



UNPLUGGING TO  
*Connect* Shabbat

Written and edited by **Dr. Ronit Ziv Kreger**,  
Momentum Director of Education and Leadership Development.



# SHABBAT

The distress in our lives seems to be rising with the fast pace of modern living and technological advancements. But worrying is not new to our generation. My father in-law shares a classic joke: “What does a Jewish telegram say?” “Start worrying. Letter will follow.”

Shabbat nurtures calmness of mind and soul.

Shabbat, perhaps more than any other ritual, is regarded as a rare and remarkable gem in the treasure trove of Jewish wisdom. Yes, it is something that we have guarded for millennia, but even more than that – it is something that has guarded and shaped the Jewish family. What is so singularly special about Shabbat?

We are taught that on Shabbat we receive what Jewish tradition terms “an extra soul.”<sup>1</sup> This extra soul brings with it a unique capacity for rejuvenating rest, deep joy, openness, and accessing our inner landscape. This capacity is cultivated through the Shabbat choreography and its various rituals. The scope of Shabbat exceeds the experiences one has on the day itself. The experiences and the relationships – with self, family community and God – that are nurtured on Shabbat help infuse the rest of the week with this sacred consciousness.

In this session, we will look at the life-changing lessons of Shabbat that are so essential to living a spiritually connected, joyous and grateful life.

## Some questions to ask yourself as you move through this unit:

- *How do I usually look at the world? Do I see brokenness as well as beauty, and even glimmers of perfection?*
- *How can rituals of Shabbat strengthen my relationship with myself, my family and community?*
- *What are some of the ideas and choreography of Shabbat that I would like to incorporate into my life to focus on what’s most important to me and my family?*
- *How can I bring the gifts of Shabbat to the world around me?*

<sup>1</sup> This is called in Hebrew *menuchat ha’nefesh*, which literally is calmness of soul.

## THE 4<sup>TH</sup> COMMANDMENT SHABBAT

As Shabbat approaches, the candles are lit and we begin a much needed day of spiritual and physical nourishment. Shabbat supports our growth as individuals and as beings who are connected to a community and to a people.

Lori Palatnik, JWRP founding director, writes: “We enter Shabbat one way, and we leave another. When it is over, we have learned and grown, so that we can now give even more to our daily lives and to others.”

We were given the gift of Shabbat at the quintessential moment of Revelation: at Mount Sinai. At that soul-stirring experience, replete with thunder and lightning, trembling earth and resounding blasts of the shofar, God downloaded to us the Ten Commandments. In that divinely given ‘Top Ten’ list of the guiding principles of our people, Shabbat stands out as the fourth injunction:

### Exodus (Shemot) 20:7-10

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. 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 sanctified it.

זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ שִׁשִּׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֹאכְתְּךָ. יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
שָׁבֹת לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלֹאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתְךָ וּבְהֶמְתְּךָ וְגֵרְךָ  
אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ. כִּי שִׁשִּׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-  
אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל-כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ

- According to these verses, what’s the rationale for Shabbat? How does that relate to your thinking about Shabbat?
- Who’s on the list of those who are not to do work on Shabbat? What is important about avoiding work and resting? How might your rest be affected if those around you also rested? What community could be available to you if you were to slow down and savor Shabbat time?



## IT'S ABOUT THE WHOLE WEEK!

Our lives these days are so fast-paced throughout the full week. How might taking a break one day a week make a difference?

The rabbis noticed that the commandment to keep Shabbat is specifically linked to the previous six days of labor. As it says, “Six days you shall labor and do all your work and the seventh day shall be Shabbat.” In the *Midrash* (rabbinic interpretations) below, the commentators reveal the connection between Shabbat and the other days of the week.

### Avot d’Rabbi Natan –B- Chapter 21.

Avot d’ Rabbi Natan is a commentary on Ethics of Our Fathers  
c.650 - c.950 CE

Rabbi Eliezer says: Great is work; for just as Israel was commanded to observe Shabbat so was she commanded to work. As it is written “Six days you shall labor and do all your work (Exodus 20:9).”

אבות דרבי נתן, נוסח ב', כא

רבי אלעזר אומר: גדולה היא מלאכה. שכשם שנצטוו ישראל על השבת, כך נצטוו על המלאכה, שנאמר “ששת ימים תעבוד, ועשית כל מלאכתך.”

### Mechilta Chapter 7

The Mechilta is a legal commentary, *Midrash Halachah*, on Exodus, c. 135 CE)

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” (Exodus 20:9) But is it possible for a human being to do all her work in six days? It simply means: Rest on Shabbat as if all your work were done. Another interpretation: Rest even from the thought of labor, as Isaiah says (58:13-14) “If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath” and he says there “then you will delight in God.”

