
A Shabbat Experience For Your Group of Friends (and Family)

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Supporting Interfaith Families Exploring Jewish Life

Introduction

Welcome to your group Shabbat celebration! This experience is designed to guide you along in your own social group's home celebration of Shabbat. It contains enhanced Shabbat features to make the Shabbat experience a meaningful one for everyone in every family in your group – no matter what their religious background, age (young children are included), history, or knowledge of Judaism. It can be used to enhance your own family's Shabbat celebration, too.

We will begin with a little background information on Shabbat: where does the holiday come from? Why do Jews celebrate Shabbat on a weekly basis? What does it mean to celebrate Shabbat? Throughout this guide, you will be asked to interact with the material you are learning. Questions for thought/discussion are interspersed throughout. Everyone (not just the Jews in the room) will be encouraged to answer and participate. This celebration of rest and creation is for everyone.

Next, we have provided you four different Shabbat themes to choose from. Each theme will walk you through everything you need for a Shabbat celebration, but with a different focus.

- Theme 1: Blessing over the Candles: Rest and Separation
- Theme 2: The Parents Blessing: Making Connections
- Theme 2: Blessing over the Wine: Sacredness and Holiness
- Theme 3: Blessing over the Challah: Community and Family

Choose the theme that speaks to you based on an experience that you had this past week. Are you in need of rest? Did you have a difficult week? Or did you find time to seek out something special, or did something unique seek you out this week? Or did you have a family encounter that made you think about life in a special way? Each one of these themes is designed to focus on one aspect of celebrating Shabbat. These are universal themes that each one of us experiences in our own right, on our own terms. Take a poll of your group, decide on a theme, and begin to explore.

You will need to choose a facilitator – someone who feels comfortable bringing a conversation to a close and moving on to the next question or to the next blessing.

Remember, everyone in your group will be encouraged to participate. The questions are interfaith couple and family friendly, specific, and universal in nature. As human beings we are each in need of a day of rest, no matter who we are and where we come from; whether you celebrate the Sabbath on Friday, Saturday, Sunday or another day during the week. Everyone needs a Sabbath – a Shabbat. So welcome to your Shabbat.

What Is Shabbat?

"The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath in every generation as a covenant for all time. It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel, for in six days the Eternal God made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God rested from all God's labors."

Exodus 31:16-17

Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath--though the English word actually came from Shabbat. It's a day of rest and enjoyment at the end of every week that religious people undertake in imitation of God, who rested on the seventh day of creation. Traditional Jews refrain from all work on Shabbat, reserving it instead for prayer, study, visiting friends and family, large meals, pleasant walks and naps. It's pronounced Shah-baht, though some spell it Shabbos and pronounce it shah-biss.

Shabbat lasts from just before sundown on Friday until an hour after sundown on Saturday evening. The greetings for Shabbat are "Shabbat Shalom," or in Yiddish, "Gut Shabbos." (It sounds like "good Shabbos" and that's what it means.)

From the InterfaithFamily.com *Guide to Shabbat for Interfaith Families*

Q&A

Please share the answers to these questions as a group. Take no more than five minutes on this piece:

- What do you already know about Shabbat?
- Have you ever celebrated a Shabbat? What did you experience?
- What questions do you have about celebrating Shabbat?

Did you know?

Shabbat is actually 25 hours long? Some celebrate for an extra hour (from sundown Friday till one hour after sundown Saturday) to show how precious Shabbat is!

Shabbat happens every week - but WE are the ones who actually make it happen with our actions and our celebrations!

What's It All About?

In Jewish culture, Shabbat is a day of peace, rest, reflection, hospitality and family. In North American Jewish families, Shabbat dinner on Friday evening can be important family time. In Israel, secular Jewish families get together on Saturday to eat and just be together. The Jewish cultural values of hospitality and family find their expression in the customs of Shabbat.

