Jewish Spirituality
Through Actions in Time: Daily Occupations of Young Orthodox Jewish Couples in Los Angeles

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Key Words: occupational science

Ethnographic methods were used to study daily occupations and weekly routines of four young Orthodox Jewish couples living in Los Angeles. Data from interviews and participant observation demonstrate the importance to the couples of fulfilling God's commandments [Hebrew, mitzvot], which organize and sanctify the otherwise mundane activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, sleeping, and rising. The article focuses on the couples' experiences in (a) observing the Sabbath, (b) studying and praying, and (c) keeping a kosher home. Orthodox Jewish ritual, practice, and spirituality are time bound and action oriented. Occupational therapists can benefit from understanding how Orthodox Jews invest and experience spiritual meaning in seemingly mundane occupations and routines.

Spirituality as an essential value of the Jewish tradition is a striving for the presence of God and the fashioning of a life of holiness appropriate to such striving. ...The style of Jewish spiritual life has always found its common expression in the deed, meaning specifically the commandments of the Torah as amplified by the classical halakhah. (Green, 1987, p. 903)

Orthodox Jews constitute about 10% of American Jewry (Liebman & Cohen, 1990). As characterized by Rackman (1987), Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah [Hebrew, the written law] is the Word of God. For them, the Torah was given to Moses with oral interpretations and a hermeneutic method called the oral law. The written law and oral law constitute the principal sources of halakhah [H.]—the body of the law by which Orthodox Jews choose and orchestrate appropriate and meaningful actions in their lives. An early tradition lays down that there are 613 commandments in the Torah, with 248 being positive commandments (prescriptions to perform certain acts) and 365 being negative commandments (prescriptions to refrain from certain acts). The medieval Jewish philosopher Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) analyzed and defined the law concisely in his major work Mishneh Torah (Second Torah) and in a subsequent work, Sefer ha-Mitzvot (Book of Commandments), which remain foundations for contemporary Orthodox Jewish faith (Werblowsky & Wigoder, 1966b).

In contrast to the historical basis for Protestantism, Judaism is not a religion of salvation by inner faith but the fulfillment of God's commandments [H., mitzvot] (Heschel, 1955). Some commandments are immediately
comprehensible to modern Jews and non-Jews alike, such as "Studying the Torah," "All oral commitments to be fulfilled," and "Resting on the Sabbath" (Chavel, 1967). Other, more esoteric and concrete commandments address the performance of rituals in the Temple in Jerusalem before its destruction, responsibilities of the priests and their present-day descendants, the wearing of special garments while praying, rules for celebrating festivals, prescriptions with regard to crops and livestock, precise injunctions for behavior toward various categories of persons, and other obligations (Chavel, 1967). It is not surprising that the word for law, halakhah, has been thought to come from the same root as "to walk [on a road or path]" (Werblowsky & Wigoder, 1966a, p. 168); most of the law concerns embodied acts or deeds in time.

There is considerable diversity among the Orthodox Jews in the United States (who number about 5,880,000) and in Israel (who number about 4,335,200) (Kosmin & Scheckner, 1995; Schmelz & Della Pergola, 1995). This diversity concerns three issues: (a) the nature and scope of divine revelation, (b) attitudes toward secular education and modern culture, and (c) the degree to which it is proper to cooperate with non-Orthodox Jewish communities (Rackman, 1987). The diversity spans a "right" wing of orthodoxy depicted by ultra-Orthodox Jewish sects and a "left" wing, or an enlightened orthodoxy (modern Orthodox Judaism), associated, for example, with the teachings of Rabbi Joseph D. Soloveitchik. Soloveitchik (1983) used philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology to reassert the meaningfulness of halakhah for Jews who partake in activities of contemporary secular life. Between the right and left wings exists a spectrum of centrist beliefs and practices.

Daily Practices in an Orthodox Jewish Lifestyle

Occupation is central to all human beings. The occupations that we engage in help constitute each person's multidimensionality (Yerxa et al., 1990) and continuity of social life. Understanding people as occupational beings highlights patterns of meaningful activity woven within their lives to create and sustain health and well-being (Clark et al., 1991). Occupational therapists and occupational scientists, therefore, seek insight into the meanings ascribed by people to their daily routines and rituals. According to Giddens (1991), there has been a resurgence of institutionalized religious life in response to the existential crisis evoked by global processes of social organization that tend to dislocate persons and communities in time and space. As sociologist Glazer (1957) noted, Judaism in the United States began to undergo a revival in the mid-1950s, marked by increased affiliation, observance, and attendance among all denominations (cf., Boyarin, 1996).

