

Take Back Your Time: Rediscover Shabbat

(Revised Edition)



Sinai Temple
Springfield, Massachusetts
5770/2009-20010

Shabbat is summed up in the candle flames that glow before our eyes on Friday nights. As our prayer book says, "Flames purify and renew, soften and refine, brighten and make warm." That's what I think you and I need in our lives: beauty, warmth, and calm. That's what Shabbat is all about. Time out. Time away. Time for holiness.

Rabbi Mark Shapiro, Yom Kippur Morning 2008.

This booklet is a gift from the Shirley and Buster Stahl Family Education Fund. Both Shirley and Buster believed strongly in Jewish education. This gift would have made them proud.

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A Taste of Shabbat: 52 Ways to Celebrate Shabbat

The following suggestions – one for every Shabbat of the year – come from Reform Jews across North America. (They were collected and made available by the Union for Reform Judaism.) The “rituals” are both traditional and creative. Here at Sinai Temple you are invited to try these observances. Some involve small changes to your usual routine while others require more transformation.

The key for us is that you try.

Choose 2 or 3 or more of these observances and see how they “fit” over a few weeks. Share your thoughts with Rabbi Shapiro or via our website at <http://www.sinai-temple.org>. If you create a brand new idea, please share it with everyone.

SHABBAT “UNPLUGGED”

“I don’t open mail on Shabbat.”

“The most profound change came when I turned off the T.V. That suddenly transformed the whole Shabbat experience. It wasn’t about the electricity; it had more to do with the noise, the intrusion of the mundane into the sacred.”

“I don’t do housework on Shabbat.”

"I work from home and had a habit of checking email every day. Last month I made the decision to turn off my computer before leaving for Friday night services and not turn it on until after Shabbat. This Shabbat ritual has changed my perspective and has made me a better father and husband."

"A few years ago we started to celebrate an 'hour of Shabbat.' No TV, lights, phones, computers, none of that; just reading things with Jewish themes, resting or relaxing together. I'm still hoping to expand the hour to two, then three..."

"I turn off the Blackberry and the cell phone for the day."

"I do not run errands, balance the checkbook or do any other mundane activity."

GRATITUDE

"During Shabbat dinner we take turns sharing both a mitzvah that we have done since last Shabbat and a good thing that has happened to each of us since last Shabbat."

GRATITUDE EXPRESSED THROUGH TZEDAKAH

"Before we bless the candles we find change from around the house and fill our tzedakah box, coin by coin. As each person puts in a coin s/he says something for which they're grateful (health, family, completing an assignment at work, pets, winning a game, passing a spelling test, etc.)."

THE TIMELESSNESS OF SHABBAT

“Not wearing a watch on Shabbat reminds me that Shabbat is an island in time.”

THE BLESSING (AND BLESSINGS) OF CHILDREN

“Now that my kids are on their own I bless them by phone late Friday afternoon before Shabbat. Sometimes I reach them and sometimes I leave a voice message. Occasionally we’ve lit the Shabbat candles together by phone. These are such meaningful moments.”

ILLUMINATED BY THE LIGHTS

“We started with two candles—for my husband and me. We added two more candles—for our children, then one for our daughter-in-law and now three for our grandchildren. Each person adds light to our lives.”

“On Friday night I turn off most of the lights and let the candles bring Shabbat light into my space. I like the physical symbolism of “turning off” the week and “turning on” Shabbat. After I bless the candles I take time to meditate and center myself.”

SIMCHAT MISHPACHAH—THE JOY OF FAMILY

“After Shabbat dinner we share a Shabbat-related activity like reading a Jewish story, learning some Yiddish words or discussing ethical issues from a Jewish perspective.”

“When my boys were young, I kept aside two boxes of toys in the attic just for Shabbat. As they got older they chose certain games they would play just on Shabbat.”

“On Shabbat morning we always eat challah French toast which my three year old daughter helps make. While I’m at Shabbat morning services my two daughters and my husband have time together. We then spend the afternoon together going to the playground or park or doing a family art project.”

HIDDUR MITZVAH—“BEAUTIFYING THE MITZVAH” (There is a classic notion in Judaism that making any Jewish practice “beautiful” is a worthy goal.)

“Even when it’s just the two of us, we have dinner in the dining room and set the table with china and crystal.”

“I save any new clothing I buy for its first wearing on Shabbat. That gives more meaning to the acquisition, and it enhances Shabbat.”

THINKING OF SHABBAT AS A GIFT TO THE BODY, GIFT TO THE SOUL

“I always have clean sheets on the bed for Erev Shabbat. It’s so nice to come home from services to clean sheets.”

“Now, as my kids are moving on in life, the house is quiet most Shabbatot (plural of Shabbat) so Shabbat menuchah/ rest is high on my list! Time to nap, read, relax...boring, I know, but amazingly renewing for body and soul in a way that is different from time taken during the week.”

“Unlike the rest of the week, our children aren’t allowed to wake us up on Shabbat morning.”

