

Shalom Bayit—Peace of the Home:

Ritual and Tradition in American Jewish Families

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Abstract

Utilizing a sample of 30 regionally-diverse families ($N = 75$ individuals) belonging to various branches of Judaism, we qualitatively explored how Judaism enhanced and facilitated participants' general life strengths and relational strengths (i.e., marriage and parenting). Based on our findings, Jewish rituals, traditions, and observances had a positive influence on participants' personal lives and family relationships. A sense of duty and responsibility felt toward Jewish observance and to family relationships seemed to facilitate much of this influence.

Keywords: Judaism; Jewish families; family; religiosity; marriage; parenting; Qualitative research

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Jews comprise only 0.2% of the global population, at approximately 13.85 million Jews worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2012). About 41% (5.69 million) of the world's Jewish population reside in the United States—in fact, there may be (numerically) more Jews in the United States than in Israel (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country). American Jewish families are the focus of this article.

Judaism is the religious aspect of a larger Jewish culture. As with other religious groups, there is a great deal of diversity in how individuals practice their religion. Yet, even with this diversity, people who identify as Jewish often share many of the same cultural beliefs, practices, and values. Jews in the U.S. often characterize themselves as belonging to a unique cultural or ethnic group. For some, being Jewish is identified by religious observance, whereas for others being Jewish is primarily centered on shared values and preferences for specific foods as well as a shared dislike for anti-Semitism (Semans & Fish, 2000). In this article, we focus on American Jews who are religiously observant and are involved with a synagogue.

The four main branches of Judaism in America include Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox¹ (Hatch & Marks, 2014). These groups tend to vary in forms and degrees of religious observance, with Orthodox, itself highly diverse, generally having the strictest levels of observance. Across all of its branches, many of Judaism's distinct rituals and traditions relate to family life, as discussed next.

Literature Review

¹ In this article, Chabbad is included as part of Orthodox Judaism, although there are some who view Chabbad as a separate branch.

Judaism has survived and evolved for thousands of years. Some scholars have partially credited the survival of Judaism to the importance and value Judaism places on the family (Schlossberger & Hecker, 1998). Jewish sacred texts and laws emphasize the importance of marriage, childbearing, and childrearing responsibilities (Krieger, 2010). Indeed, both the Torah (the Five books of Moses) and the Talmud (rabbinical teachings regarding Jewish law) teach of the importance, even centrality, of familial relationships. While the Torah provides some guidelines for marriage, the Talmud addresses marriage in much more depth, including expositions on responsibilities, obligations, and practices that should occur within marriage. In America, many religious practices ideally take place within the home and deal with spouses' responsibilities to nurture their children—and to honor their progenitors (Krieger, 2010).

Davey, Fish, and Robila (2001) found that while some Jewish individuals felt that their religious rituals and traditions were inherently important or even sacred, others believed rituals were important because of the perceived benefit these observances had on their family relationships. In a recent qualitative article, Marks, Hatch, and Dollahite (2017) captured both the sacred and relational nature of one Jewish family tradition—observing the Sabbath (*Shabbat* in Hebrew) from sundown Friday to sundown on Saturday, wherein no work is to be performed. The predominant theme that recurred in interviews with Jewish families in this sample was that *Shabbat* observance “can bring the family closer together.” Participants reported that eating together, blessing children, and even preparing traditional foods were activities that reportedly fostered family unity and closeness.

Further evidence of the importance of the family in Judaism may also be seen clearly in the lives of Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jewish families generally have the highest levels of religious observance and also have rates of marriage and fertility that are significantly higher

than the general population (Hatch & Marks, 2014). In addition, compared with the other branches of Judaism, the modern Orthodox view about family life and practice is described in great detail and with much specificity by scholars such as Lamm (1980) and Greenberg (1983).

However, despite the importance of family in Judaism, little research has focused on family processes in Jewish families (Krieger, 2010; Marks et al., 2017). In this article, we identify and explore strengths in exemplary Jewish families (that were referred to us by their rabbis) that reportedly help foster positive outcomes in life, marriage, and parenting.

Method

We refer the reader to the special issue introduction for a detailed description of the *American Families of Faith* project's methods and sample (Dollahite & Marks, 2018; see also Marks & Dollahite, 2017). Additional information regarding sampling and coding is offered at <http://AmericanFamiliesofFaith.byu.edu/participants>. A step-by-step guide to our innovative approach to team-based qualitative data analysis is also available (Marks, 2015). Here, we briefly outline the characteristics of the 30 Jewish families ($N = 75$) that participated in this study.