מכילתא פרשת בחודש פרשה ז'

ששת ימים תעבוד. וכי איפשר לו לאדם לעשות מלאכתו בששת ימים אלא שבות כאלו מלאכתך עשויה. דבר אחר שבות ממוחשבת עבודה ואומר ישעיה נ"ח אם תשיב משבת רגליך ואומר שם אז תתענג על ה':

- *According to these texts, what is the relationship and synergy between the six weekdays and Shabbat? Where and how do you feel a synergy between work and rest?*
- *The second Midrash tells us that we need to make a consciousness shift on Shabbat, beyond just physically resting from our labor to setting aside thoughts of our weekday work. What helps you shift away from constantly thinking about the work that you need to do?*
- *What could a consciousness shift look like in your own life? How could it affect your entire week, rather than just the one day of Shabbat?*

## FOCUSING ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO US

The Hebrew word for the “not-doing” of Shabbat is *menuchah*, usually translated as rest. The great commentator Rashi explains that *menuchah* was – paradoxically - an essential element in the otherwise very busy creation of the world. What is so special about “not-doing?” How is it different from leisure time or laziness?

### Rashi's Commentary on Bereishit 2:2

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), was a great French commentator on the Tanakh and Talmud.

What did the world lack [before the seventh day]?  
Rejuvenating rest (*menuchah*)! When Shabbat came,  
rejuvenating rest came; the work [of Creation] was  
completed and finished.

מה היה העולם חסר? מנוחה, באת שבת באת מנוחה, כלתה ונגמרה המלאכה.

- Rashi says that the world was not completed until it included **menuchah**. What is so essential about rest? Is true rest just the absence of work?
- In what way do you think the world around you needs rejuvenating rest?



### Writing Exercise

Think about a time when you experienced truly rejuvenating rest. What was that experience like? In what way did it differ from leisure time or doing nothing? How did your experience of rest impact you at the moment and in your activities after it?

Take a few minutes to quietly reflect, writing your thoughts about Shabbat on the reflection chart at the end of this section.

In the following excerpt, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes the rejuvenating rest of Shabbat as a revolutionary idea that is an absolute key to Jewish values and life.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is a contemporary rabbi and Jewish leader who served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the United Kingdom for 22 years.

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Renewable Energy: Beshallach 5776**

The Greeks could not understand the seventh day, Shabbat, as itself part of the work of creation. What is creative about resting? What do we achieve by not making, not working, not inventing? The idea seems to make no sense at all.

Indeed we have the independent testimony of the Greek writers of that period, that one of the things they ridiculed in Judaism was Shabbat. One day in seven Jews do not work, they said, because they are lazy. The idea that the day itself might have independent value was apparently beyond their comprehension. Oddly enough, within a very short period of time, the empire of Alexander the Great began to crumble, just as had the earlier city state of Athens that gave rise to some of the greatest thinkers and writers in history. Civilizations, like individuals, can suffer from burnout. It's what happens when you don't have a day of rest written into your schedule. . . .

Shabbat . . . is one of the greatest institutions the world has ever known. . . . What Shabbat did and still does is to create space within our lives and within society as a whole in which we are truly free. Free from the pressures of work; free from the demands of ruthless employers; free from the siren calls of a consumer society urging us to spend our way to happiness; free to be ourselves in the company of those we love. Somehow this

one day has renewed its meaning in generation after generation, despite the most profound economic and industrial change. In Moses' day it meant freedom from slavery to Pharaoh. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it meant freedom from sweatshop working conditions of long hours for little pay. In ours, it means freedom from emails, smartphones and the demands of 24/7 availability.

The human spirit needs time to breathe, to inhale, to grow. The first rule in time management is to distinguish between matters that are important, and those that are merely urgent. Under pressure, the things that are important but not urgent tend to get crowded out. Yet these are often what matter most to our happiness and sense of a life well lived. Shabbat is time dedicated to the things that are important but not urgent: family, friends, community, a sense of sanctity, prayer in which we thank God for the good things in our life, and Torah reading in which we retell the long, dramatic story of our people and our journey. Shabbat is when we celebrate *shalom bayit* – the peace that comes from love and lives in the home blessed by the *Shekhinah*, the presence of God you can almost feel in the candlelight, the wine and the special bread. This is a beauty created not by Michelangelo or Leonardo but by each of us: a serene island of time in the midst of the often-raging sea of a restless world. . . .

Finding Time for What Is Important

Rabbi Sacks says that Shabbat helps us focus on matters that are important, even if they are not urgent. Fill in the chart below<sup>1</sup> to consider how you usually spend your time, and how you can make time for the things in life that are important even if they are not urgent.

- What are some important issues for you in terms of yourself, your family, and your community?