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to explore how the practice of Orthodox Judaism influences a person's daily occupations. Information about Orthodox Jewish lifestyles may have value for occupational therapists and occupational scientists in several ways. Occupational therapists, particularly those practicing in major urban areas where they are likely to encounter Orthodox Jewish clients and coworkers, can benefit from understanding the spiritual meaning of this population's participation in and avoidance of particular activities at particular times. Occupational scientists can benefit from a pluralistic or multicultural approach in order to understand how Orthodox Jews invest and experience spiritual meaning in seemingly mundane occupations and routines. Mundane occupations such as eating, dressing, and toileting in which occupational therapists commonly try to restore function are imbued with powerful personal and cultural meanings (Frank, 1994). Theistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and others teach us that daily occupations and routines attain spiritual meaning when understood as commanded by God. Buddhism, a non-theistic religion, further teaches us that daily occupations have an intrinsic spiritual dimension (cf., Kelly & McFarlane, 1991).

Method

Design

An ethnographic research design (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) was used to explore how the practice of Orthodox Judaism influences a person's daily occupations. To enhance the rigor of this qualitative study, four criteria were applied: credibility (truth value or internal validity), transferability (applicability or external validity), dependability (consistency or reliability), and confirmability (neutrality or objectivity). The criteria of interpretive validity and relevance (Hammersley, 1990) were also applied.

Participants

Four young couples, Jews who chose to perpetuate, study, and adopt an orthodox way of life, participated in the study. All were born in North America, were in their twenties, were married for less than 2 years, and identified themselves as being at the center to right wing of modern Orthodox Judaism. The four couples were given pseudonyms: Rachel and Gary, Aleeza and Steven, Leah and Josh, and Lauren and David. Two couples, Aleeza and Steven and Leah and Josh, each have a child. The participants' jobs included: teacher, stock broker, bookstore manager, full-time graduate student, and full-time homemaker. The couples were recruited from a single chevra [Yiddish, a group of friends, a study group] by one of the authors who, with her husband, was also a member. The
participants, however, attended different orthodox synagogues within walking distance of their homes located in a dense Jewish enclave in Los Angeles. The congregations were Ashkenazic, which accounts for the participants’ use of Yiddish expression and Hebrew pronunciation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interview and participant observation by four fieldworkers. Each fieldworker interviewed one couple, using a semistructured interview guide about the selection, organization, and personal meaning of Jewish religious practices with daily and weekly routines. Each member of the couple was interviewed separately for about 45 min. The couple was then interviewed together for about 30 min to confirm the accuracy of each member’s report and to add coherence. All interviews were audiocaped and transcribed verbatim.

Fieldworkers also participated in and observed a Sabbath meal with a host couple and recorded their observations in field notes. This additional method of data collection allowed some triangulation of data sources.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with a uniform set of codes devised for the study by the researchers. Fieldworkers coded transcripts of another fieldworker in addition to their own to enhance confirmability and neutrality. The complete data set was reviewed by all the authors, but the primary authority for accuracy and relevance of data was given to the two authors who were Jewish. The final report was reviewed by all the researchers and sent to all study participants for accuracy, validity of interpretations, and relevance of the material.

Results and Discussion

The Orthodox Jewish lifestyle practiced by these participants requires distinct roles and responsibilities for men and women as reflected in their daily actions. For purposes of this article, three main areas (primary occupations) are presented: (a) observing the Sabbath, (b) studying and praying, and (c) keeping a kosher home. These three occupations appear to be important to the participants’ spirituality.

Observing the Sabbath

For many Orthodox Jews, the celebration of the Sabbath [H., Shabbat; Y., Shabbos] is considered to be the most meaningful and sacred of the religious observances (Donin, 1991). According to Donin, the Sabbath is intended to be a holy day, often regarded as the high point of the week. The Sabbath symbolizes an eternal sanctuary in time (Heschel, 1951). Traditionally, the Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and continues until sundown on Saturday. This day of reverence is observed as a memorial to God, the Creator of the world. According to the Torah, “For in six days, the LORD made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:11). Heschel (1951) gave an eloquent description of the intention and experience of Sabbath:

Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world. (p. 10)

As a symbol of honoring and respecting God and to refresh one’s body and soul, those who observe the Sabbath must refrain from engaging in work [H., melakha] (Donin, 1991). Although the actual observance of the Sabbath is the primary focus among Orthodox Jews, the tasks required to prepare for the Sabbath are of tremendous importance in the weekly routine. David described some aspects of preparing for the Sabbath:

Now in order to properly understand what Shabbos is about, you actually have to start from before Shabbos. You have to actually start Thursday night, because Shabbos is not just the day itself; Shabbos is preparing for it also. You have to do all the cooking and cleaning beforehand; so most people start Thursday night; we actually start Wednesday night. We try to do all our shopping and rushing around Wednesday night so that by the time Thursday night comes around we can cook.