You can bring holiness and peace into your life in 20 minutes of blessings before Friday night dinner. Shabbat is for the entire Jewish community, and unlike many other Jewish observances, Shabbat explicitly includes the non-Jewish members of our families. Everyone can have Shabbat.

From the InterfaithFamily.com *Guide to Shabbat for Interfaith Families*

Theme 1: Blessing over the Candles: Rest and Separation

Step 1: Why bless and what do we bless?

Flames evoke a sense of wonder.

The beginning of Shabbat is marked with the lighting of candles. In biblical times, women lit a lamp that had to last them through the evening, since lighting a fire was work they would not do during Shabbat. This tradition has been carried forward through Jewish history. Today, you can begin your Shabbat on Friday evening by lighting the candles and saying a blessing.

You can buy candles that are marked “Shabbat candles” in many supermarkets, though if you can’t find them, other plain candles will work. Since we let them burn down and don’t usually move them or blow them out, make sure you find a good fire-safe spot. One lights the candles first because saying the blessing is what brings in Shabbat.

This is probably the origin of the custom of covering the eyes before saying the blessing – to hide that the action in the blessing already happened. Some have the additional custom of waving the hands toward the face, as though to bring in the light of the candles.

How many?

Traditionally two candles are lit, however, in modern times families often light one candle for each member in the household. Any candleholder will do, but some people purchase candlesticks they only use for Shabbat. This is called *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying the mitzvah (commandment). You make the candle blessing all the more special by having candlesticks specifically for Shabbat.

When?

Traditionally candle lighting times are calculated by checking the time of sunset (online or in the local paper) and subtracting 18 minutes. Therefore, in the winter, candle lighting can be as early as 4pm and during the summer as late as 9pm. If you want or need to light candles when you get home from work or before your children go to bed, that's ok! More traditional members of the Jewish community would disagree – but we just think it's important to light in the first place.

1. Light the Candles
2. Cover your eyes
3. Bless the candle lighting (we don't bless the object of the candles, rather the symbolism)
4. Greet everyone with the words, "Shabbat shalom!" and maybe even a kiss and hug. Lighting the candles symbolizes the actual start to Shabbat.

Try This!

Next time after you close your eyes, try taking a few deep breaths and focusing on the transition between the mundane (the work week) and the sacred (Shabbat) before you open your eyes.

The blessing is:

If you don't feel comfortable saying the blessing in Hebrew, you can recite an English translation of all or part of it

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שַׁבָּת.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzeevanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are You Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to light the Shabbat candles.

After the candles have been blessed, don't blow them out.

Step 2: A Conversation

“A great pianist was once asked by an ardent admirer: ‘How do you handle the notes as well as your do?’ The artist answered: ‘The notes I handle no better than many pianists, but the pauses between the notes – ah! That is where the art resides.’

In great living, as in great music, the art may be in the pauses. Surely one of the enduring contributions which Judaism made to the art of living was the Shabbat, the ‘pauses between the notes.’ And it is to the Shabbat that we must look if we are to restore to our lives the sense of serenity and sanctity which Shabbat offers in such joyous abundance.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath

Q&A

Please share the answers to these questions as a group. Take no more than seven minutes on this piece:

Everyone is encouraged to share, but if someone does not feel comfortable, they can refrain. You can choose to answer all or some of the questions below.

- How does music, a universal concept, help you more fully understand the essence of Shabbat?
- Aside from any Shabbat celebrations, how does your family relax? What do you do/not do?
- How do you relax personally? Where/how do you find serenity in your life?
- Did covering your eyes between lighting the Shabbat candles and saying the blessing help to physically separate yourself between the week and Shabbat? How did you feel after you opened your eyes?
- Read the following quote:
“Do your work, then step back, that is the only path to serenity. One who clings to his work will create nothing that endures. Just do your job, then let go.” – Tao Te Ching
- What are a few practical techniques that you can do to be able to separate yourself from your work and the hectic pace of the week, even if it’s just for an hour or two?