ENTERING THE SACRED: GETTING READY

“On Thursday evening I set the table in the dining room with our best linens, dishes, silverware and arranged fresh flowers. When we return home on Friday from work, volunteering or errands, the house already has an air of Shabbat about it.”

“I begin my challah-making preparations on Friday morning by putting on Jewish music. As I combine the ingredients, I bless each of my three children, recall loved ones and add a prayer for healing for those in need.”

“I listen to Shabbat music while driving home from work on Erev Shabbat.”

OUTDOORS IN GOD’S CREATION

“For me, the best way to experience Shabbat is outside where I can breathe, see, touch and smell the world as God created it. I try to go to a wooded place. The greatest gift I can give myself on Shabbat is to find an hour or so to be in nature.”

“When possible, we spend Shabbat out of doors: hiking, at the beach, biking, skating, gardening—some activity that puts us in touch with our bodies and nature.”

G’MILUT CHASADIM—DEEDS OF LOVING KINDNESS

“I try to observe a “green” Shabbat, minimizing my detrimental impact on the earth. I do errands by bicycle rather than by car, eat vegetarian rather than meat meals and refrain from using appliances (washers, dishwashers, etc.).”

"I live in New York City and on the way to Temple I seek out the opportunity to give tzedakah to someone who is homeless."

"Before Shabbat dinner I perform the hand washing ritual. As I pour the water over my hands I think about how I've used my hands over the past week and how I will use them in the upcoming week."

"Over Shabbat, one member of our family takes dinner to an elderly neighbor who relies on Meals on Wheels during the week, but does not receive them on weekends. She especially loves the home baked goodies and looks forward to the companionship."

K'HILAH K'DOSHAH - BEING PART OF A HOLY COMMUNITY

"I'm thirteen and recently became a Bar Mitzvah at our Temple's alternative minyan that takes place Saturday mornings sort of parallel to the official sanctuary Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. I've been participating in this alternative service for half my life. It was fun to have the community there, supporting me and celebrating with me! I didn't get nervous because I really knew the service and when I looked out I saw familiar faces. It was meaningful to have an aliyah the week after my bar mitzvah."

"Even though I am a newcomer to the synagogue, I feel connected to fellow congregants as we pray together. Perhaps this is the key. I find a sense of community each Shabbat. I feel centered that once again the week has cycled around and I see the same familiar faces."

L’HAVDIL—MAKING SHABBAT DIFFERENT

“We have a Jewish story book and every Saturday morning we read one story. It doesn’t take a long time and it helps make the day feel like Shabbat.”

“I differentiate Shabbat by keeping kosher: no milk and meat together, no otherwise forbidden foods, paper plates, etc.”

“I try to do something cultural in the afternoon-go to the museum, listen to the Metropolitan Opera broadcast, etc.”

“From Friday evening through Saturday night I wear a kippah.”

“Starting on Friday afternoon and continuing through Saturday we listen to Jewish music instead of the news or our regular music stations. It sets the mood.”

SHABBAT CHEVRUTA—COMPANIONSHIP

“After Shabbat morning services at Temple we spend the afternoon with two families, alternating homes. We study, raise questions about the parashah, eat, laugh, joke, talk, eat and laugh some more. Occasionally we are joined by other families but typically it is just the three core families, creating ‘virtual’ siblings and cousins.”

“Attending our synagogue’s Shabbat afternoon family education programs has given us the opportunity to be together in a Jewish context—singing, learning and meeting other Jewish families. At the end there is always

Havdalah, an amazing, sweet, short moment of connection where time seems to stand still.”

“I attend Torah Study at Temple and participate in Shabbat morning services. Following our brief, post-service Kiddush, about a half dozen of us go to lunch together.”

“I attend the Kabbalat Shabbat service. After that, we try to arrange for several friends to go out to dinner. It’s our Shabbat custom.

TALMUD TORAH—STUDYING TORAH

“I began attending the Saturday morning Torah study to say Kaddish for my husband. He enjoyed this Torah study and I felt connected to him, in some sense, by attending. This group is smaller, more informal and less couples-oriented than Friday night services and it has provided a weekly oasis for me.”

“Table drash! I try to decorate the table with something that relates to the weekly Torah portion. Sometimes I copy the Union’s Family Shabbat Table Talk, a few lines of Torah or a relevant newspaper article for discussion. Sometimes I’m more creative: putting out red lentils, a bowl of water, toys or artwork that is related.”

“We ask our guests and each person in our family to bring an object from the weekly Torah portion to share during Shabbat dinner or Shabbat lunch.”

“I get the Union for Reform Judaism’s weekly e-mail on the Torah portion. I bring something to the Friday evening

table from whatever I've read in the Union's mailing. (Available from urj.org/torah/ten/. The Union also sends out material on current events. Sometimes I refer to that when Friday evening comes around.)