Observing the Sabbath involves many negative commandments, including avoidance of 39 categories of melakha. The participants reported that they refrained from such occupations on the Sabbath as (a) cooking, cleaning, showering, and doing laundry; (b) using electrical appliances, machines, and equipment; (c) writing or erasing; (d) switching lights on or off; (e) driving a vehicle; and (f) carrying, pushing, or moving an object or even carrying a child more than 6 feet in public. According to many of the participants, these rules sometimes present an inconvenience, but are accepted as a necessary part of their lifestyle.

The participants disclosed feelings of freedom and elation rather than restriction, however, with regard to the rituals of the Sabbath. Several viewed this day as a time to separate oneself from the demands of modern society—a time to focus on fellowship with others and a time to reflect on one’s spiritual relationship with God through scripture (i.e., studying the Bible) and prayer. Heschel (1951) illustrated this point by commenting that throughout the week, modern civilization requires humans to “sanctify life” (p. 101) through control of their spatial environment, whereas on the Sabbath, an opportunity is
given to “share in the holiness that is in the heart of time” (p. 101). The component of rest that is such an important part of the Sabbath provides a person with the awareness of the meanings of eternity as well as the opportunity to experience the realm of endless peace (Heschel, 1951). With regard to the spiritual experiences of the Sabbath, David stated:

I can’t imagine people who live without Shabbos.... Jews who really understand and appreciate Shabbos can’t wait for Shabbos... it is really our day of rest. It is our day to gain a little spirituality, to get closer to the things that we are and we do... just a way to regroup and look at ourselves and look at our surroundings and relax and enjoy it.

For working participants, the Sabbath may be especially treasured as a time to nurture their relationship with one another, as Lauren commented on spending the Sabbath with her husband David:

So Shabbos is our time. I don’t have to think about work, and he doesn’t need to think about work, and there’s no TV to distract him, and really we can spend time just with each other.

Rachel gave a similar description of how she values the Sabbath with her husband Gary:

As far as Shabbos, this is the one day that no matter what happens, we get to spend that day together. It is a day of the week that nothing else can get in the way, not the telephone, not a super good TV show that’s on, not anything, and even if we spend the whole day sleeping, I mean, we’re cuddled up together. And no matter what happens, nobody can take that day away from us.

Although the performance of mitzvot connects the person to God and provides a sense of meaningfulness, ritual occupations also provide valued opportunities for persons to interact with their community. For example, the rituals surrounding the Sabbath are often engaged with friends within the Jewish community. Josh provided an example of social interactions that may occur on the Sabbath:

One of the things that we like to do is...to have guests over, people who are interested in traditional Judaism...[On Friday evenings] I'll go to the synagogue, bring home guests, and have the traditional Friday night meal. Saturday is the same thing. We basically don’t do anything...except spend time in the synagogue with family and friends because that is the way God wanted it to be.

Studying and Praying

Jewish culture and family life appear to be rich in a variety of activity settings. Activity settings influence the person’s social construction of personal meanings attached to a particular activity or role, which, in turn, are constituted through meanings intrinsic to one’s culture (Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993). Thus, a person’s culture can influence his or her choice of activities as well as provide the foundation for establishing certain values and beliefs according to the cultural context. Study of the Torah, and the Talmud [H., Jewish laws compiled through the rabbinic tradition] is an ongoing obligation of Jewish practice. Every Jew is obligated to pray daily and to always be mindful of God’s presence in all creation (Donin, 1991). Thus, an important occupation common in Orthodox Jewish living is studying.