Each of the 30 families were involved with a Jewish synagogue. Interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, with both spouses present. In some cases, children (aged 10-20; $N = 15$) were also interviewed. Participants were from California, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Utah. Interview length varied from one to four hours. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and resulted in nearly 1,000 pages of data. Participants were primarily recruited through their rabbi's referral but a few Orthodox families were added via participant referral. Husbands' ages ranged from 32-58 (mean age = 50) and the wives' ages ranged from 35-59 (mean age = 47). Children's ages ranged from 10-20 (mean age = 16). The sample was all White and were well educated—all completed high school and a

majority of both wives and husbands held graduate degrees. Participants were recruited from three of the four major branches of Judaism, including Conservative (5), Orthodox (9), Reform (14), as well as two who did not specify their branch. It should be noted that many people in the Jewish community refer to themselves as “just Jewish”—others report that they are Jewish by heritage but have no religion. The latter group are often classified with the religious “Nones.”

Findings

The fabric of ritual and tradition seemed to be interwoven in marriage and family life for the observant Jewish families who shared their experiences with us. Here, we will share accounts that address domains of (a) General Life Strengths, (b) Marital Strengths, and (c) Parent-Child Strengths.

In Hebrew, the term for virtue is *Midah*. The *Midot* are often explicitly taught to Jewish children, however, actual behavior is determined by the *mitzvot* or commandments which include both the rituals and ethics of Judaism. Jewish family members often referred to specific rituals and tradition that offered both a template and sense of purpose for these different dimensions of lived experience. As an Orthodox mother named Naomi² stated, “Judaism is very explicit in a lot of ways. There’s no area of life . . . that hasn’t been addressed in Judaism.” She further expressed how this explicit guidance had impacted her life and relationships:

It’s very incredible [how much] guidance that we get. I think that it’s hard to separate G-d³ from Torah in Judaism. . . . G-d gave the Jewish people Torah, and Torah tells us how to live and how to treat your spouse.

As we will see, Judaism provided rituals and traditions for many aspects of family life, and participants’ accounts of observing these permeate our findings.

Theme 1: General Life Strengths

² All participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect identity.

³ When Orthodox Jews write the Divine Name, they typically write it “G-d” out of respect. In this article, we follow this practice.

Marriage and family relationships are an important part of life but broader values and strengths also influence marriage and family life. In this section, we address what we call general life strengths. Based on participant reports, Jewish rituals and traditions enabled families to celebrate times of joy and to cope with difficulty, pain, and loss. A youth named Caleb, from the Reform branch, shared how Jewish ritual helped him cope with the violent death of his uncle:

I had an uncle who was murdered. . . . I found comfort [in] the ritual that's associated with death. [It] really helped me deal with the suddenness and the sadness of it. . . . The burial ritual, the funeral ritual, the *Shiva* ritual of staying at home [with family] for seven days . . . are things that helped me cope in the short term. And during the service . . . the *Kaddish* prayer . . . the prayer for memory [or] prayer for the dead, [was] very comforting for me. It's not that I necessarily believe that there is a G-d listening to my prayers. It's more that the comfort of doing something that I've done all of my life has made it comfortable and given me the space to deal with those kinds of trying situations.

For Caleb and several other participants, Jewish ritual and tradition provided comfort and served as coping mechanisms. Ziva, a Reform mother, similarly expressed how Judaism sustained her through challenges—and “enriched” her life:

You don't have to [wait until the] end of your life [to] suddenly be wise. If you use [Jewish] tradition[s] and the teachings early in your life, you can have wisdom . . . by just trusting the tradition. . . . It's tradition [that] enrich[es] your life . . . and [teaches] how to make ordinary moments . . . holy [and] how to make dreadful moments bearable.

Ziva mentioned “trusting the tradition” (indeed, she mentioned tradition three times in four lines). For her, tradition is the “wisdom” that “make[s] dreadful moments bearable,” and transforms “ordinary moments [into something] holy.” A Reform father named Abe similarly reflected on the “holy.”

