

Values Curriculum:

Shabbat/The Value of Free Time

OVERVIEW	This session explores the holiday of Shabbat, the day of rest. Using the Shabbat candle ritual as the focal point, students learn about the importance of setting aside time for rest on Shabbat.
OBJECTIVE	To empower students to light Shabbat candles and to make Shabbat rest a part of their lives.
VALUE(S)	<i>Cheyrit</i> (Freedom)
STORY	"Shifra's First Shabbat" by Ariela Ronay-Jinich (see attached, pages 9-10)
MATERIALS	Shabbat mat and candlestick materials
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take home Shabbat candlesticks and a mat (with the blessing) on which to place them to use for Shabbat. Families are challenged to practice real free time on Shabbat.

Materials List

Activity One

- No materials necessary.

Activity Two

- Plastic tablecloth(s)
- Air-dry clay
- Clay cutter
- Beads, shells, and jewels for children to stick into the clay for decoration
- Pencils to use for making patterns on the clay
- 2 Shabbat candles

Gathering Activity

- Colored construction paper OR white cardstock
- Printed copy of Shabbat candle lighting blessing (included here)
- Pairs of scissors
- Glue sticks
- Colored pencils or markers or crayons
- Clear contact paper, pre-cut to just bigger than the paper/cardstock size

Opening/Closing Circle

- Printed copy of story: "Shifra's First Shabbat" by Ariela Ronay-Jinich
- Shabbat candlesticks and Shabbat candles
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Shabbat Candle Lighting Mat (15 Minutes)

Children will make a mat that they can place under their Shabbat candles to catch any wax that drips and to remind them of the Jewish blessing for Shabbat candle lighting.

1. Gather children around a table with materials laid out.
2. Have children choose a piece of colored construction paper or white cardstock and also take a copy of the Shabbat candle blessing.
3. Have each child cut out the blessing and glue it to the mat.
4. Have each child use the writing/drawing materials to draw on their mat. Think together about images we associate with candles or with Shabbat as children begin to draw/decorate.
5. When each child is done decorating, help them cover their mat with the contact paper placing one piece over the front and another over the back so that they face each other and stick together with the mat in between.

Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle, bringing their Shabbat mats with them, and begin with a melody, a niggun or a greeting song such as Hineh Ma Tov.

Tell about today's theme:

- Show the children the Shabbat candlesticks.
- Does anyone know what these are for or when we light them?
- Has anyone here lit candles for Shabbat before?
- Place the candles in the candlesticks and on someone's mat.
- What do we think the mats we just made will do for our Shabbat candle lighting?

Look for:

- ◊ remind us of the blessing;
- ◊ catch the wax if it drips
- Today we are learning about Shabbat.
- What do we already know about Shabbat?

Look for:

- ◊ Shabbat is the most frequently celebrated Jewish holiday which happens every week;
- ◊ Shabbat begins on Friday night and goes until Saturday night;
- ◊ Shabbat is a time of resting, honors God's day of resting after working for six days to create the world;
- ◊ It is framed with a Friday night ritual of candles, wine/grape juice, and bread and ends with a Saturday night ritual (Havdallah) of candles, wine/grape juice, and spices.

Introduce today's Hebrew word — *Cheyrut*:

- Stretch out your hands in front of you so your fingertips are touching and your palms are facing your chest, as if you were holding a big ball in front of you. Say "Chey."
- Then open up your hands outward as if you were letting that ball go, or as if you were freeing a bird that was inside that space, and say "Root."
- Now put the two together: Chey (holding a ball) Root (letting it go).
- *Cheyrut* means freedom.
- What does freedom have to do with Shabbat?

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story — “Shifra’s First Shabbat”

- When the Jews were slaves in Egypt they didn’t have many choices. They didn’t get to choose when to work and when to rest and take a break. They had to work every day and didn’t have a weekend!
- Would you like it if your parents worked every day and didn’t get a weekend? Would you like it if you went to school every day and didn’t have free time?
- Today’s story is a letter from a girl named Shifra who lived in the time when the Jews had left Egypt to become free and were wandering in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. When they first left Egypt they weren’t used to having free time; Shabbat was new to them. Let’s find out how Shifra liked this new idea of a day of rest.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**
 - ◇ What was life like for Shifra’s family before they had Shabbat?
 - ◇ What was different about Shabbat than the other days of the week?
- **Get Curious**
 - ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
 - ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
 - ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
 - ◇ These questions don’t have to have answers, though kids are welcome to try and answer each other’s questions.
 - ◇ Have kids respond to each other’s questions with “good question!” and a thumbs up.
- **Give one more Question to Ponder**
 - ◇ I’m wondering: What would we write back to Shifra about Shabbat today?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Shabbat Line-Up Game (15 Minutes)

Children will think about what they would choose to do, or not do, on a day of rest and free time. The goal is not for children to think that there is any particular way to observe Shabbat, but rather for them to become aware that Shabbat is a special day that we make special and restful through our choices.

Introduce the Activity:

Shifra asked us a really good question in her letter to us in the future: What do we like to do on Shabbat? Shifra explained that not doing some things allowed her to have time to do other things.