- Think about what you have done over the past week, and complete the table below. Where would each of these tasks fit into this table?
- What are some of the things you would include as “important and not urgent”? When do you make time for those things? How could Shabbat help you make time for the things in your life that are important but not urgent?

Research has shown that people are more likely to act based on their fear of negative experiences than their desire for

	Important (consider: self, family, community)	Not Important
Urgent		
Not Urgent		

<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see the excellent book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen Covey



## CONNECTING TO THE GOOD AROUND AND INSIDE US

positive experiences. Two Israeli behavioral economists, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky<sup>1</sup>, showed in a set of experiments that when people make decisions, they give more weight to possible losses than possible gains. In 2002, Kahneman shared the Nobel Prize in Economics for this work.

Can we see Kahneman and Tversky's findings play out in our own lives? Do we spend more time worrying about what's wrong - with our jobs, our marriages, our children, our homes - than focusing on what is actually overwhelmingly right? Building on the good is powerful, especially in times of challenge. To do this, we need to overcome our tendencies to focus on problems and instead deliberately notice what's going on in our lives.

**Shabbat consciousness helps us pivot away from focusing on the negative, to truly appreciating the good that surrounds us every day.**

Shabbat is a taste of Heaven on Earth. The Talmud<sup>2</sup> tells us that Shabbat is 1/60 of that 'Heaven on Earth' of our most idyllic dreams.

Shabbat is a time when individuals, families, and communities gather to co-create the conditions for relishing a taste of this much-anticipated state of being. We turn away from all our workaday business to be more present. When visiting the theatre, we turn everything off and focus on the show. So it is when we unplug in order to connect and focus on what's already good and delightful in front of us right now.

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately Amos Tversky had died by that time.

<sup>2</sup> Brachot 57b

In the children's ward in the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, hanging on the wall at the center of the hall is a quote from Rabbi Carlebach. It reads, **"When you put your children to bed at night, tell them how wonderful they are; and when they wake up in the morning, tell them how wonderful the world is."**

### Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 16a

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, "The Blessed Holy One, gives humans an additional soul on the eve of Shabbat, and at the end of Shabbat God takes it back."

דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש נשמה יתירה נותן הקדוש ברוך הוא באדם ערב שבת  
ולמוצאי שבת נוטלין אותה הימנו.

- *For you, what might an "additional soul" feel like? If there is an "additional soul" on Shabbat, could it also impact the rest of the week? If so, how?*
- *The classic commentator, Rashi, explains that the additional soul that we receive on Shabbat is: "a greater ability for rest and joy, an openness to well-being, and an added capacity to healthfully eat and drink." Which of these do find challenging? Whats gets in your way of doing it? How might you work through it?*

## THE HOME FRONT

Amidst a culture that has different ailments, how might you support the well-being of your family? Momentum's work with parents stems from evidence that the home has powerful leverage on its members' spiritual and emotional wellness. It's not a new idea; the blessing following the words of the *Shema* already guides us to "teach your children when you sit at home." Our children's core identity is created at home. Their sense of self, their habits, their mental models, where they feel belonging and develop relationships to the larger Jewish family is rooted in the home. For us, too, when our home is a place of connection and meaning, it can nurture our hearts and shield us from the isolation in contemporary life.

Jewish tradition has a tool-kit of accessible spiritual technology for home celebrations – daily, weekly and annual strategies that help us infuse our lives with meaning. For example, there are daily practices related to how we wake up<sup>1</sup> and how we go to sleep<sup>2</sup>, and how we begin and end our meals<sup>3</sup>. There are practices that help us experience holidays not simply as a pause from the hustle of life, but are actual holy days that renew our soul through connection with loved ones, family stories, shared memories and deep aspirations.

Shabbat is one of the strongest tools in this tool-kit of Jewish spiritual technology. "Call Shabbat a Delight!" said the prophet Isaiah, and the Talmud explained, "it means a delight for both body and soul."<sup>4</sup> There's a full choreography for turning Shabbat into a sensual and spiritual delight, called *oneg*, in Hebrew. While the holiness of the day involves distancing ourselves from everyday mundane business, it is to be done in ways that engage us with physical and spiritual pleasures. Shabbat is a journey that can give us a taste of our inner Garden of Eden. May we be blessed to visit this inner landscape and from that place move to taking action that brings holiness into our exterior endeavors.

The choreography of Shabbat takes some preparation. Experimenting with it is a great way to explore this journey that can lead you to new inner vistas. Remember, "it's not all or nothing at all."