Step 3: Activities

A Shabbat Story – The Rabbi and the Emperor

Taken from the Babylonian Talmud and retold by Jody Hirsch as found in the book *Tastes of Jewish Tradition*.

Rabbi Judah, the Prince, was good friends with the Roman Emperor Antoninus. One day, the emperor invited the rabbi to eat dinner in his palace. The rabbi ate fruit and pastries the likes of which he had never tasted. The next Friday night, Rabbi Judah invited the emperor to eat at his house. They ate soup, roasted meat, stewed vegetables, pastries, and wines. It was all delicious. It was better than any meal the emperor

had ever eaten. "I must eat here again!" said the emperor to the rabbi.

"Come again next Wednesday," the rabbi said.

The next Wednesday, the emperor appeared at the rabbi's house ready for a meal grander than the last.

Rabbi Judah served the exact same menu: soup, roasted meat, stewed vegetables, pastries and wines – but somehow the meal wasn't nearly as good as it had been the previous week.

"What's the matter with our food!?" asked the emperor. "It's good, of course, but it's not nearly as delicious as it was last week!"

"Ah!" said the rabbi. "That's because I used a special spice last week which made the food taste all the better."

"And what is that special spice?" demanded the emperor. "I must have it!"

"The special spice," said the rabbi, "is Shabbat."

Craft – Candle Making

One way of making Shabbat special and unique to your family is to create your own ritual items.

Candle

Purchase beeswax strips and wicks at a craft store

Cut to size

Roll with a wick inside

Candlesticks - Soda bottle candlesticks

Materials:

- 2 empty/clean see-through soda bottles (see through)
- 4 bottle caps
- 2 disposable Shabbat candle holders (or aluminum foil)
- Craft glue
- Option 1 materials: corn kernels, dried peas, black beans, lima beans, kidney beans
- Option 2 materials: marbles, rocks, pebbles, small seashells

Steps:

1. Fill two bottles with layers of objects. You can use a spoon, your hands, or a funnel
2. Apply glue in a circle around the inside edge of the bottle cap. Close the bottle tightly.
3. Invert a second bottle cap and glue it on the top of the first cap
4. To use, line the inverted bottle cap with the disposable Shabbat candle holder or aluminum foil

There are many websites where you can find other options for candle and candlestick making. Here is one:

http://www.jewishnaturecenter.org/html/shabbat_candles.html

Theme 2: The Parents Blessing: Making Connections

Step 1: Why bless and what do we bless?

What might it mean to your relationship with your child/ren to stop and take a moment on a weekly basis to focus and share why you are proud of their accomplishments, what you are proud of, and how much you love them? The parents blessing marks time in just that way. This is a perfect moment to focus on our children, put our hands over their heads, give them a hug, and tell them why we love them so much.

In addition to marking Shabbat with our own blessing over our children, there is a formal blessing. The words contained in this blessing over our sons and daughters are directly tied into biblical history.

Why?

Blessing our children dates back to the Torah (the Jewish Bible/Five Books of Moses) when Jacob gave two of his grandchildren and twelve of his children a personalized blessing. In the Middle Ages parents blessed their children on the eve of Yom Kippur (Day of Repentance). The focus on our own mortality and future during this holiday prompted parents to think about their legacy as well as to ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt. The weekly ritual of blessing our children in connection to Shabbat is only a few centuries old.

For sons

We bless our male children after Ephraim and Menashe, Joseph's sons. They are the first brothers in Jewish history to not display intense sibling rivalry. The blessing also attests to their unique strength. Both boys had an Egyptian mother and were raised in Egypt, fully integrated into Egyptian society, but still held firm to their Jewish identity. Therefore, Ephraim and Menashe are symbols of loyalty to their parents and to their Jewish faith. The words of the blessing state: "May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe."

For daughters

We bless our female children after the matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. These women displayed characteristics of strength, compassion, and courage. The words of the blessing state: "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah."