I look at the world around me, and I look at the cosmos. . . . Everything . . . is holy. There is a holiness to the world, the grand world, that we have to look at through many different avenues. Some of it is science, some of it is faith. . . . Science tells us how things are happening. Faith tells us what we should do with [that information] and how we should make sure [to] enjoy the beauty of the world around us.

Abe's account reflected how Judaism colors his holy view of the cosmos and “the beauty of the world.” According to Jewish tradition, celebrating times of joy and coping with difficulty, pain, and loss are examples of *mitzvot*. Although the respondents of this study did not explicitly use

the term mitzvot, the behaviors mentioned in the interviews suggest Judaism's formal mitzvot inform many participants' views of family relationships and processes.

Theme 2: Relational Strengths in Marriage

In this section on marriage, we present three subthemes that identify how Judaism reportedly influenced and enhanced marriage. The three subthemes related to marriage include: (a) marriage is sacred, (b) ritual facilitates relational success, and (c) relational success is a duty.

Marriage theme 1: Marriage is sacred. An emergent theme regarding marital unity was the idea that marriage is sacred and transcendent. This conceptual theme is somewhat unique. Most of the other themes address Jewish rituals and traditions but this theme addressed a sacred *belief*. While the other themes provide more practical applications of Judaism in marriage, this theme offers more idealized perceptions of what marriage can and should be like. A sacred and idealized view of marriage was offered by Moriah, an Orthodox wife, who expressed how sharing a religious identity with one's spouse can enrich marriage:

I believe that we're supposed to try to find a partner . . . to share [life with] on the deepest level; [the] joyous things that life will bring us, and then the incredible challenges that will certainly come. . . . If you share the religious . . . if you have that . . . in common . . . a religious level, a spiritual level, the joys will be even more joyful and more enriching, and the really difficult times will be more bearable because you have each other.

This account illustrates how Judaism reportedly enhanced her marital unity, in Moriah's words, "on the deepest level." Taking this idea further, for some religiously active participants marriage not only deepened their marital relationship, marriage was also a transcendent experience in that it allowed them "to ascend to a higher level" of sanctity. Eli, an Orthodox husband stated,

The purpose of marriage is to increase the holiness of human relationships. . . . We hope to have an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimension, where we help each other to try to ascend to a higher level, or at least become more what we should be.

Leah, a Conservative wife, similarly expressed how she experienced holiness in her marriage:

I have . . . felt, metaphorically, the hand of G-d at very pivotal moments in life. I mean, one can be together in a room and have little emotional contact, but there clearly have been times when the contact between us has been so strong and so different. I . . . look at those times as [experiences] when [my husband] and I

were connected more than usual, and those would be the times . . . that we were closer to G-d and each other, and we were moving toward being more holy individuals and as a couple. I think that those times, coincidentally, some of them definitely did come as a result of religious observance . . .

While these three accounts (two Orthodox, one Conservative) offer portraits of what some Jews we interviewed said that marriage can be, Leah's account addressed one pathway to *how* such relationships were achieved—through “religious observance.” Of course, not all Jews would have said similar things. Ways that Judaism reportedly enhanced marital quality are discussed in the following two sections.

Marriage theme 2: Ritual facilitates relational success. This section presents narratives focused on practical applications of Judaism within marriage. This theme captures how Jewish rituals and practices strengthened marriages. Tevia, a Reform husband, explained how sharing Judaism had unified his marriage to Ruth:

There's a lot of stuff I think we take for granted about our relationship in terms of knowing that we're on the same page with stuff. We don't even need to talk about it. . . . We're on the same page. . . . We just know that if [my wife] said, “I want to stay home this Saturday and just observe *Shabbat* [at home],” she knows I'm there. If she wanted to do something at the synagogue, we go.

For Tevia, sharing Jewish rituals with his wife was very important to fostering unity in their relationship. The role of ritual and sacred “routine” was also discussed by an Orthodox wife named Asha. In response to the question, “Are there ways that your religious beliefs or practices help you to avoid or reduce marital conflict?” Asha responded,

The first thing that comes to mind is the routine. And another thing that I've come to understand and believe is that religious belief and truly religious moments don't just come from . . . nowhere. One has to be in the habit of religious practice and religious observance. . . . If you wait for the mood to hit you, it never will. But if you go, if you observe, if you practice, on a regular . . . basis, then you're open to G-d. . . . I think that our routine of going to synagogue every week, that it is something we do whether we really feel like it or not . . . it is what we chose to do. It's about the Sabbath. It's what you do on the Sabbath. It is such a calming experience, when tensions are high, when frustration is high . . .