- *How might you bring this potent delight to your children?*
- *If you were to start with what you are most drawn to and what will fit your family, what might that be?*

**Reflect on the Choreography of Shabbat at Home<sup>5</sup> and consider what components are attractive to you:**

1. Setting the Shabbat Mood
2. Lighting Candles
3. Welcoming
4. Blessing our Children
5. Acknowledging our Spouse
6. Sanctifying the Day of Shabbat over Wine
7. Sharing our Bread and Eating a Meal
8. Shabbat Table Talk
9. Singing at the Shabbat Table
10. Gratitude for Nourishment
11. Delights
12. Shabbat Morning and Afternoon Meals
13. Separating the Holy from the Mundane

<sup>1</sup> Starting the day with gratitude (currently p. XX,)

<sup>2</sup> Ending the day with unity (found currently on p. XX, )

<sup>3</sup> See p. XX

<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem Talmud Kiddushin

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Noam Sachs Zion and Shawn Fields-Meyer's *A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home* – a wonderful resource for Shabbat at home.



## BLESSING OUR CHILDREN

The Blessing of the Children ritual on Friday night is one of Shabbat's most touching and beautiful customs. Blessing our children is a powerful tool for focusing on the things that we love and value about our children, especially after a week in which we may have paid attention to their shortcomings and needs for improvement.

Add to the traditional blessing a personalized blessing, sharing bright spots you've observed over the course of the week in your children. Make it your practice all week long to gather observations about the wonderful nature of your children, their efforts and actions so that you can include your observations as part of your personalized blessing to them. You can offer the blessing after candle lighting, before Kiddush, or if your children are away you can even offer the blessing by phone before Shabbat or at the Shabbat table virtually.

For a video guide on how to bless your children, see:  
<http://bit.ly/2s06eCm>.

The words of the blessing come from the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26). It is preceded by an introduction that differs depending whether the child is a boy or girl. Place your hands on your child and recite the blessing.

---

### For boys

*Yesimcha Elohim  
K'Efrayim v'chi Menashe.*

May you be like Ephraim  
and Menashe.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה.

---

### For girls

*Yesimech Elohim K'Sara,  
Rivka, Rachel v'Leah*

May you be like Sarah,  
Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּסָרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה.

---

### Continue here

*Yevarechecha Adonai V'Yishmerecha*  
May God bless you and guard you.

יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ

*Ya-er Adonai Panav Elecha Viy'Chuneka*  
May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

יֵאָר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶךָ

*Yisa Adonai Panav Elecha V'Yasem Lecha Shalom*  
May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

יֵשָׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

## WHAT'S IN A BLESSING?

**Consider, as a group, the concept of blessing and being a blessing**

- God tells Abraham: “You will be blessed” and “All the families of the earth shall find blessing through you.” Is there a relationship between being blessed and being a blessing to others?
- Partner with another sister, talk with each other about what blessing you would wish for. Take turns offering each other a blessing. Notice what it feels like to give a blessing and what it feels like to receive a blessing. How is the space between you both affected?
- Consider, if you give a blessing to your child, how does this impact your child? How does it affect you? How does it affect the relationship between the two of you? For you, what might giving a blessing to your child be about? How do you bless or want to bless your children?



## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER

### Spotlight on Israel: A Year of Reflection

Where in our lives, beyond the week, could the notion of rejuvenating rest and disconnecting in order to connect be helpful?

Israelis are leveraging this concept in many new ways.

The idea of a Sabbatical Year is well-known in the world of academia. It is when academics remove themselves from their usual work in order to gain fresh insights and inspiration.

This concept of a sabbatical year comes directly from the Torah, which tells us to do a remarkable thing every seven years in the Land of Israel: to observe a sabbatical year, *shmita*. The *shmita* year offers a rest to the land and to the people who work it. We are called to refrain from planting, pruning, plowing, harvesting, or any other form of agricultural work. All seventh-year produce becomes ownerless and free for all people to take and enjoy equitably.

Another aspect of this seventh-year is absolving loans from one Jew to another. It is a remarkable national ritual that has been revived in the modern State of Israel since our people's return.

And yet, today Israel is no longer an agricultural society. Recently, a group of Israelis came together to consider how to restore the meaning of the *shmita* year when most Israelis are not farmers. They founded the Israeli *Shmita* Initiative, an effort to bring the message and meaning of the seventh year to modern Israeli society. They frame it as a time of personal reflection, learning, social involvement and environmental responsibility in Israel.

Some of the projects they instituted for the *shmita* year in 2015 were:

- An economic recovery program, in which debt forgiveness is the first step to help Israeli families in severe financial need;
- Group study sessions across the diversity of Israeli population;
- Musical evenings in community gardens;
- Programs where Israelis shared their talents with one another for free;
- Traveling Israeli *shmita* sukkah with a free cafe serving Israeli fruits and vegetables, a reading and lending library, a recycling center, and an invitation to stop for a collective moment and remind ourselves of the truly important things in our lives, while dreaming of ways to repair the world and our communities.