Sarah – Abraham's wife, displayed courage and responded to adversity with laughter.

Rebecca – Isaac's wife, modeled hospitality and concern for others.

Rachel and Leah – Jacob's wives, showed real sisterhood and caring for others.

Both blessings are concluded, and everyone joins in, to recite the Priestly Benediction. These are the same words that the high priests in the Temple recited asking God's blessing for protection, kindness, and peace.

How?

1. Place your hands on the head of a child or sit them on your lap
2. Recite the blessing for a boy or for a girl (or both!)

3. Recite the Priestly Benediction
4. Share your own personal prayer/connection to your child

If you don't feel comfortable saying the blessing in Hebrew, you can recite an English translation of all or part of it.

For a boy:

יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה:

Y'sim-kha Elohim k'Ephraim v'ski-Menashe
May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe

For a girl:

יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה:

Y'si-meikh Elohim k'Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, v-Leah
May God Make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah

For all: (Priestly Blessing)

יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ.
 יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנְנֶךָ.
 יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

Y'va-re-kh'kha Adonai v-yish m'rekha
Ya-er Adonai panav ei-lekha vi-khun-e-ka
Yisa Adonai panav ei-lekha v-yasem lekha Shalom
May Adonai bless you and guard you.
May Adonai's face shine on you and be gracious unto you.
May Adonai's face smile at you and grant you peace.

Step 2: A Conversation

"There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other, wings."

Attributed to many authors...

Q&A

Please share the answers to these questions as a group. Take no more than seven minutes on this piece: Everyone is encouraged to share, but if someone does not feel comfortable, they can refrain. You can choose to answer all or some of the questions below.

- What values did your parents instill in you that you appreciate? What values do you wish you exemplified in a stronger manner?

- Why do you feel it is important to share your family lessons/values with your children? What would happen if you didn't?
- What do you want to pass down to your children? What values? What concepts? What ideals?
- What do you think the long-term effects of blessing your children on a weekly basis might be?

Step 3: Activities

Activity options

Create a mask (you can buy plastic masks at any craft store) using paint, beads, feathers, glue on items, and markers. Decide what characteristics you would like to put on the mask for your child. What identity do you want them to have? Love of family? Connections to a particular heritage or country? Strength, compassion, or hope?

Create a poster of people in your lives who exemplify the characteristics that you would like your children to embody. Use pictures of family members or other important people in your life as a visual reminder. Hang it on their wall or in a prime family area.

Theme 3: Blessing over the Wine: Sacredness and Holiness

Step 1: Why bless and what do we bless?

The blessing over wine combines the regular acknowledgment of God's role in feeding people with a longer blessing on remembering creation. Many Jews grow up drinking a very sweet sacramental wine for Kiddush. Some people like this wine, either because they like sweet things or because it makes them nostalgic. Sweet wine isn't necessary, however. Kosher wine makers, who make wine according to Jewish law about food and drink, are doing their best to improve the quality and variety of kosher wines, so that people who only make Kiddush on kosher wine can choose a dry wine if they like. The same blessing that is used for wine can also be made over unfermented grape juice. The point is to sanctify a symbol of joy and relaxation.

From the InterfaithFamily.com Guide to Shabbat for Interfaith Families

Remember, you are not actually blessing the wine; however, you are blessing what the wine represents – holiness.

When?

The blessing over wine comes after the candle lighting and blessing over the children. Kiddush is recited both on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon (Shabbat lasts until Saturday night when

you see three stars in the sky, and it is traditional to have a Saturday afternoon meal with Kiddush).

How?