SHABBAT AS TIME, NOT PLACE

"When we go out to dinner on Friday night we bring Shabbat with us; blessing the bread and the wine distinguishes this meal and day from the rest of the week. If friends join us they become part of our Shabbat away from home tradition. Going to services after dinner is also part of our ritual."

"Even when we are out of town our family takes traveling candlesticks with us and we say the blessings wherever we are."

"When we're on the road in our RV we attend services if there is a synagogue nearby. Otherwise we make Shabbat on the coach and do Torah study in the morning together. It's easy to refrain from work since we are retired. It's these regular practices that set Shabbat apart no matter where we are."

A "TASTE" OF THE WORLD TO COME

"Vegetarianism is something I aspire to but, as yet, feel unable to maintain. But I do keep vegetarian for Shabbat—beginning with Friday night dinner. It helps heighten my awareness of Shabbat a different as truly holy time."

“I have something special for lunch; often it’s falafel—Texas style—with salsa.”

“Before Shabbat I set up the slow cooker and coffee pot. There is real joy in waking up Shabbat morning to the smell of something yummy cooking and coffee ‘making itself.’ Knowing it’s all done and there’s no work required is such a gift.”

“When my kids were young we started a family ritual of “Shabbat snack.” It was a late Saturday afternoon event, the best snacks of the week with a game or family read-aloud time. As the kids got older, they were in charge of making Shabbat snack. Shabbat snack led right into Havdalah.”

I only drink Coca-Cola on Shabbat because it’s my favorite beverage—it helps to sanctify the day. I wrote a brachah—blessing for my first glass of Coke each Shabbat: Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi caffeine min egoz hakolah—Blessed are You. Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who brings forth caffeine from the cola nut.”

LET ALL MY LIMBS PRAISE YOU

“Our synagogue doesn’t have regular Shabbat morning services so I attend yoga class on Saturday morning. It’s an opportunity for reflecting, meditating, reconnecting with my neshuma (soul), asking God’s guidance, offering my gratitude for the gifts God has given me and preparing for the week ahead.”

Ten Ways to “Rediscover Shabbat” for 5770/2009-2010

Friday, October 2 at 6:00 p.m.

You're invited to a Shabbat dinner for all Religious School families. From Kindergarten through Seventh Grade, we will start the year off in a big way! A great meal. Blessings. Singing. Followed by decorating the outdoor sukkah.

Friday, October 9 at 7:00 p.m.

This is one of the great events in on our Jewish calendar. It's Simchat Torah. Unroll a Torah scroll around the auditorium. Finish reading the Book of Deuteronomy and then begin the Book of Genesis immediately. It's fun. It's Shabbat. (Good snacks after the service too.)

Friday, October 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Something different. Everyone is invited but a special invitation goes to students of Grades 5 and 6. You'll have a part in the service AND after the service you'll have your own special Oneg Shabbat. Food for you and games only for you too.

Friday, November 6 at 7:00 p.m.

Seventh Graders will be leading part of this service. We're also asking the Seventh Graders to be greeters/ushers. You welcome congregants and make them feel at home with your great smiles!

Friday, November 20 at 6:00 p.m.

It's an early service. Starts with food at 5:30 p.m. When we get to the praying part, students of Grades 3 and 4 will lead us. Everyone is invited.

December – Big Month!!!

First Friday service at 7:00 p.m. on December 4. Second Friday service at 7:30 p.m. on December 11. Third Friday service at 6:00 p.m. on December 18. (This is also the 8th night of Chanukah. We're planning something unique and festive.)

Saturday, December 5 in the morning

Seventh Graders are becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah this year. We've got a special program planned for you and your parents. Something to explore what BBM means at a deeper level.

Reading "Gates of Shabbat"

An invitation to Shabbat in the form of a book. Rabbi Shapiro wrote "Gates of Shabbat." School families received the book last year. More copies are available. Please contact the Rabbi.

Sinai's Website for Learning AND for MUSIC

Go to www.sinai-temple.org. On the home page, find the link Take Back Your Time: Rediscover Shabbat. You'll see the blessings for Friday night plus other sources. NEW FOR THIS YEAR: The Cantor has recorded lots of the music used at Sinai. You can hear it and learn it on our website.

A National Website!

Our Reform Movement has an excellent website with specific materials for families celebrating Shabbat. You'll find books, music, and activities. Current and archived ideas. Go to <http://urj.org/learning/forparents/gotshabbat>

Rekindle Shabbat: For the REST of your week

Ever wished that life came with a "Pause" button? Here's a community program that might appeal to our Sinai Temple members.

The Rekindle Shabbat Program brings Jewish and interfaith families together in homes across the Pioneer Valley for three catered dinner celebrations, each an opportunity to learn more about Shabbat and other holidays. . The program will match you with a host family or you can match yourself with friends. This year's dinner dates are Fridays Dec 11, Jan. 29, and April 30. Interested households can get more information and sign up at www.Rekindle-Shabbat.org. For more information, contact Janet Kaplan Bucciarelli at (413) 439-1984; rekindle@jewishwesternmass.org .

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