For Asha, the Sabbath is a “calming experience.” For Israel, an Orthodox husband, “the rules” of Jewish tradition reportedly helped him and his wife avoid conflict. He explained,

Things that might have been conflicts before aren't even issues because we know the rules. What are we doing on Saturday? Well, that's not an issue. Where and what are we eating? It's not an issue. . . . This is the way it is. I want to go [somewhere], we look at the calendar. ‘Oh no, we can't go here because it's *Yom*

Tov, it's a holiday," [but] it's . . . okay. It's not a conflict [between us]. These are not issues because there's a higher authority that we all are agreed with. That's our priority.

In these narratives, Asha and Israel expressed how Jewish tradition, ritual, and observance seemed to facilitate success and unity in their marriages by reducing, removing, or pre-empting potential "conflict" and "tensions." In the next theme, we further address how Judaism reportedly enhanced marital quality by helping couples reduce and resolve marital conflict.

Marriage theme 3: Relational success is a duty. While the previous themes address what participants desired in their marriages and how these ideals were pursued, the present theme of "Relational Success is a Duty" addresses how having strong marriages was not only a personal or relational desire but was seen also as a sacred duty. Tamara expressed:

I think one of the strong points of Judaism is the sense of personal responsibility, and certainly in any conflict we've had it's been really important to own up to whatever part we have in the conflict. And that's something that comes straight from Judaism, that thought of, "Did I do something wrong? And if so, I need to fix it, and apologize for it"—as opposed to just, "Well, it'll go away, forget about it." And that's one of the things that I really admire about Jerry. He will always apologize. He will always say, "I'm wrong."

Another participant, a Conservative husband named Asher, expressed how marriage comes with a responsibility to work through difficulties and preserve the marriage "at all costs." He shared,

[Marriage] is a sacred bond that should be upheld at all costs, if at all possible. I think from that perspective, [my wife] and I have worked a lot on [and are] continually working on the marriage—because of that [perspective]. It is not something that will come easy, so you need to continually work at it. It's kind of like a second job . . . if you want it to continue [going well], you've got to keep on working on it.

For Tamara, marriage involves deep "personal responsibility." For Asher, it is "a sacred bond."

This does not mean that the relationship will be easy; rather, it means that there is a great deal of work required to honor and preserve that bond. These stated ideals did not imply that participants avoided all conflict, but that they expected themselves to work through conflict in a healthy way.

Uriel, a Conservative husband, explained how the Jewish teaching and aspiration of *shalom bayis* helped him and his wife resolve conflict:

The Jewish version of domestic tranquility, of amity in the home, what Jews call *shalom bayis*, peace in the home, is a very big concept in Jewish thinking. It is not the notion of a compliant wife who will go along with everything a guy says, and therefore they have peace. . . . It's quite the opposite. They both know how

to argue, they both hold their own. I think it's precisely because we can argue that we can do well. . . . That's the secret.

Uriel's reflection shows that while couples have a responsibility to maintain peace in their home, this does not mean that they should completely avoid conflict. Rather, they have a responsibility to maintain peace by effectively working through the conflicts that arise—by “holding their own” and by “arguing well.” This approach of healthy debate held true not only for marriage, but also (to some degree) in connection with the second major theme of parent-child relationships. As discussed next, there was overlap between how participants discussed the influence of Judaism on their marital relationships *and* on their relationships with their children.

Theme 2: Relational Strengths in Parenting

In conjunction with the subthemes found in the previous section on marriage, two of the same three subthemes emerged regarding how Judaism enhanced the quality of parent-child relationships for participants. However, one additional theme unique to parent-child relationships was also identified. These themes speak particularly to enhancing relational unity and reducing relational conflict. The three subthemes are (a) ritual facilitates relational success, (b) relational success is a duty, and (c) God is a relational model.