1. Find a cup for the blessing. Some people use a Kiddush cup, which is a special cup used only on Shabbat and other Jewish holidays when you intend to recite a blessing over the wine. It might be decorated in a special way or made of silver. You can find one online or at any Judaic shop. If you don't have one, you have 2 options: use a regular cup or make one! (instructions below)
2. Pour the wine/grape juice. Some people pour one cup of wine. After the blessing, the cup is passed around and everyone shares in the joy from the same cup. Others pour one cup of wine, say the blessing, and then pour that wine into many smaller cups so each person can have their own cup. (HELP! What if I don't have wine or grape juice in the house...what do I do? Well, the point is to elevate the celebration and make Shabbat special and unique. Drink something you don't usually drink, as long as you don't do the blessing over water).
3. Do you stand or sit during the Kiddush? Both! Some people sit and some people stand. Some people rise to show honor (*kavod*) to the celebration and sanctification/blessing. Some people sit to honor the dinner as a whole. We are to relax on Shabbat and include wine in our meal.
4. Lifting the cup. Some people lift their cup of wine during the blessing with their hand underneath the cup, fist open. The openhandedness is a sign of generosity and trust (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).
5. Blessing. You can either sing or recite the blessing. The words of the blessing declare Shabbat as a holy day, celebrating God's partnership with human beings. You can all recite the blessing together, or one person can recite the blessing and everyone can respond, AMEN!

The Friday evening Kiddush has three parts: a reading of Genesis 1:31-2:3, a short blessing over the wine itself and a longer sanctification of Shabbat.

Read the following before reciting the blessing:

And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. The heavens and the earth, and all they contain, were completed. By the seventh day, God had finished the work which God had been doing, and rested from all work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it God rested from all the works of creation.

(Genesis 1:31-2:3)

The blessing is:

If you don't feel comfortable saying the blessing in Hebrew, you can recite an English translation of all or part of it.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei pe-ri ha-qafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with your commandments. Lovingly you have favored us with the gift of your holy Shabbat as our inheritance, a reminder of creation, first among the sacred days, recalling our liberation from Egypt.

You have chosen us and given us a holy purpose from among all the peoples. In loving favor, you have given us your holy Shabbat as a heritage. Blessed are you, God, who makes Shabbat holy.

Step 2: A Conversation

"Judaism does not divide life into holy and profane, but into the holy and the not yet holy."

Martin Buber, Jewish Philosopher

Don't run the other way – holiness is an accessible concept – even if you've never approached it before. If you come from a Christian background, holiness is basically understood as being separate from worldly influences. In Eastern religions the concept of holiness also entails separation from the world and meditation in an environment that promotes peace and tranquility. In Judaism we focus on the charge in the Torah (Leviticus 11:44) to be "holy because I [God] am holy." To be holy, we often have to remove ourselves from the mundane tasks of everyday life to find what we can elevate to a higher level. JewishEncyclopedia.com defines holiness as the state of separation from, and elevation above, things common. The word in Hebrew for holiness is *Kadesh*, which is where we derive the word Kiddush.

Q&A

Please share the answers to these questions as a group. Take no more than ten minutes on this piece: Everyone is encouraged to share, but if someone does not feel comfortable, they can refrain. You can choose to answer all or some of the questions below.

- With the kiddush, we sanctify the day of Shabbat over wine. What does it mean to sanctify something? How hard is it for you to bless something that represents something else (the wine represents holiness)?
- Think about something uniquely special in your life. What makes that person/thing special? Do you think this person/thing has an element of holiness (refer to the definition of holiness above).
- Why would you want to find holy aspects/instances in your life? Why would you want others to find holy aspects to their lives?
- Are there things you elevate in your life that you feel you shouldn't?
- What do you think has the potential to be holy in your life? In the life of your children?
- How do you interpret the quote from Martin Buber above? Can you expand this idea to support a particular way of life?

Step 3: Activities

Craft – Create your own Kiddush cup

Part of celebrating Shabbat is having ritual items that make the holiday celebration special. This is a Jewish concept

called *hiddur mitzvah*, the beautification of a mitzvah (commandment). While you can use any glass to recite the blessing and drink the wine/grape juice, having a special glass used only for Shabbat and the Jewish holidays elevates the celebration to a higher level.