Watch these videos about the Initiative:

<http://bit.ly/2rxMXe9>

<http://bit.ly/2s0KLxg>

- *The seventh year is called both “Shabbat of the Land,” a ‘letting go’ of farming activity, and shmita, a ‘letting go’ of ownership. Where in your life might the concept of ‘letting go’ be especially rejuvenating? What other ideas related to the shmita year resonate with you?*
- *How could you incorporate some of these ideas into your life?*
- *What is a project you would want to be involved in that incorporates some of the ideas of the shmita year? With whom might you collaborate?*





Israeli Shmita Sukkah

## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER HUMAN BEINGS AND HUMAN DOINGS

By Adrienne Gold Davis

As a young girl my mother had a rule that we had to come in the house from playing outside (an archaic custom now but back then it was paradise) when the lights came on.

My friends however had a later come-home time; and so, in the time between entering my house and an hour later when I knew my friends were going in, I was paralyzed with fear. Fear that something would happen to the balance of relationships we shared. Fear that “everything would change” and I would be left behind the next day! Fear that new allegiances would be forged without my say-so . . . my manipulations. Fear that the next day I would be outside of the action. Isolated. Obsolete. I think I invented the concept of FOMO (fear of missing out). I ached from it.

In my teen years I felt the same way about every party I went to, every boy I dated, every club I frequented. There was always a nagging sensation that the 'real party' was happening elsewhere, that the real boy of my dreams was dating someone else... that the real 'action' was somewhere else. And so I went from place to place, from boy to boy, convinced, in the immortal words of Groucho Marx: "I don't want to be part of a club that lets me be a member." My mind was like that of a chess master. I would anticipate every conceivable outcome and pre-plan for it: if you say this, I will say this in response; and if you then say that, I will have a response ready. I will protect myself from all inevitabilities that will render me vulnerable, out of control, and not appearing at my best. I even avoided activities I didn't excel in. God forbid anyone should see me as mediocre.

And then came Shabbat.

When I learned the concept of *being* rather than *doing*, disconnecting in order to connect, I had to face my deep convictions that the world would cease to turn without my agitation, and that I was a human doing not a human being. In short, I was terrified of 25 hours of disconnection. How would life go on? Who would I be in the face of it?

I started slowly.

I went Shabbat mornings to a learner's service in a synagogue basement. My favorite part was the extensive *kiddush* lunch that followed, the social connections and the lunches at people's homes. Before I knew it the day was close to over. As we stepped away from the lunch table filled with food and wisdom and connection at 3pm, I knew that in only a few short hours I could be back in the rat race, searching for the ultimate piece of cheese!

Then we stopped driving. We still used our phones and our televisions, still cooked and did other forms of work - but we stopped driving. That meant there was not much to do except go to the park in the afternoon, play the board games and card games my children loved so much and which we never played during the week, and sometimes even take an afternoon nap together!



As the years progressed and we grew accustomed to the “pause that refreshes” we added more and more ritual to our Shabbat experiences. In the process I discovered something profound.

Apparently, I do not run the world. Apparently, it turns quite well on its own without my agitation. Apparently, I have a wealth of serenity and quiet inside myself that I had never accessed. I stopped looking over my shoulder to see who was coming through the door. I learned to be in the moment: to speak to a person as if there were no one else in the world but them to focus upon, to cherish quiet, and to understand with bone-deep clarity that all I thought I was controlling was a delusion and that life is not a chess game. Its greatness and joy is not to be found in the winning or losing illusion but in the person you are in the face of whatever ‘moves’ life gives you.

I was free in a way I had never been. The Midrash on Song of Songs (5:2) says: “Open up for me an opening like the eye of a needle and in turn I will enlarge it to be an opening through which wagons can enter.” This means that we begin the process and when we do, God does the rest of the work for us. Sometimes it is the fear of being called a hypocrite that prevents us from taking the first steps toward this tremendous gift we keep rejecting. It is not hypocrisy to believe in a concept even if you are not able to fully integrate it into your life. That is called being human!

In this age of endless connectivity and virtually no connection we are desperately in need of the gift of Shabbat. The digital world feeds our delusions of control. Those delusions keep us imprisoned in our egos and prevent us from accessing the utter joy of vulnerability. Imagine the slave who was told “you get one full day off to rest, to study, to connect to your family.” Would he say “Naah... don’t wanna miss anything”?

Adrienne Gold Davis



# TRY IT OUT

## PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES

### FOR FAMILIES

Ideas for bringing the values of Shabbat into your family life

#### For Yourself or with a Partner

- Check out the podcasts, videos, and articles on [MomentumUnlimited.org](https://MomentumUnlimited.org)
- Select a phrase that inspires you, write it on a card and place it where you'll see it. Repeat the phrase to yourself a few times each morning with enthusiasm. Phrases you could consider:
  - Shabbat affects my full week
  - Rejuvenating rest calms my mind and soul
  - See good say good

#### For Families with Children of All Ages

- Together with your children, create your own Shabbat family ritual items. This experience deepens their connection to the traditions of Shabbat. Joining their very own artistic creations together with other family ritual items honors your child's role and elevates their participation in the celebration.
- The crafts below are most fitting for young children. With older children, ritual items could be created with clay, painting ceramics or glass, or the like.