When her family wasn't busy packing or unpacking, they got to sing and feast together. And when she wasn't busy helping to build or gather food in the wilderness, she got to play games with her friends.

In this game, you'll get to choose what you would want to do on Shabbat, and what you wouldn't like to do on Shabbat, since it's your free time to rest and have fun.

Remember what Shifra's father said when you choose: Shabbat is a day of rest for you and for your family, your animals, and other creatures on the Earth too!

1. Identify an area of space between two objects, such as two chairs set apart or two sides of a room. One side is "I would do this on Shabbat." The other side is "I would not do this on Shabbat."
2. When you read each item on the list of activities below, the children will choose whether they would:
 - ◇ (A) Choose to do that on Shabbat
 - ◇ (B) Choose not to do that on Shabbat
 - ◇ (C) Aren't sure
3. Once students decide about the activity you've just said, they run toward the side that reflects their opinion. If they aren't sure or it depends, they can stay in between.
4. Once everyone in the group has lined up according to their opinion, ask children who have taken different positions to share their reasoning. Just take one or two answers from each side in order to keep the game moving.
5. Keep going until you are out of time.

Line-up statements: On Shabbat, I would/would not...

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| • Stay at home | • Read a book | • Do an art project |
| • Visit a new place | • Do homework | • Play video games |
| • Have some alone time | • Play with friends | • Light candles |
| • Spend time in nature | • Go to school | • Clean up my room |
| • Play a sport | • Help around the house | • Walk my pet |

Activity Two: Shabbat Candlesticks (25 Minutes)

Children make Shabbat candlesticks from air-dry clay and a variety of decorative materials, including beads, jewels, shells, and fabric flowers. Children can also use pencils to add contour and marks to their candlesticks.

Introduce the activity:

Jewish people have remembered Shabbat for thousands of years, whether they have lived in ancient Israel or in places like Morocco, India, Mexico, or the United States. Everyone's Shabbat can look and feel a little bit different across the world, but we all like to start it the same way.

Shabbat starts on Friday at sundown and ends the next day when it's night again and you can see three stars in the sky. We begin Shabbat by lighting two candles on Friday night. When we light Shabbat candles, we remember that we are entering a special day that is different from all the other days, a day of free time and rest.

1. At a table covered with plastic tablecloth (makes clean-up easier) give each child a medium-sized clump of clay.
2. Have each child divide their clay into two equal-sized balls.
3. Have children manipulate their balls into other interesting shapes.
4. When they have a shape they want, have each child (or help each child) press a candle into the clay to make an indentation for a future candle. Because the clay will shrink when it dries, wiggle the candle a bit to make the indentation wider than the actual candle.
5. Have each child decorate their candlesticks with the beads, shells, jewels, or other available materials. Make sure they leave the candle hole free for the candle. And remind them they can etch with a pencil as well.
6. Leave the candlesticks on the table to dry. They can pick them up the next time they are together or carry them home carefully today.
7. Have everyone look at each other's work at the table.



Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle.

Before we go, let's learn the special blessing you say for lighting candles on Shabbat. Repeat after me (do one line at a time):

Baruch Atah Adonai

Eloheinu Melech ha Olam

asher kidshanu

bamitzvotav

vitzivanu

lehadlik ner

shel Shabbat

That means, "Blessed are You, Maker of the World, who gave us the practice/mitzvah of lighting the Shabbat candles." Lighting candles can help you get ready for a day of rest and free time.

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

- Stretch out your hands in front of you so your fingertips are touching and your palms are facing your chest, as if you were holding a big ball in front of you. Say "Chey."
- Then open up your hands outwards as if you were letting that ball go, or as if you were freeing a bird that was inside that space, and say "Root."
- Now put the two together: Chey (holding a ball) Root (letting it go).
- Have the children say what *cheyrut* means: freedom.

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet

Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.

At Home Challenge: Shabbat Free Time

Today we learned about Shabbat and the importance of rest in our lives. Even though most people in our society have at least one day of the week off from work or school, in our modern, digitized, and frequently over-scheduled lifestyles, we often experience having little “free time” because we have planned and scheduled most of it.

A Shabbat practice that limits how much and what we do, though it seems the opposite of freedom, can actually free us to experience the ease and rejuvenation that comes from not having a plan, or at least having fewer plans in one day!

Your challenge is to light candles with your child's Shabbat candlesticks and decide as a family what you would like to be “free from” on Shabbat to help you fully enjoy your free time.

Here are some suggestions on how to make Shabbat a freedom practice:

1. Try a digital device-free Shabbat: turn off your phones and refrain from using iPads, computers, and other digital devices.
2. Plan no more than one or two activities for the day (you choose what gives your family the most amount of freedom in time).
3. Leave all of Saturday open to what might unfold. Plan only the first place you'll go, or thing you'll do, such as go to the beach or on a nearby hike, and let the day unfold on its own.