For adults, learning is a highly regarded ideal and practice. Many of the male participants discussed the importance of communal study of the Torah as well as the theoretical aspects of the religion. Women also participate in study. However, according to Rachel, women are instructed more in the “practical aspects of the religion.” For men and women alike, studying has the potential of providing an inspirational experience. Through study, they may develop a higher understanding of the meanings behind their culture as well as their occupations, hence developing a stronger sense of identity. Rachel described such an experience while learning under a rebizhen [H., rabbi’s wife] and how this woman ultimately changed her perspective of Orthodox Judaism:

She actually gave me a lot of perspective on how Judaism effects women specifically, and the more I learned, the more I found that...through the laws, a woman can express herself more than...I think any other religion. To the outside world, it seems like Jewish women are really repressed, and it’s not true... Outsiders don’t see the beauty that’s there.

For Rachel, the process of studying and engaging in her newly discovered way of life also became a source of anxiety, which stemmed from an apparent imbalance of daily occupations. To overcome her anxiety, she turned to various members of the Jewish community for support:

I ended up hooking up with one family. They were like “support central” for me. Sometimes I really felt like I was drowning because I didn’t know how to balance religion, school, and work and everything else. This one woman, for me, was an inspiration. She really helped me through the hard times, and she taught me how to balance...everything. So it made being orthodox and a student and a worker easy.

Rachel shows how a modern Orthodox Jew can be affected by the pressures of maintaining both a secular and a religious lifestyle. Leading a religious life in a secular society has the potential to add stress to the person’s life because of conflicts between the timing of mitzvot and the conventional, established organization of daily life and the workweek in the dominant culture.

An example of studying is hinukh [H., education], which is the activity of educating and training a child for Jewish living. People raised in Orthodox Jewish families have benefited from hinukh. According to Donin (1991), the primary aims in the education and upbringing of a child are to (a) instill the moral and ethical values of the
Jewish heritage; (b) encourage active observance of mitzvot; (c) transmit knowledge of the Torah, the Talmud, and the major Jewish sources; and (d) create a strong identity with and concern for all Jewish people. For example, according to Steven, though his studying was primarily conducted at Yeshiva [H., Orthodox Jewish school or academy] or the synagogue, it appeared that important aspects of the learning of religious rituals occurred at home through observation and participation in family activities. With regard to this assumption, Steven described his childhood experience of studying and learning rituals within activity settings at home:

My father taught me how to read the Torah... with a special style, a special tune. My father taught me how to pray and lead the congregation. I also did not learn in school a lot of little things... the way things happen on Shabbos, the order of things... I picked up what to do on Shabbos from home mostly, more than school.

_Tefillah_ [H., prayer], or _davening_ [Y., prayer], is the most obvious and universal reflection of a person’s relationship with God (Donin, 1991). Different forms of davening occur throughout the day and week. For example, the male participants indicated that before engaging in daily activities, they would daven because it is considered an act of disrespect before the Lord to engage in activities before doing so. In addition, a morning service, _shabarit_ [H., morning prayer], is conducted in orthodox synagogues. After davening, the person conducts his or her regular morning activities. For the study participants, morning prayers last approximately 30 min. (Table 1 depicts a typical weekly schedule of an Orthodox Jewish man and highlights how mitzvot and other occupations are related to religious practice.)

During the afternoon, men are obliged to daven _mincha_ [H., afternoon prayer]. According to David, davening is performed to remind one of God’s presence throughout the day. _Maariv_ [H., evening prayer] is conducted sometime before bedtime. Steven pointed out that because of work schedules, mincha and maariv are often recited together, at dusk, because a quorum of 10 men [H. _minyan_] is required for these as well as morning prayers. Although among Orthodox Jews, only men are obliged to engage in public davening with a minyan, usually in a _shul_ [Y. synagogue], women may attend. However, women are often occupied by tasks related to the home service that accompanies meals, especially on Sabbath and other holidays or when there are small children or guests. For example, during the welcoming of Sabbath, which follows the lighting of the candles, men attend _Kabbalat Shabbat_ [H., welcoming the Sabbath] at the synagogue where they pray throughout the 45-min service. After the lighting of the candles, women participate in davening at home.

An important prayer ritual during the Sabbath is known as _Shabbat Kiddush_ [H., sanctification of the Sabbath]. Traditionally, a man performs this prayer at the head of the table while holding a cup of wine, as was observed by one of the fieldworkers for this study:

Everyone was standing around the table, and the hostess directed everyone where to sit. I sat down next to the host and my colleague next to me... the host led a song, which was the blessing of the dinner and singing to the angels around the table. Everyone was singing, and some looked as if their thoughts were somewhere else. Everyone sang loud... in Hebrew. A second song was sung. Following the second song, a blessing of the wine [Shabbat Kiddush] was made in Hebrew.

