



the queen of shabbat, by elena kotliaruk

Shabbat

made easy

interfaithfamily

Supporting Interfaith Families Exploring Jewish Life

Shabbat

Shabbat is the Jewish holiday that comes every week, encouraging you to take time to rest and play, to enjoy family and friends, and to put work and worries aside. It is there for the taking, but up to you to make it happen.

What do you need to do? Remember! Remember that you want this special time. Remember that it is there for the taking and that it does not require special food, flowers, clothes or music. Jews have made *Shabbos* (Yiddish for Sabbath) happen in their homes for generations, when they were farmers, peasants and simple craftspeople and when they were bankers, jewelers and traders.

It is for you to decide what you will do for this Shabbat and then next week you can duplicate your efforts or add and subtract as new ideas and new opportunities arrive.

Because Jews have been making *Shabbos* happen in their homes for so long, there are many traditions and rituals that have evolved that you can include in your home celebration. Remember that all these traditions and rituals have enriching and enhancing the celebration as their goal. They worked for some people in the past, were ritualized and passed on in the belief that they would work for you. They are a good place to begin, but you can surely add your own traditions. Aim to create a gift for each of the five senses: smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing.

Some Background Information

Where does the idea of taking the seventh day off come from?
The Torah, or Five Books of Moses!

In the story of creation:

On the seventh day God finished the work that God had made and God ceased from all the work that God had made.

(Genesis 2:3)

Jews imitate God and finish their work and take the seventh day as a rest day. Like all Jewish holidays, the Sabbath begins at sundown and ends when stars are visible 25 hours later.

Begin by gathering the entire family for Friday night dinner. With the pressures of long hours on the job and lengthy commutes, sports practices, music lessons and homework, having a family dinner is a major achievement.

Jews have celebrated with a special dinner for Shabbat with many different menus depending on the country they lived in and the money in their pocket. This may mean a pre-cooked meal from the local market or something in your freezer. It is not the food that makes the time special and holy, but that you set this time apart from the rest of the week and that you do it every week (or as often as you can).

How you set it apart is up to you...

Traditions & Rituals For Friday Evening

The Candles

Friday evening is a time to awaken all your senses around the dinner table. But before you eat, tradition tells us to pause and acknowledge that this evening, this dinner is different. We set two candles out and as we light them we invite the Sabbath to enter our home and surround our family with rest and joy.

These two candles can be just the start of the innovations made for Shabbat. You may choose to eat in the dining room or on the deck. You can choose to use a tablecloth or a picnic basket. You may choose to take your jeans off and put on something special or you may want to take off the clothes worn to work and put on something less restrictive. You may want to put on music reserved for this time or lower the lights, buy flowers or set out a centerpiece that a child created.

The goal is to set the day apart, to remember that it is different and special. The woman of the house traditionally lights the candles, but it is lovely to rotate this honor to everyone regardless of gender. The custom is to light the candles then to cover your eyes while saying the blessing. This gives your family a chance to see the world transformed by the light of the candles when your eyes are opened at the end of the blessing. Some wave their hands over



the candles as if scooping up the holiness of the flames. Two candles are traditional but some families add a candle for every family member.

Here are the words of the candle blessing:

| | |
|---|--|
| בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת. | BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM A-SHER KID'SHA-NU B'MITZ-VO-TAV VITZ-I-VA-NU L'HAD'LIK NER SHEL SHAB-BAT. |
|---|--|

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who has sanctified us with Your
commandments and
commanded us
to light the Sabbath lights.
[A traditional translation.]

Holy One of Blessing,
Your Presence fills creation,
You make us holy with Your
commandments and calling us
to light the lights of Shabbat.
*[An alternative translation
from Vetaher Libenu, a prayerbook created by
Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley.]*

Family Blessings

Usually said after lighting the candles, there are three additional blessings for those people who are most important to us. Whether you use the traditional Hebrew or create your own words of blessing, the tiny moment of exchanging a blessing can strengthen or even rebuild a tense relationship.