Parenting theme 1: Ritual facilitates relational success. Just as participants reported that Jewish ritual, tradition, and observance were beneficial to their quality of life and marital quality, participants also tied their lived Judaism to success in parenting. Specifically, as with marriage, the observance of *Shabbat* reportedly facilitated peaceful parent-child relationships. Lila, a Reform mother, explained, “[Talking] about Jewish values as a family . . . *Shabbat* . . . pausing and coming together . . . [helps us] when conflict arises because we are all there . . . together as a family.” Other Jewish practices had a similar bonding effect between parents and

children. When asked how her beliefs or practices had helped her avoid, reduce, or resolve conflict, Eija, a Reform mother, responded:

There's a big emphasis in our services on taking responsibility for [and] forgiving other people, on praying for forgiveness for yourself, praying for healing for other people. . . . It take[s] you out of yourself. And it works with the kids, too, because there's prayers that the parents say to their children. . . . [It's] a nice bonding thing. . . . [It] relax[es] all those tensions.

The reader will recall that the relaxing of tension was also mentioned as a benefit of ritual in marriage. Here, similar language is used to describe relations between parent and child. Prayers for, forgiveness toward, and personal responsibility for her children reportedly helped Eija have less conflict with her children and helped them feel connected. Similarly, Pesha, a mother, reported feeling closer with her children during weekly parent-child blessings:

Blessing the children on Friday night . . . is a special time when the parents bless the children. It is a beautifully wonderful and tender moment that we . . . do and our children have come to expect. [We don't just] put our hands on their heads and we bless them . . . we also each [say] something to each child about something that we're proud of that they've done this week. It's just a wonderful thing that . . . we didn't make that up. . . . [I]f we just look at what our tradition teaches us, it was already there. Jewish parents have been doing that for thousands of years.

Parenting theme 2: Relational success is a duty. Many participants explained that high-quality parent-child relationships were not a luxury but rather a duty within Judaism. Aaron, an Orthodox father, stated, “There needs to be a bonding between a man and his son or a son and his mother.” Many participants, including parents and children, stated that in Judaism parent-child relational success is a shared responsibility. Benjamin, a 20-year-old Orthodox son; Deborah, his 17-year-old sister; Hannah, their mother; and Eli, their father, discussed this idea:

Benjamin (son): [My family] argue[s] over little things all the time, of course, like anybody. But we've never had any serious, emotional arguments that disrupted general family life. I'm sure that Judaism has a lot to do with that . . . because you have laws governing how you're supposed to act towards your parents and towards your children. And when you have a legal system, almost, [that prescribes] in what ways you can respond, you aren't so totally at sea, as many people are.

Deborah (daughter): On how to . . . interact with your parents.

Benjamin (son): And your children. It goes both ways.

Hannah (mother): [We have] mutual respect.

Eli (father): We're very wise and loving parents. [kidding]

Benjamin (son): Yeah. . . . Having . . . respect for your parents is something that is not generally a common trait in this society, but . . . it's impossible to be Halakhically observant and not have respect for your parents.

For this family, Judaism provided a context for (and expectation of) mutual responsibility for relational success and for mutual respect between parents and children.

A similar sense of responsibility and equity shared between parents and children seemed to be important to Alexandra, a Reform mother, who reflected,

One of the things that we do regularly . . . when I'm wrong, [is that] I'm able to tell my daughter, "I've been wrong, and this is why I've been wrong." And to ask her forgiveness is a really important part of Judaism. . . . If you have wronged another individual, you have to work out the relationship with the individual before you can get real forgiveness from G-d. [However], that's not why I do it. . . . The real important part to me is that my daughter knows that I'm able to say "I'm wrong" when I'm wrong. . . . I teach her that.

Alexandra was reportedly quick to apologize—as was Tamara's husband Jerry (Theme 1).

Indeed, for multiple participants in multiple relationships, asking for forgiveness was a profoundly "important part of Judaism."

Parenting theme 3: God as a relational model. A less pervasive but parenting perspective shared by some of the Orthodox participants involved looking to God as a relational model. Moriah, a Hasidic Orthodox mother, described a Jewish book that helped her use God's example in her parenting. She explained,

It's a book about forgiveness and understanding and using G-d's example. You don't just make one mistake and G-d just turns His back on you. It's . . . about forgiveness, modeling our own forgiveness and understanding and patience as parents . . . [after] G-d's example. . . . I have thought there are things people could do that you could just never forgive them for, and I'm thinking now that that's kind of harsh. . . . G-d doesn't . . . do that. . . . I've enjoyed reading that [and applying it to] the relationship with our children, and how we parent.