#### Create a place mat to catch the Shabbat candle drippings

- Provide your child's favorite art materials... paint, tissue and construction paper, stamps and stamp pads, etc.
- Decorate a piece of construction paper with them, adding Shabbat themed colors and shapes if you like.
- When the artwork is dry, cover with clear contact paper to make it wax-proof.
- Place under your Shabbat candles to catch wax drippings.

#### Decorate Shabbat candleholders

Collect the following materials: glass tea light holders, craft jewels, paint pens, white craft glue, and tea light candles. Then get creative as you work together to decorate your new Shabbat candleholders, using the paint pens and jewels to embellish. Once the paints and glue are dry, you will have a new, personalized set of candlesticks for Shabbat!

#### Design your own *Kiddush* cups

Using tissue paper, children can create their own colorful *Kiddush* cups. Collect plastic wine cups (can be purchased at a party store), multicolored tissue paper, scissors, clear or white school glue, and a clean paintbrush.

- Cover the top 1-inch of the cup with blue painter's tape.
- Work together with your child to cut or tear the tissue paper into small pieces, about 1 inch around. Depending on their age, they can do more/less unassisted.
- Once the tissue is cut, children can cover sections first with glue and then place pieces of tissue on top.
- After the cup is covered, decoupage the top of the tissue with the glue.
- Once dry, remove the painter's tape for a colorful and usable "stained glass" style *Kiddush* cup.
- Your children can learn about the Shabbat dinner blessings from this fun, karaoke style video produced by Moishe House Rocks. A guest comes to dinner at Moishe House and gets a surprising challenge - can he lead the Shabbat dinner guests in four ritual blessings?! <https://bit.ly/2HwMHTh>

Infusing Shabbat into your week doesn't need to be difficult! There are simple actions you can take to make it a joyful day that works for you:

### **Enjoy Delicious Food**

For some families, this means cooking for hours and serving multiple courses on beautiful china dishes; for others, it might

mean an outdoor picnic, bringing in dinner from their favorite takeout place, or doing something different, like breakfast for dinner. Think about what a special meal could look like for you and your family: remember, "special" doesn't need to mean "stress!" Shabbat Songfest

### **Celebrate Being Together**

Together some families will sing and dance around the Shabbat table, while others play games or read books aloud. Think about how you can set aside a special time to be together as a family: what do you enjoy doing? How can you do something fun and meaningful to set Shabbat apart from the rest of the week?

### **Take Time to Learn**

Shabbat is when the Jewish people have traditionally come together to pray and learn. Think about how you could spend some time with your children learning about and discussing a Jewish teaching. For little ones, do they have a favorite book from PJ Library that they love talking about? With your older children, consider taking a moment to read an idea from the week's Torah portion and discussing its relevance to your lives. There are many online resources available, including Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' "Covenant & Conversation: Family Edition." <https://bit.ly/2QfhSVT>

For more ideas on how to integrate Shabbat into your family's life, check out [Kveller.com](http://Kveller.com), a website full of Jewish parenting tips.

- Check out The Shabbat Club, created by Jori Lichtman, who is a Momentum sister and Momentum Fellow from Toronto, Canada. The Shabbat Club helps families and communities forge stronger connections during their Shabbat meals. Sign up for free and you'll receive a monthly package of Table Talkers, content sourced and created by community leaders, to help facilitate more meaningful conversations at the dinner table. Content is inspired by the weekly Torah portion, a holiday, or a Jewish value, and is very family friendly! To access The Shabbat Club materials, email [theshabbatclubofficial@gmail.com](mailto:theshabbatclubofficial@gmail.com) or visit The Shabbat Club's sign-up page.

### For Families with Young Children

- To help young children understand the traditions and values of Shabbat, watch this Shalom Sesame video together. Kids will discover what Shabbat is all about along with Grover, as he experiences the preparations and celebrations with his friend. <https://bit.ly/1KSvlZY>
- As you prepare for Shabbat, bake challah together with your children. The process of making the dough, watching it rise,

braiding it into shape, and ultimately eating it is a wonderful learning and bonding experience. Read *It's Challah Time!* by Latifa Berry Kropf to get you started.