Purchase plastic wine glasses (you can find them at party stores). You can also use regular wine glasses that are heavy duty – nothing fancy needed! Place a thin layer of tape at the top of the glass. This will ensure that your decorations will never touch your lips! Suggested decorations: (remember in Judaism ritual items do not have pictures of people) permanent markers, foam craft paper, beads, stickers, ribbon, etc. Make designs using flowers, fruit, geographic images, or free form. You can even print out a copy of the blessing and attach it to the glass so you always have it together!

Theme 4: Blessing over the Challah: Community/Family

Step 1: Why bless and what do we bless?

Challah is one of the most popular aspects of Shabbat. This traditional Jewish braided bread has a unique flavor that is sweet and substantial all at the same time. Sometimes you will see it with raisins, poppy seeds, or sesame seeds. Sometimes people even make chocolate chip challah! These are all modern inventions.

On Shabbat we are commanded to eat three meals: Friday night, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday evening. In Jewish tradition, a meal is only considered a meal if it contains bread. This is why we recite a blessing and eat challah for all three of those meals. Challah literally refers to a small piece of dough which traditionally is reserved, baked separately, then burned and thrown away representing the destruction of the Jewish temple after a special prayer is said. However, today, most people simply refer to the bread we eat on Shabbat as challah.

Why is challah braided?

This is not a requirement, just a custom. There are many explanations as to why we braid challah, but the most common one is that Shabbat gives us the opportunity to weave the many strands of our lives together. Others say that the three braids represent the commandment to observe, remember, and do both at the same time. (*shamor, zachor, b'dibbur echad*)

On Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, the challah is baked in a round braided shape that might look like a crown. This is to represent the crown of God. Oftentimes raisins and honey are added to make the new year even sweeter.

Why are there two challahs?

You might sometimes see a Shabbat table with two challahs. This comes from the biblical story when the Israelites were wandering in the desert after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Israelites had no food, and so manna (the name of the food they would eat in the desert said to be a type of sweet bread) would fall from the heavens. Since the Israelites didn't receive any manna on Shabbat, they received 2 portions the day before. The double challahs represent the double portion of manna.

Why is the challah covered?

There are a lot of small customs associated with performing the blessing over the challah. First you take your cover off the loaves of bread. For some reason, rabbis give as the reason for the challah cover that the challah will be embarrassed because you blessed the wine first! Some lift the loaves together; others make a symbolic slice at the bread with a knife, perhaps to remind us of animal sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem in ancient times.

After you've made the blessing you can slice or tear the bread into pieces, salt it and distribute it.

Because we put bread into the hands of a mourner and Shabbat is a day of celebration, some families have the tradition of putting the bread on a plate or in a basket to pass it. There's also a Sephardic custom of throwing the bread. Another, newer custom is for everyone to say the blessing together while touching the bread, and pull off a piece at the same time. The blessing on the bread covers all the foods you eat in your delicious meal.

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Hand washing

Some people perform a ritual hand washing before they eat. This is often performed with a special cup called a *natlah*. However, any cup/pitcher will suffice.

1. Pour clean water over your hands from a pitcher or glass
2. Dry your hands
3. Recite the blessing over washing the hands
4. SHH!! It is customary to not talk until everyone has washed and you recite the blessing over the challah and take a bite
5. Hold both loaves of challah together
6. Recite the blessing over bread
7. Eat plain, dip in salt (representing tears from the destruction of the temple) or honey (during the first year of marriage or during the new year)
8. Eat the challah!

Handwashing Blessing

If you don't feel comfortable saying the blessing in Hebrew, you can recite an English translation of all or part of it.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל
נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzevanu al nitilat yadaim.

Blessed are You Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us concerning the waving of hands.

Challah Blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, ha-motzi lekhem min ha-aretz

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Step 2: A Conversation

Q&A

Please share the answers to these questions as a group. Take no more than ten minutes on this piece: Everyone is encouraged to share, but if someone does not feel comfortable, they can refrain. You can choose to answer all or some of the questions below.