As Moriah contemplated God as a parent and tried to model her parenting after God's example, she seemed to more readily forgive her children due to her belief in God's forgiveness towards her. For Moriah and others, the attempt to follow God's example as a benevolent and forgiving parent seemed to enhance the quality of participants' parent-child relationships. Only Orthodox participants in our sample referred to God as an example. This idea may not be part of the way that most other Jews think about God in relation to parenting.

Discussion

Utilizing a sample of 30 regionally-diverse families ($N = 75$ individuals) belonging to diverse branches of Judaism, we explored participants' reports regarding how Judaism enhanced and facilitated participants' relational strengths in both marriage and parenting strengths. The findings suggest that for these diverse participants, Jewish ritual, tradition, and observance enhanced the quality of participants' lives and relationships. Emergent themes of relational strengths included (a) ritual facilitates relational success, and (b) relational success is a duty, for both marriage and parenting. The theme unique to marriage was (c) marriage is sacred, while the theme unique to parenting was (c) God is a relational model.

We find this overlap between the marriage and parenting strengths interesting. While this suggests that Judaism may impact a variety of family relationships via similar processes, the presence of a unique theme for each relational group suggests that Judaism's impact may in some ways also be dependent on relationship type. In addition, we find it interesting that only Orthodox and some Conservative participants mentioned the idea of sacred obligations, especially in regard to marital relationships. Many Reform and Reconstructionist Jewish individuals regard parenting and marriage as sacred, and this should not be ignored because the quotes came only from Orthodox and Conservative individuals.

The current study is an examination of the familial and relational impacts of Judaism (Krieger, 2010; Marks et al., 2017). However, there are several limitations to our study. First, our study, from sample to analysis, was strengths-based. While the purpose of our study was focused on strengths or how Judaism "helps" marriages and families, an examination of any potential individual or relational "harms" of Judaism might also be valuable (Dollahite, Marks, & Dalton, 2018; Marks & Dollahite, 2017). Second, while the sample (30 families, 75 individuals) was both relatively large for a qualitative study and diverse in terms of branch and geographical

location, all participants were white and most were highly educated. Although these features are consistent with most American Jewish communities, they are not fully reflective of the Jewish population in the United States. Finally, we would like to acknowledge that previous to writing this paper the first- and second-authors were largely unfamiliar with Judaism, including its practices, beliefs, and culture. While this probably facilitated objectivity in analyzing and interpreting the findings, it is possible that a greater understanding and familiarity with Jewish customs would have aided our analyses. In order to accurately depict Jewish customs and beliefs, we invited a Jewish rabbi and scholar and American Jewish family researcher to join the paper as third- and fourth-authors, thus providing insider checks and balances.

Another limitation of this study is that the researchers did not specifically ask about sexual intimacy in the context of Jewish marriages. Jewish texts explicitly address intimacy (Lamm, 1980), yet the participants of the study may have been reluctant to speak about these topics with interviewers. In addition, no same-sex couples were interviewed for this study, and there were no questions about sexual orientation among children. While some branches of Judaism are closed to accepting these differences in families, other branches (in particular Reform and Reconstructionist) have fully accepted these family types.

However, additional study is needed with respect to family processes in the broader Jewish community, including the non-religious Jewish sector. Moreover, the study of Judaism and Jewish family life should be broadened to include current significant controversies. For example, in contemporary Orthodox life, marital intimacy is mandated by religious law and is still practiced, but contemporary Orthodoxy faces issues around women's autonomy and status. It is important that the findings of this study should be considered in the context of these controversies about the role of women in the family. Moreover, there are numerous other

controversies around issues such as divorce and remarriage. In the concluding essay of this special issue we discuss additional implications of these findings (Marks & Dollahite, 2018).

Conclusion

This article explored how and why Jewish families are reportedly influenced by Judaism in salutary ways in both their personal lives and their family relationships. Jewish ritual, tradition, and observance seemed to foster a sense of duty and unity at both marital and parental levels.

The findings of this study indicate the importance of Jewish belief and values to family life. However, it is also important to recognize that there is a high level of secularism in the Jewish community. Despite the secularism that is occurring throughout Jewish communities, the findings of this study indicate that Judaism and being Jewish remain a significant contributing factor in family life. Rabbi Sussman, one of the contributing authors of this paper, notes that even among individuals who are not affiliated with a formal Jewish institutional setting, Judaism still plays an important role in family life.

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