Shabbat Candle Blessing

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melech
haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu
l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are You, Creator, Our G-d, Rule-Maker
of the World, who made us holy and gave us
the Mitzvah of lighting the Shabbat Candles.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת

“Shifra’s First Shabbat” by Ariela Ronay-Jinich

Breaking news: Archeologists have just unearthed an ancient parchment deep in the sands of the Sinai desert. After months of trying to decipher the ancient language it is written in, they claim it is a letter written by a young girl who was travelling with the ancient Israelites on their way to the Promised Land.

Read on for a full translation of the ancient letter:

Dear People of the Future,

Hi, my name is Shifra and I’m 7 years old. I once saw someone writing a letter to a person who lived far away and thought I could do the same. I thought I’d write a letter to a person far away—not far away in a different place, but far away in a different time.

That’s why I’m writing to a person in the future.

As I told you, my name is Shifra and I’m 7 years old. I live in. . . well, it’s hard to explain exactly where I live because we keep moving all the time. Since we left Egypt, we haven’t stopped moving. Every couple of weeks we have to pack everything up, walk with all our stuff, and then unpack it again. My parents say all this moving is important because we’re trying to get somewhere. They say we’re on our way to the Promised Land.

I like living in the desert wilderness, though. It’s very different than living in Egypt. We didn’t like it there. My parents had to work every day. They couldn’t even take a break for lunch sometimes. We were also told where we could live and where we couldn’t, what we could wear and what we couldn’t, when we could eat, and when we couldn’t. They were so bossy. We didn’t have any choices, and I like having choices.

When we lived in Egypt, the grownups always said they were tired. At the end of the day, no one had any energy left to play or tell jokes. Everyone walked around with a frown.

One day my mother told me that the day of our Freedom was coming. I didn’t know what that meant. She said we would be free—that there wouldn’t be a person deciding everything for us all the time.

Sure enough, one night at midnight we left Egypt. The full moon was glowing and we had to be very careful not to be seen. When the sun rose, we were in the wilderness! I turned around looking back toward Egypt, toward the Nile River and toward our mud house, but I couldn’t even see them anymore.

“We’re free!!” everyone shouted. The women started to dance and sing, playing their tambourines. Suddenly, though, everyone got quiet. It was a scary kind of quiet.

And then, everyone started talking all at once, asking so many questions: “Where are we going to sleep? What are we going to eat? With all this moving, who will help the slowest ones keep up?”

It felt just like when I’m having fun playing with my friends and then someone starts crying. It’s not fun anymore. I don’t think people felt so free anymore.

“It will take so much work to find food and water here! We’ll have to look all day and maybe all night!” some would say.

“How are we going to get to the Promised Land? We’ll need to travel without stopping!” others said. Everyone seemed so worried and upset.

Then, the shofar sound blasted through the crowds, quieting even the wind.

“We are free, my friends,” insisted a man far away in the crowd. “Why are you all making life as tiring as it was when we were slaves in Egypt?” he asked.

He had a good point—it was really up to us to choose how we wanted to do things now that we didn’t have someone telling us how to do everything.

“Listen closely, people of Israel,” the voice said. If only I was closer, I thought, I could listen more closely, but there were hundreds of people in front of me, also listening!

“We are free. Not only are we free to choose what we do, but when we do it. It’s hard for us to act like free people because we’ve been slaves our whole life.” People nodded their heads and agreed. It was new to be a free person.

“Shabbat will help us,” he said. Everyone seemed puzzled. We didn’t even know what that word meant! “What’s Shabbat?” I asked my father.

“It’s a day of rest,” he said, “just like we say that G-d rested after creating the world, we too get to rest.” We won’t need to do any of those things that are so tiring—like moving camp, having to gather food in the wilderness, or build structures. We get to rest.

“Does that mean it’s a day of play?” I asked.

“Yes,” said my father, “it’s a day to rest our bodies and also our hearts.”

Six days later we had our first Shabbat. We were so excited. We waited for the sun to set and everyone started singing and dancing and feasting together. I spent all day playing with my best friends, playing hide-and-seek behind the prickly bushes and chasing each other around camp.

I also got to hear amazing stories from my aunties and uncles over a yummy plate of manna, our favorite snack in the wilderness. No one had to work, so everyone could relax and have fun together. It was like one big “free time” day for everyone.

My father said to me that Shabbat was all about letting everything rest—your family, your animals, and even things like tent poles, wool, and flour. It wasn’t a day to turn wool into a blanket, or wood into a house. It was a day to just let things be exactly as they were. I liked that.

That first Shabbat felt like the longest day of my life. After the sunset, we waited for three stars to come out to let us know Shabbat had ended. I felt so sad.

“Shifra, don’t make such a sad face,” my mother said, “We’ll get to do this again. . . Every week!”

And so that’s my story I wanted you to know, because I’m not so sure you remember your own first Shabbat, or do you? Mine was everyone’s first Shabbat, so it’s easy to remember.

I wonder what people in the future do on Shabbat . . . I wish you could write a letter back to me in the past and tell me what Shabbat is like in your time!

Either way, I hope you enjoyed my story, and I hope you enjoy Shabbat! Say hello to the future for me and Shabbat Shalom.