Challah recipes hold a very special place in Jewish tradition. Once a family finds a recipe they love, it becomes a part of family tradition.

- Is there a particular recipe in your family currently, or your family growing up, that has a special tradition or memory associated with that recipe? Talk about that recipe and what it means to you.
- What communities do you consider yourself to be a part of? Work? Family? Religious? A particular group of friends?
- Think about the times that food has been a part of a community gathering. How does food connect you to a community? How does ritual connect you to a community?
- Many of us who have pets consider them to be a part of our family. In Jewish tradition, we are commanded to feed our animals before we feed ourselves. (Talmud Berachot 40a) We are told in this passage that we are to provide grass for our cattle before we are to eat and be satisfied. What does it mean to feed those who depend on us before we feed ourselves?

Step 3: Activities

A Shabbat Story – The King’s Loaves, an Afghani Folktale

Once there were two beggars who went daily to the palace to beg at the king’s gate. Every day the king gave each of them a loaf of bread. One of the beggars would always thank the king for his generosity. But the other thanked God for giving the king sufficient wealth to give *tzedakah* (acts of righteousness/charity).

The second beggar’s words always hurt the king. So the king decided to teach him a lesson. The king ordered his baker to bake two identical loaves, but in one he had him conceal precious jewels. Then he instructed the baker to give the loaf with the hidden jewels to the beggar who always thanked the king for his *tzedakah*.

The next day the baker went to the king’s gate and handed the two loaves to the beggars. He took great care not to confuse the two, for he feared the king’s wrath if he should make a mistake.

When the beggar with the special loaf felt how heavy and hard it was, he concluded that it was poorly made and asked the other beggar to exchange loaves with him. The second beggar, always eager to help a friend, agreed. Then they went their separate ways.

When the second man bit into the loaf, he discovered that it was filled with jewels. He thanked God for his

good fortune, grateful that he would no longer have to beg for his bread.

The next morning the king was surprised to find only the first beggar at the palace gate. He had the baker brought before him and asked him, “Did you mix up the two loaves I had you bake?” “No, your majesty,” answered the baker. “I did exactly as you commanded.”

The king turned to the beggar and asked, “What did you do with the loaf you received yesterday?” The man replied, “It was hard and poorly baked, so I gave it to my friend in exchange for his.”

Then the king understood that all his riches had indeed come from God, and that only the Holy One can make a poor man rich and a rich man poor. Not even a king can change the will of heaven.

Craft – Challah cover

There are many ways to make challah covers to cover your challah while reciting the blessings.

Here are a few options:

- You can purchase a white handkerchief and decorate it with fabric markers or tie dye!
- You can purchase felt squares and decorate with paint or fabric markers. You can glue on beads or craft foam.
- You can purchase craft foam in Judaic shapes or download a traceable challah or Star of David to trace onto your fabric. You can write Shabbat on the cover.

Did you know?

On the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) we dip the challah in honey (instead of salt) to represent a sweet new year. If you’ve never tried it – it’s delicious!

**May your celebration of Shabbat
be meaningful and restful.
Shabbat Shalom!**

Extra activities for kids to help them enjoy this group experience of Shabbat

- Feed them a “pre-Shabbat” snack so they are patient through the blessings.
- Have crayons/coloring books and quiet activities available that they can engage in at the table.
- Buy a special treat for dessert – and make sure they know it comes at the end!
- Play music – Shabbat songs or just relaxing music in the background.
- Focus their energy in your own family rituals – so they know what to expect. Some families give their children a few coins to put in the tzedakah box before candles are lit. Assign them to come up with a particular organization that they want to donate to – have a discussion (for older kids).

- Play doh, molding clay, or something to do with their hands that won't disturb the blessings.
- Purchase a "play" Shabbat set- wooden or plush that you can find online. That way they have their own set to play with while the adults are focusing on the ritual items that can't be played with in the same manner.