaZamir experience as opposed to 76% of the broad impact group. The core impact group is five times less likely to "strongly agree."

Table 15 .My experience at HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Israel. Organized by HaZamir Impact Groups

Column %	Core Impact	Core + Broad Impact
Strongly disagree	6%	1%
Disagree	20%	3%
Neither agree or disagree	36%	20%
Agree	29%	31%
Strongly agree	9%	45%
Total	100%	100%

Extent of Exposure to Israel Plays a Role

Twenty-seven percent of the American respondents have never visited Israel, 37% have visited two or more times or currently live in Israel and 17% have lived in Israel for more than six months or currently live there.

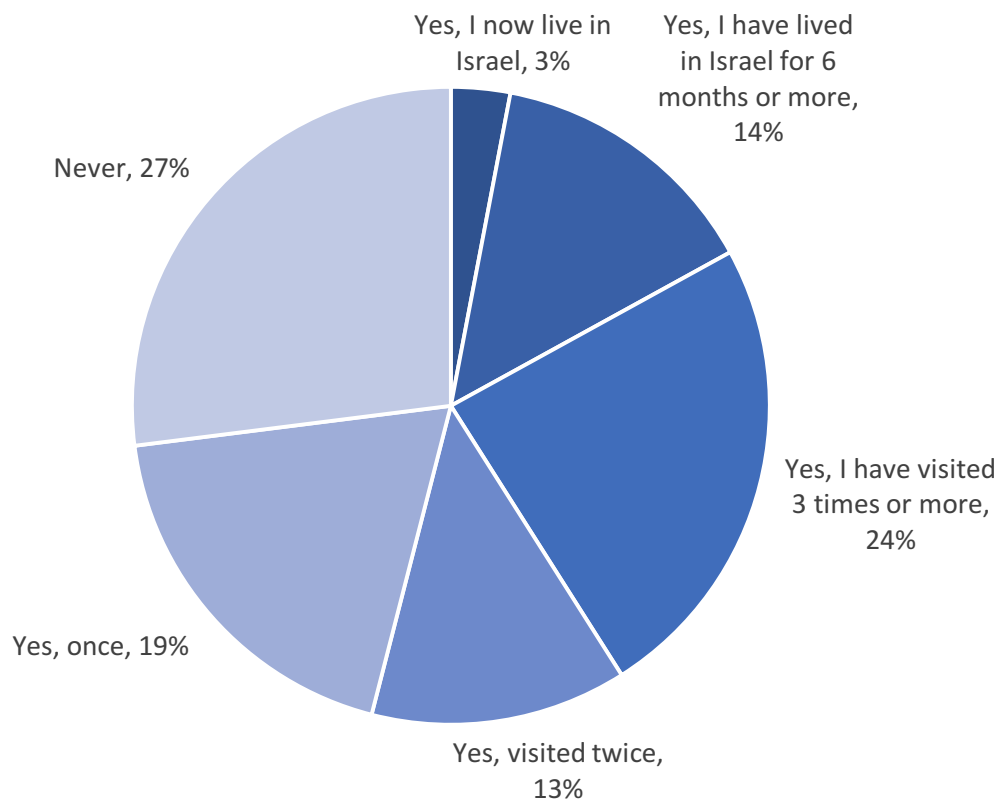


Figure 11 .Have you ever been to Israel?

There is no correlation between the number of visits to Israel on the answers to the measures of Israel connection shown on the previous pages. Respondents who have never traveled to Israel and respondents who have travelled to Israel many times are as likely to attribute impact from their HaZamir experience on their connection to Israel and Israelis.

There is correlation between Israel visits and impact respondents attribute from HaZamir on their Jewish lives. The "core impact group" are the most likely to have traveled to Israel multiple times, with 61% having traveled two or more times, in comparison to 48% of the broad impact group (table 17). An explanation for this correlation is provided in the discussion below (see section titled: “Day school education and greater exposure to Israel.”)

Table 16 . Have you ever been to Israel? Organized by HaZamir Impact Groups

Column %	Core Impact	Core + Broad Impact
Yes, I now live in Israel	5%	2%
Yes, I have lived in Israel for 6 months or more	18%	11%
Yes, I have visited 3 times or more	21%	25%
Yes, visited twice	17%	10%
Yes, once	18%	21%
Never	22%	31%
Total	100%	100%

Discussion and Recommendations

HaZamir provides a highly sophisticated experiential educational environment. The singers report a high level educational experience involving the interaction of social enjoyment and the acquisition of Jewish and musical skills and knowledge. The education is experiential. The teens are pulled into an intensive experience of Jewish socialization and knowledge acquisition without the resistance they are likely to feel in school-based settings. A common love of singing, not Jewish education is at center; the result, is an intensive and impactful Jewish education that includes a variety of impacts for the large majority of participants, including:

- A strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connection to Israel
- Motivation to pursue Jewish singing and their personal Jewish growth.
- Confidence in their ability to work with peers and lead a group
- A pluralistic worldview in which the teens views Jews who are different from themselves as sharing in and communicating a common Jewish heritage.