This description indicates elements of the social nature of ritual performance. Although it is permissible to worship in private, the Orthodox Jewish religious tradition has always considered congregational worship preferable (Donin, 1991). For the purposes of davening, every effort to join a congregation is made where a minyan is needed to conduct public worship. According to Donin (1991), as long as 10 righteous men participate, the merits of the community, represented by these men, could offset the sins of the community. Steven and Aleesa commented on the importance of communal worship and indicated that a minyan can gather anywhere:

_Interviewer:_ Are men obligated to go to synagogue?

_Seven:_ For me, it’s more of an issue because they have that obligation to pray with [other] men.

_Interviewer:_ And what if you don’t have the opportunity to pray in a group?

_Seven:_ You pray at home.

_Aleesa:_ You pray with what you got, People live in this [Jewish] community, so it’s a pretty interactive group. You interact with the whole community, you tend to congregate... Without a minyan, you would have a hard time walking to a synagogue [for public worship].

_Seven:_ Yes, and it’s at least 10 people.

_Keeping a Kosher Home_

Another important aspect of the Orthodox Jewish practice is following _kashrut_ [H., dietary laws] by keeping a kosher home. Among the requirements of a kosher home is to avoid mixing meat and dairy products as well as any dishes and utensils used for their preparation or consumption. Aleesa described how the activities related to keeping a kosher home have become embedded within her daily activities and are second nature to her:

_Thursday, I do a lot of shopping for Friday so I can do cooking... there are little details about keeping kosher and keeping a kosher kitchen that are different [from not keeping kosher]. Part of keeping kosher is you don’t mix milk and meat... based around the religion... it is not something I think about._

_Because it is only permissible for Orthodox Jews to eat at restaurants that are kosher, this becomes a problem particularly when relatives who do not follow kashrut_
Table 1
Typical Weekly Schedule of an Orthodox Jewish Man (Married, Age 24 Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m.—11 a.m.</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands (2 min)</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands (2 min)</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Same as Tuesday</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands (5 min)</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands (5 min)</td>
<td>Hang out all day, no work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Go pray at temple (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to pray and learn Jewish studies (2 hr)</td>
<td>Go to pray (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Walk and attend temple (3.5 hr)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eat breakfast</td>
<td>Lunch (2 hr)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Eat hands and eat bread</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td>Hang out, play games, or sleep</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat breakfast</td>
<td>Eat breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walk and attend temple (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wash and eat bread</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 p.m.—4 p.m.</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Same as Tuesday</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go to temple and pray (15 min)</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to temple and pray (15 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shower and dress for Shabbos before sundown</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walk and attend temple (2 hr)</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wash small meal</td>
<td>Wash and attend temple (15 min)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td>Havdalah (10 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 p.m.—11 p.m.</td>
<td>Go back to work</td>
<td>Go back to work</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Same as Monday</td>
<td>Shabbos dinner</td>
<td>Shabbos over at sundown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Kiddish rituals (30 min)</td>
<td>Go out (i.e., to movies, shopping)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go to temple and pray (15 min)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to pray and learn Jewish studies (1.5 hr)</td>
<td>Go pray (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go to bed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leisure activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Go to bed</td>
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</table>

Note: Bench = make a blessing.

celebrate family events at nonkosher restaurants. Josh discussed the challenge of keeping kosher within a busy contemporary American lifestyle in which people frequently eat at fast food restaurants:

And there is one other big thing...that is I can’t eat just anything or anywhere because of the laws of kosher, so it’s very hard, you know, when you’re downtown...you want to have a bite to eat and stop [at a nearby restaurant]....that’s something that is different than anybody else walking the street.

Forethought and planning are therefore necessary for following the dietary laws. As indicated earlier, tasks related to the Sabbath dominate the household routines of Orthodox Jewish homes on Friday afternoons and even sometimes beginning earlier in the week. The meal preparation for the Sabbath is time consuming and requires planning especially because no cooking is permitted when the Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. (Table 2 illustrates a typical weekly schedule of an Orthodox Jewish woman and highlights her occupations associated with religion.) Leah described her Fridays as follows:

Friday’s like my hardest day of the week because I have to cook and, you know, the Sabbath...Friday is usually shopping and cooking...I make from fish to soup to chicken, a four-course meal.