- If you have older preschool and elementary aged children, read the PJ Library book *Lights Out Shabbat* by Sarene Shulimson. The book's explorations of the values of blessings and separating the sacred from the ordinary, PJ Library suggests following your reading with these suggested questions:
  - When we notice something we are thankful for, Jewish tradition teaches us to recite a blessing. What are the things that make you thankful and might cause you to say a blessing?
  - What do the words 'holy' or 'special' mean to you?
  - When something is special, how do we treat it?
- Consider these ideas for your family, adapted from PJ Library's classroom activities, to honor the sacredness of Shabbat:
  - Create a photo album or slideshow of special moments spent together on the weekend or preparing for Shabbat at home.



- Create a sacred space within your home; a place to think or quietly talk about feelings.
- Take a family nature walk and point out things for which you each are thankful.

### For Families with Older Children

Shabbat activities for families with tweens and teens can reflect the unique needs that this age group presents. Adapt these suggestions offered by Kate Bigam in her article, *Ideas for Shabbat With Your Teens* in order to make them meaningful for your own family.

- Set aside one Shabbat each month as “nature Shabbat” and take time to be outdoors together. Hike in a local park or relax in the yard together for a period of time to appreciate the glory of creation.
- If being outdoors is not of interest to your family, look for other opportunities to experience quiet and serenity together like meditation, reading aloud or individually in the same room, playing a board game together, or attending services.
- Listen to Jewish music as you prepare for Shabbat. Tune into [JewishRockRadio.com](http://JewishRockRadio.com), or ask your teens if they’re familiar with any websites from which it can be downloaded. Ask them to play a favorite song for you and talk about why it’s a favorite. Ask them to share memories of when they first heard it.



- Consider a green Shabbat. Ask your teens to help you identify ways you can minimize your impact on the earth each week on Shabbat.
- Choose a family justice, *tzedakah*, project which you can change periodically. Learn about the issue you’ve chosen together and discuss ways your family can jointly engage in repair of the world, *tikkun olam*. Before lighting Shabbat candles, there’s a tradition to give money to a cause. You may want to keep a *tzedakah* box by your Shabbat candles to gather your offerings.
- Talk as a family about ways to prevent work, homework, athletics, chores and other obligations from taking over the whole weekend, by setting aside time on Shabbat that is free from these types of activities.
- Consider making a family commitment to everyone being home for Shabbat or having all family members eat Shabbat dinner together before going out with friends.



Use this chart to plan and track your progress regarding to Shabbat:

### Acknowledgment (*Vidui*)

What in your life offers rejuvenating rest? In what ways do you set time to focus on what is good and working well? What rituals and routines help you to focus on what is most important? What is a Shabbat memory you have with your family?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Vision (*Kavanah*)

How would you like Shabbat to be at your home? What gets in the way and what can you do to reorient yourself and your family toward Shabbat, rejuvenating rest, focusing on what is good, and time for that which is most important?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Goals (*Kabbalah*)

What is one or more small, actionable step that you can do in your daily life that is realistic, easily-scheduled, and will support you in growing toward your potential and vision in terms of Shabbat?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Accountability

Who can help hold you accountable on your goals? How?  
When? What evidence can indicate you are making progress?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In this session we explore the value of Shabbat.

## The Guiding Questions in this unit are:

- *How do I usually look at the world? Do I see brokenness or glimmers of perfection? How can Shabbat help me focus on all the good that exists around me?*
- *How can the rituals of Shabbat strengthen my relationships with my family and community? How can I bring the gifts of Shabbat to the world around me?*
- *What are some of the ideas and practices of Shabbat that I would like to incorporate into my life?*

## Meaning-ful Vocabulary

Rejuvenating rest	<i>menuchah</i>	מנוחה
Delight or pleasure	<i>chesed</i>	ענג
The sabbatical year of the earth rejuvenating	<i>oneg</i>	שמחה

## Facilitating the Session

### 1. Seek Participant Input

In advance, invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading the session such as:

- Planning an activity to accompany the study session (see **Extras! Program Ideas** below);
- Hosting the event;
- Co-facilitating **Soul Sparks** discussions
- Sharing a memory about Shabbat, perhaps from childhood.

\*\* Involving participants helps them take ownership over their learning, and prepares them to take the lead in their family and community!

### 2. Choose Your Session Activities (in advance!)

Remember: You know what will best engage your participants, and we encourage you to tailor the session to their interests and needs. **Soul Sparks** activities carry a particular power, and we encourage you to include them where possible!

### 3. Prep Your Space

Before the session begins, prepare the room, for example, by helping the hostess put out a spread of food.

#### 4. Welcome & Warm- Up

Make a ritual of transitioning your participants from their hectic, everyday lives to your safe space of learning and growth. Consider engaging your participants in a short stretching exercise or focusing on deep, relaxing breaths. Invite a few women to share how they brought home the learning from the previous session.

#### Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

Remind everyone that you are in your Sisterhood Safe Space of confidentiality and compassionate listening, free of judgment and unsolicited advice.

