

“Challenging myself Jewishly with USY was a great experience! But what’s next?”



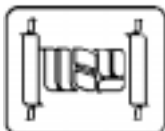
BRINGING IT HOME —SHABBAT—

**A guide to bringing your experiences
with Jewish practice in USY
into your everyday life.**

Editor

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Adapted for USY with permission from
Shabbat: An Oasis in Time—A Taste of the World To Come
presented by *Koach*—<http://www.uscj.org/koach/shabbat.htm>



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Experiencing Shabbat

Think about your Shabbat experience with USY. Shabbat at a USY program is something that grabs you by all five senses and romances your soul. It is singing, dancing, praying, seeing old friends and meeting new ones. It is feeling like we are elevated to a holier place for just one day. It is the emotion that for a few hours in our week, nothing material matters: only our friends, our hearts, and our souls are important. That is why Shabbat with USY is so special. But the question is, how do we take that experience home with us after the USY program is over? How do we Bring It Home?

What is Shabbat and why do we observe it?

- It is one of the Ten Commandments
- On this day God rested from the work of Creation (Exodus 20:11)
- Remembering the redemption from slavery and the exodus from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15).

What do these tell us about observing Shabbat?

That we are to be God-like in our behavior, stepping back from our labors to appreciate the world around us. That the observance of Shabbat recalls the freedom from slavery (as slaves cannot have a day of rest), our interconnectedness with God, the fulfillment of our special covenant with God, and the luxury of living a Jewish life.

Shabbat is a gift to yourself.

The experience of Shabbat is an experience of and for a lifetime. You don't need to change your lifestyle to make it work. You can build slowly, taking on a little at a time, so that the commitment will be a natural and lasting one. It is a gift you will give yourself and one which you will want to share.

"I can't observe Shabbat! There are too many rules!"

While it is true that there are many rules, think of them as liberations for the mundane work of the week. Part of how we make Shabbat special comes from the things we don't do — like leaving the computer off, keeping our wallets stowed away and eating foods we have prepared in advance.

The types of activity from which we refrain are derived from the **39 types of activity (*melachot*)** which were halted on Shabbat during the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable sanctuary in the desert. This frees us up to appreciate the wonders of creation and links us with the experiences of our ancestors. It is the combination of the things we do with the things we don't do which sets aside Shabbat and **gives it holiness.**

What does it mean to observe Shabbat? How can you bring out the meaning in what you do?

Good Ways To Think and Do Shabbat:

⇒ Spend time with community and friends:

- 1. Invite friends and family over for meals**
- 2. Invite friends and family over to hang out**
- 3. Attend synagogue on Friday night and/or Saturday morning for services** (Bring friends!)

⇒ Break from the ordinary (celebrating “Ruach Shabbat,” the spirit of Shabbat).

- 1. Put your homework somewhere where you won't touch it the whole day.**
- 2. Take a long nap.**
- 3. Read for pleasure.**
- 4. Take a refreshing walk** alone or with friends.
- 5. Partake in Jewish study** (it is a custom to learn *Pirkei Avot*, Ethics of the Sages, on Shabbat. It is a beautiful book).
- 6. Try not to worry about time.**
- 7. Try not to do every-day activities** such as shopping, cooking, watching television, using the computer, and using the phone on Shabbat (this may be hard at first, so go a little at a time).

⇒ Make the day special by bringing God into it and feeding your *neschama* (soul) and stomach.

- 1. Light candles on Friday evening to welcome in Shabbat.** By lighting candles, we are saying that this will be our light for the evening; that we are making Shabbat special by not creating fire on it. When you light the candles, picture a little spark of God entering your house through the light—it is a wonderful idea. You should light candles anywhere between an hour and a half to 18 minutes before sunset on Friday evening (though lighting them, regardless of the time, will make the day special for you). This bracha can be found on page 1 in the B'Kol Echad or page 717 in Siddur Sim Shalom.
- 2. Say Kiddush over wine (or grape juice) on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon.** This shows that you are making the day holy (*kiddush* means to sanctify). These can be found on pages 727 and 735 of Siddur Sim Shalom, respectively and pages 8-10 in the B'kol Echad.
- 3. Enjoy big, festive meals on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon** with family and/or friends. Don't forget to try to have two *challot* (that's plural for *challah*). One is perfectly fine, but two is preferable because it symbolizes how God provided for us in the desert (thus adding a little extra Godliness to our table).
- 4. Try adding blessings into your Shabbat routine.** For example, you can say “*Hamotzi*” before you eat a meal (p. 714 in Sim Shalom and page 12 in the B'kol Echad), “*Birkat HaMazon*” after you eat (p. 755 in Sim Shalom and page 42 in the B'kol Echad). It will infuse everything you do with a sense of spirituality.
- 5. Sing Jewish or Shabbat songs.** As you know from USY, this will increase your enjoyment and the spirituality of the day. This can be done with family, friends, or even by yourself.

How do I do this in a non-Shabbat house and in a non-Shabbat world?

Luckily, much of your Shabbat observance will have **no affect on** (and will not be affected by) **other people**. Your Shabbat observance is for you! Here are some pointers:

TAKE SMALL STEPS. Keeping Shabbat is important, but you cannot (and should not) force your family to change just because you wish to. Talk to your parents and you will come up with a way to appease both your levels of observance. One thing you can do is ask your parents if your family can sit down for Shabbat dinner on Friday night or go to services together. Above all, be sure to communicate with them and tell them what you would like to start doing and how you both can be accommodated.

You CAN Observe Shabbat!

When everyone else is treating Shabbat like any Saturday, or when you feel like you just have to check your e-mail or go to the mall Saturday afternoon, don't give up! You can observe Shabbat, like so many of your fellow Jews have for thousands of years.

Please note that this guide is meant as a starting point in your road to keeping Shabbat. Please do not treat it as an authoritative guide. Your rabbi, your Youth Director or USY advisor, or regional board members are all available to you as resources for learning, guidance and specific questions.

Places to go for more information

- ⇒ **Slow Down and Live: A Guide to Shabbat Observance and Enjoyment.** Edited by Stephen Garfinkel
- ⇒ **A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice** by Isaac Klein
- ⇒ **B'Kol Echad.** Edited by Cantor Jeffrey Shiovitz.

**All of the above publications are available from the USCJ Book Service
(www.uscj.org)**

- ⇒ **Koach—Department of College Outreach—<http://www.uscj.org/koach/shabbat.htm>**

B'hatzlacha! Good Luck!

Note: This pamphlet is not designed as a substitute for Jewish law. It is merely a stepping stone on your path to observing Jewish law correctly. The authoritative guide for observance should be your Rabbi.