For Boys: The traditional blessing for sons is based on the blessing given to the sons of Joseph and Asenath, his Egyptian wife:

| | |
|---|---|
| יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶפְרַיִם וּבְמִנַּשֶּׁה | Y'SIM-KHA EL-O-HIM K'EF-RA-YIM V'CHI-MEN-ASH-E |
|---|---|

May God make you
like Ephraim and Menashe

For Girls: The traditional blessing for daughters lists the four matriarchs:

| | |
|--|---|
| יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּסָרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה | Y'SIM-EKH EL-O-HIM K'SA-RA, RIV-KA, RA-CHEL V'LEI-A |
|--|---|

May God make you
like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah

For Both, Continue:

| | |
|---|--|
| יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם. | Y'VAR-EKH'E'KHA A-DON-AI V'YISH'MAR-EKH-A YA-ER A-DON-AI PA-NAV EL-EI-KHA VI-CHU-NEKH-A YI-SA A-DON-AI PA-NAV EL-EI-KHA V'YA-SEM L'KHA SHA-LOM. |
|---|--|

May God bless you
and keep you
May God shine
God's countenance upon you
and be gracious to you
May God favor you
and give you peace.

You may also choose to substitute family names as in, "May you be like Grandma Sylvia and Bubbie Ann." You may also simply whisper in the ear of each child mentioning something that you love about them, or that they have done or made in the last week.

In any case, the importance lies in the placing of your hands on their head or cheek or the hug and whisper.

For Your Partner:

Traditionally a husband reads from the Song of Songs, a small book of the Bible which contains poems expressing the love of a shepherd and a young woman. This poetry is seen as a symbol of the love of God for the people of Israel. Reading aloud from this sensual poetry gives a strong signal to children of the holiness of a loving relationship and the approval Judaism gives to physical love.

Wine

Judaism uses wine to sanctify time. There are several different versions of the blessing over the wine, depending on the occasion or holiday, but they all have the same core words:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
BO-REY P'RI HA-GA-FEN.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

[A traditional translation.]

Holy One of Blessing,
Your Presence fills creation,
forming the fruit of the vine.

[An alternative translation
from Vetaher Libenu, a prayerbook created by
Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley.]

Since the blessing is over fruit of the vine, you may also choose to use grape juice.

In some families, the honor of saying this blessing belongs to the man of the house and in others the family joins together in saying the blessing. You may choose to have wine in one special cup that is passed to each guest after the blessing or you may have a cup for each person.



Challah

Challah is special bread for Shabbat. In the poor homes of Eastern Europe, the daily fare was rough black bread. But on Shabbos the bread was a special loaf of white flour and eggs, decorated with poppy or sesame seeds.

In some homes the challah is torn apart (to avoid using a knife which can be a weapon) and pieces are handed or tossed around to each guest. For others, the challah is sliced and passed on a special Shabbat platter.

Before blessing and eating the challah, it is traditional to wash your hands, but not for cleanliness. This washing reminds us that eating has spiritual potential. In this time of fast food, it slows us down and reminds us of how fortunate we are to have food. The table we sit at is the modern equivalent of the “Holy of Holies,” the altar of the ancient Temple.

Here are the words of the blessing for the challah:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
HA-MOTZ-I LECH-EM
MIN HA-AR-ETZ.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Who brings forth bread from the earth

[A traditional translation.]

Our praise to You, Adonai
our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

[From Mishkan T'filah, a Reform prayerbook.]

The blessing for challah is a blessing for all the food brought to the table and a reminder to make the time spent eating the beginning of the restful, joyful Shabbat. It is a time to avoid scolding or correcting manners and a time to avoid gossip and problem solving.

God rested on the seventh day and took the time to admire all that was created. Make it your goal to do the same. Take the time to look back at your week and enjoy the family and friends who join with you to celebrate Shabbat.



InterfaithFamily's mission is to empower people in interfaith relationships— individuals, couples, families and their children— to make Jewish choices, and to encourage Jewish communities to welcome them.

InterfaithFamily offers consultation and resources for synagogues, agencies and schools of all affiliations to assist them in their welcome and engagement of interfaith families and all those who are interested in exploring Judaism.

**You can join the InterfaithFamily Network or
signup for our email newsletter at
www.interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Atlanta area contact
404-991-2238 atlanta@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Greater Boston area contact
617-581-6857 boston@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Chicagoland area contact
312-550-5665 chicago@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Los Angeles area contact
213-972-4072 losangeles@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Philadelphia area contact
215-207-0990 philadelphia@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the San Francisco Bay area contact
415-878-1998 sfbayarea@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in the Washington DC area contact
202-618-4111 dc@interfaithfamily.com**

**For more information in all other areas contact
617-581-6862 network@interfaithfamily.com**

This booklet is one of a series originally created by Karen Kushner at The Jewish Welcome Network and revised and redesigned at InterfaithFamily with support of the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund. Previous versions of some of the booklets were published by Project Welcome of the Union for Reform Judaism: www.urj.org/outreach.