

Invitation to Judaism – Lesson Plan – Shabbat

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Reading: Robinson, pp. 81-92, Kushner pp. 92-106, Telushkin pp. 673-680

1. “A Jew who feels a real tie with the life of our people throughout the generations will find it utterly impossible to think of the existence of the Jew without the Shabbat. One can say without exaggeration that **more than the Jew has kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept the Jew.**”¹ Ahad Ha’Am
2. **Why is the Sabbath so important?** Think of it. It is the only holiday mentioned in the Ten Commandments. Even Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are not there. It is a *weekly* reminder – to us and our families – that we are Jewish. It creates a sacred time on a regular basis to celebrate with our family and friends. And it designates a time that we can reflect on the values we hold dear, on the events that have occurred during the past week, and on the personal goals we are striving for. It provides a needed rest to recharge our batteries, and to revive our souls.
3. A Shabbat prayerbook includes the following story: “A great pianist was once asked by an ardent admirer: ‘How do you handle the notes as well as you 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 story concludes, “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 pause 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.”²
4. **“Work” what is it?**
 - a. **Creation.** Genesis Chapter 1. God *creates* in six days *and* rests on seventh day. We, too, create on six days and rest on seventh
 - b. In Exodus, the Shabbat law is sandwiched by instructions to build Mishkan. Hence, Rabbis concluded that holiness in space (Mishkan) is superceded by holiness in time (Shabbat). Activities required to build (and worship in) Mishkan are “work”. (Although, when Temple stood, its activities were actually exempt from Shabbat restrictions.)
 - c. **39 categories.** See Robinson book. P.82 ff. Includes: conducting business, cooking, cleaning (except dishes needed for Shabbat), shopping, writing, laundry, carrying, making, transferring or extinguishing fires, building something, fixing something.
 - ❖ **Compare with Yom Tov:** can (i) carry, (ii) transfer fire, (iii) cook.
 - ❖ What is cooking – **Ben Druzai, cholent, heating up** something, hot water pots, coffee and tea.
 - ❖ **Muktzeh** – things that have no “purpose” on Shabbat, should also not be touched. “Making a fence around the law.”

¹ Greenberg, Sidney *Likrat Shabbat* (Prayer Book Press, Enhanced Edition, 1998) p. 98

² *Id.*, p. 99

❖ **Electricity** – is it fire? Using **timers**. **Driving** to synagogue and the Conservative teshuvah.

5. Heschel, *The Sabbath*: Holiness in time. First holiness created – before holiness in space. All these “restrictions” *create* holiness in time: creates temporal “space” to fill with holiness, peace. Time for people, interaction, learning, relax, refreshing your soul.
6. “**Remember**” in Exodus and “**Observe**” in Deuteronomy (two versions of 10 Commandments)
 - a. Like the lion in the forest: animals flee before it and leaves a wake behind it. Prepare for Shabbat on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday; take some of the peace with you on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday.
 - b. **Remember** = things **To Do** (rest, etc.); **Observe** = things **Not to Do** (work, etc.)

7. “**Bride**” and “**Queen**”

- a. Like Remember and Observe
- b. Bride = love, freshness, radiance, renewal; Queen = royal, pomp, grandeur

8. **Taste of World to Come**

9. Friday night service: **Kabbalat Shabbat** – opening psalms: 7 for 7 days of week; + **Lekha Dodi** - Mystics of Tsfat: Shabbat as Bride and taste of final redemption.
10. At home: **light candles** (why?), **kiddush** (why wine?), **challot** (why 2?) **blessing children, Ashot Hayil, Shalom Alekhem, songs, birkat hamazon**
11. Saturday service: *Shaharit*, Torah service, *haftarah*, *musaf*
12. At home: kiddush again, hallah again, etc.
13. Afternoon: minhah, Torah reading, *Shalosh seudot*, Ma’ariv. **HAVDALLAH**: with wine, candles and spices. Say goodbye to Sabbath.

14. **Practical Shabbat: Where to begin?**

- a. **Friday night at home ritual: candles, kiddush, nice dinner, friends, etc.**
- b. Do at least one hour of “Torah” study sometime on Friday night or Saturday.
- c. Limit “work” activities as much as you can.
- d. Services on Saturday morning (and afternoon?)
- e. Havdallah
- f. It is not an all or nothing proposition. It is not hypocritical to have a full Friday night dinner if you feel you will need to go to work on Saturday. It may not be ideal, but it is not hypocritical. I would say do as much as you can. What you can’t do, you can’t do, but the more you *do* do, the more you have done.

Journal Topics: How can I see myself observing Shabbat in my life? What can I reasonably expect myself to do in the next few weeks? What would I like to add to Shabbat observance over the course of a year? How will Shabbat enhance my relationship with God? With the Jewish people? What services can I attend at Beth Yeshurun and how often can I go?