A main meal is eaten on Friday nights as well as three meals on Saturday. All meals need to be prepared ahead of time by sundown Friday night because cooking is prohibited after sundown. This proves to be a challenging task, yet one that is anticipated with much joy every week. Rachel explains the ultimate value she places on the practices of kashrut and Sabbath:

I run around the house like crazy before Shabbos, trying to get everything ready, and then it’s like the clock strikes the hour of Shabbos, and...I light the candles and all of a sudden, there’s this peace that comes across my house and it’s really incredible.

Conclusion

The core goal of occupational therapy practice is to enable persons with disabilities to perform meaningful occupations and to construct satisfying routines for living (Christiansen, 1994; Clark et al., 1991; Kielhofner & Burke, 1980; Yerxa et al., 1990). From the point of view
Table 2
Typical Weekly Schedule of an Orthodox Jewish Woman (Married, Age 24 Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m.–</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands</td>
<td>Pray and wash hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>Eat breakfast</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>(5 min) Clean house</td>
<td>(5 min) Shabbos lunch ritual</td>
<td>(5 min) Work (all day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dress modestly (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cook for Friday dinner</td>
<td>Lunch (2 hr)</td>
<td>Work (3–5 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Saturday meals</td>
<td>Hang out, play games or sleep</td>
<td>Working (3–5 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work 9 a.m.–12 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pray (30 min)</td>
<td>Pray (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 p.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Set table with china and white cloth</td>
<td>Shabbos over at sundown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat meal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shower and dress for Shabbos</td>
<td>Shabbos dinner (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–15 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Light candles at sundown</td>
<td>Lunch (2 hr)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 1 p.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walk and attend temple (2 hr)</td>
<td>Hang out, play games or sleep</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pray 15 min before 4 p.m.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 p.m.–</td>
<td>Shop at kosher store</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Shop for Shabbos钓鱼</td>
<td>Kiddish rituals (30 min)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 p.m.</td>
<td>Prepare dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare food</td>
<td>Eat meal and visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wash hands and eat bread</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Invite friends in addition to</td>
<td>(2–4 hr)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bench (5–10 min)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday routine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pray before bed (5 min)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bench = make a blessing.

of occupational science, perhaps we may even define health or well-being as purposeful engagement in patterns of meaningful activities. As Clark et al. (1991) wrote: “A sense of life satisfaction, purpose, and quality of life is seen as the net result of engagement in carefully orchestrated occupation” (p. 303).

Religiously observant Jews in the United States represent a range of lifestyles in which meaningful existence is cultivated through daily occupations invested with transcendent meaning. The major denominations of Judaism (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) share the belief that a covenant with God is realized through specific deeds on earth. One scholar has written: “The basic concept in the Jewish religion relating to practice is undoubtedly the Mitzvah, or the Commandment of the Lord” (Chavel, 1967, p. vii). Judaism is a religion in which God is realized through the fulfillment or avoidance of specific acts (mitzvot) that are understood, through a tradition of rabbinic interpretation, to constitute God’s law for the Jewish people or halakhah.

Occupation and spirituality are thoroughly intertwined for the young Orthodox Jewish couples interviewed in this study. The two dimensions of existence cannot be separated but rather define each other. By gaining an understanding of spirituality, as expressed and experienced by the participants, occupational therapists and occupational scientists may gain a new appreciation of the possible relationship between persons’ everyday occupations and meaningful existence. The data in this article demonstrate how young Orthodox Jewish married couples experience spirituality through the orchestration of concrete acts in time. As David suggested in the concluding quote, Orthodox Jewish practice provides order and purpose in life for those who accept its many rules as opportunities to bind themselves to God through daily occupations:

I view [Orthodox Judaism] as part of my life. It’s like saying, "How do you like your life?" It's your life, and it has ups and downs, and high points and low points... My religion is my life... Those are the rules I live by. Just like everybody lives by the rules of gravity, so too the rules of my religion are those types of rules. To every action there is a consequence, and there are certain things that have to be limited and certain things that don't, and that's the way I live my life. I am very happy that I have these rules, which seems kind of strange... for someone to say that they are happy that they have these restrictions. But the older I get... the more I see the beauty behind these rules and these restrictions, and they change from restrictions to... direction... [which] gives meaning to life. It really gives you a purpose, it gives you a goal in life. ▲

Acknowledgments
We thank all the families who participated in this research project and willingly shared their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and insights about living an Orthodox Jewish life.

References