#### 5. Intro & Inspiration

Ask the women to share with the group three words that they associate with Shabbat. After everyone has shared, think together about the themes, longings, and conflicts that emerged. Make a note for yourself about which of these themes you can explore in this session, and which themes you would like to follow up on in future meetings.

Alternatively, if you have more time, consider inviting women to share a memory about Shabbat or to share a question they have about Shabbat. Eliciting questions allows you to address some of them during the session.

#### 6. Soul Sparks Activities



There are different activities in the session that will encourage learning and growth; we suggest choosing one or two for your session. Below are some of our favorites:

##### *Focusing on What's Important to Us*

What is so important about rejuvenating rest, what in Hebrew is called *menuchah*? The great commentator Rashi (1040-1105, France) tells us that on the seventh day, God created rejuvenating rest. What does it mean? Isn't rest just the absence of doing? Ask the women to think of a time when they experienced true rest and ask for volunteers to share with the group. Read together Rabbi Sacks' article about the significance of Shabbat rest, and how it helps our human spirit "breathe, inhale and grow" and find time for those things that are important but not urgent.

Give the women some time to fill out the "Finding Time for What Is Important" chart. Ask them to consider what is important to them - even if it is not urgent - in terms of themselves, their families, their communities and Israel. Then ask them to think about their activities from the past week or so, and fill them in the appropriate quadrant of the chart. Chances are that most people will have filled the quadrants in the "urgent" categories, but may not have as many entries in the "important but not urgent" category.

Talk about how Shabbat can free us from constant urgency so that we can find time for the things that matter dearly but are not urgent. Give the women some extra time to think deeply about the “important but not urgent” matters they would like to attend to, and what practices – including Shabbat - they can use to make time for what matters. Ask how the women can help each other be accountable to grow with practices to attend to what is “important but not urgent.”

### **The Home Front**

Participants will be familiar with some, but likely not all, aspects of the choreography of Shabbat. Your time together can be an opportunity for women to share with each other Shabbat experiences they've along this Shabbat choreography and what they would like to introduce to their family. The book *A Day Apart* by Noam Sachs Zion and Shawn Fields, is one of many that unpacks this choreography for contemporary readers.

Prepare to be able to share a bit about each element and engage the women in a conversation about a time in which they experienced something along these elements of Shabbat. Have

them consider which element they might explore bringing to their own homes. No matter their existing practices, listening to each other's ideas can encourage everyone to explore ways to deepen their family's Shabbat. Encourage the women to consider how they might help each other in doing so.

### **Blessing Our Children**

A beautiful custom in many Jewish families is for the parents to give a blessing to their children on Friday nights. Teach the women how to say the traditional blessing and give them time to practice; enough time to feel confident. A lovely custom is to add a personal message after a parent gives the Blessing of the Children. Women can practice by offering each other both the words of the traditional blessing and a personal addition. Some parents have a practice during the week to look for, and take note of, their child's good points, thoughtful actions and efforts and then to mention these in their personalized blessing after the traditional words of the Blessing of the Children.



## 7. Reflection & Closing

Recall the main ideas explored in the session and create an opportunity for reflection.

*Reflection Suggestion:* Ask participants to reflect on the following, “What is one takeaway you’ll be going home with after our session today?” or “A Shabbat idea or practice that I would like to begin with my family is . . .”

Invite them to respond to the prompt by writing, drawing, or thinking silently. After individual reflection time, you may ask your women to partner and share their reflections, which can be followed with group voluntary sharing.

Direct the women’s attention to the **“Try It Out: Practical Tips and Resources for Families.”** These suggestions will help them bring the learning they have done home to their families in interesting and fun ways. Encourage them to choose at least one thing they will do with their families and come back next time and report on how it went. Give a brief overview of the rest of the unit. Give them an opportunity to schedule a time with their learning partner before they leave the session today. (See **“Learn**

**With Your Sister**, pages XX.”) Let the women know when you’ll be meeting again and what theme will be explored. Encourage the women to continue to share with each other how they plan to bring the ideas and practices of Shabbat into their lives.

## Extra! Program Ideas

To enhance your session, you may consider one of the activities below:

- An art project illustrating the Blessing of the Children;
- A Shabbat cooking demonstration;
- A meditation session;
- A talk by a psychologist about how to open ourselves up to seeing the good in the world.



The sales of Year of Growth are used entirely to cover costs of creating, producing, distributing, and supporting the successful use of this educational resource.

Momentum Unlimited  
6101 Executive Blvd, Suite 240, Rockville, MD 20852  
240-747-7080 | [info@MomentumUnlimited.org](mailto:info@MomentumUnlimited.org)



**[MomentumUnlimited.org](https://MomentumUnlimited.org)**



**Ministry of Diaspora Affairs**  
Creating a common Jewish future