Program alumni are engaged in Jewish life in general, and as leaders at very high levels. Jewish leadership participation is also present among both day school and non-day school attendees at much higher levels than one would reasonably expect in the general Jewish population.

Almost all of the HaZamir singers and alumni report impact for their sense of self confidence, the experience of flow when singing, the integration of music into their Jewish lives, and the formation of their pluralistic Jewish worldview. Yet, two-thirds also report broader impact. Other forms of impact include influencing how the singers view their spiritual connection to Judaism, exposure to the breadth of Jewish tradition, interest in Jewish texts and a strengthened connection to the Jewish people, Israel and Israelis.

Three factors distinguish those who report “broad impact” from the “core impact group.”

Time Involved with HaZamir

The more years an individual is involved in HaZamir the broader the impact they report on their Jewish lives. Whereas 81% of the five-year participants report a broad impact, that number drops to 66% for those in their second year and 25% for those in their first year. We learn there is a significant impact as a result of participation over time. For those singers who extend their participation beyond one year, at least two-thirds are reporting broad impact on their lives that strengthens their Jewish identity and sense of belonging to the Jewish people, an impact that only intensifies with each additional year of participation.

Day school education and greater exposure to Israel

There is a relationship between other Jewish involvements, such as day school and Israel travel and the extent of impact of HaZamir on a participant’s Jewish life. Table 18 below shows that the respondents who report broad impact are less likely to have attended day school. We learned in table 17 that those who report broad impact are also less likely to have visited Israel two times or more.

	HaZamir Impact Groups	
	Core Impact	Core + Broad Impact
Jewish day school	57%	35%
Non-Jewish day school	43%	65%
	100%	100%

Table 17. What is the main source of Jewish education you received until the age of 13? Organized by HaZamir Impact Groups

Based on the interviews and a reading of the data we learn that for

approximately half of the teens with higher levels of involvement in Jewish life, HaZamir’s impact is primarily on excelling in Jewish singing, an increased sense of self confidence and the exposure to Jews who are different than them. Due to their relatively greater Jewish knowledge and exposure to Jewish life and Israel, these alumni attribute their stronger Jewish identity to these other involvements, and not to the HaZamir experience. Yet, there are as many with similar background characteristics who do report that HaZamir had a broad impact on them. Why? The answer is found in the extent of leadership involvement and interaction with Israelis.

Leadership Involvement and Interaction with the Israelis

We learned in this report that those reporting that HaZamir has had a broad impact on them are more likely to report interaction with Israelis being part of their HaZamir experience and are also more likely to report meaningful friendships with them; they are also more likely to report impact on their leadership abilities. These factors are partially due to the structure of the HaZamir educational program. Thus, it stands to reason that changes to the educational program might lead to broader Jewish impact on those who currently are not reporting it.

From interviews and written comments, we learn that leadership impact comes from three channels: 1) the natural progression of older singers helping younger ones, 2) receiving formal leadership responsibilities within the local HaZamir group, and 3) participating in the HaZamir Teen Leader program. The latter two factors are programmatic and can be structured and/or grown to enable more participants to receive leadership opportunities.

Due to the smaller number of Israelis than Americans, only a selected minority of the Americans interact directly with the Israelis in an intensive way when they visit, either in the Mifgash [encounter] program or through home hosting. If HaZamir Israel continues to grow at its current rate, more Americans will likely gain greater opportunities to interact with the Israelis in the future. Until that time, HaZamir might, (a) work to multiply opportunities for interaction with the Israeli singers so that more of the American participants can benefit and/or (b) make sure that each year different American participants get the opportunity for interaction with the Israelis. Over the course of high school all will ideally have an opportunity for meaningful interaction with Israelis.



In summary, **singing in HaZamir is a highly impactful Jewish experience** and the program **alumni are engaged with Jewish life with high levels of leadership involvement**. Almost all the **singers report an experience which shapes their Jewish worldview and integrates their Jewish and musical lives**. **Two-thirds report even broader impact on their Jewish lives**.

Those who sing for more than one year are the most likely to report broad impact. To further amplify the impact of HaZamir, the program should focus on lengthening the involvement of teen singers by beginning the program in 8th grade; expanding options for interaction with the Israelis; increasing leadership opportunities; and formalizing the educational curriculum.