

Genesis 2:2

On the seventh day

God finished the work that God

had been doing, and God

ceased on the seventh day

from all the work that

God had done.

בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מָלְא אֱלֹהִים

בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִלְאֲכָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בְּיוֹם

הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלָאכָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

Traditionally we understand that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. We tend to think of the Sabbath as the absence of creation. Yet, another reading of Genesis 2:2 reveals that God continued to create on the seventh day. By establishing Shabbat as a day set apart from the rest of the week, we can think of God as actually creating rest. Rest is an integral aspect of creation, without which the cycle of work would not be complete.

Shabbat welcomes us to create rest in our own lives. Just as God spent the week creating the world, we work by taking action to further social justice. However, unlike God we often fail to recognize the significance of rest as a fundamental aspect of creation. Each Shabbat offers us an opportunity to discover the ways in which reflection, awareness, wholeness and connection are present in our lives.

You are invited to use the following themes and guiding questions to create your own framework for a meaningful day of rest. As you move through your creative process, use this tool to prompt personal reflection and discussion with others. Hopefully this will translate into a more fulfilling approach to social justice work during the week.

WHOLE RHYTHM

The pattern of work and rest modeled in Genesis establishes a powerful rhythm to the week. Unfortunately, we rarely take time to appreciate and participate in the fullness of this cycle. Our society encourages fast-paced lifestyles consumed with goals and objectives. During the week, we can become so concentrated on attaining our aims that we easily forget the importance of rest - an essential piece of this work. This natural rhythm, the complementary dynamic between work and rest, prevents fatigue and sustains passion in our social justice work. When we allow ourselves to incorporate both aspects in the rhythm of our lives and fully experience this cycle, we bring a new richness to our experiences. In what ways are both work and rest important to you? How do the two complement each other in your life?

GOOD WORK

God created the world and saw that it was good (Genesis 1:31). Even though we may not be aware of it, each of us performs social justice work in the world. It is important for us to take a step back and acknowledge our contributions. We may do this work professionally, through volunteering or in our daily interactions. Each of us holds dear issues and causes such as economic and criminal justice, gender and racial equality, effective healthcare and educational systems, and a sustainable environment. In order to push through societal and political barriers, we need to acknowledge that we have the power to effect change in the world. What do you do to identify and acknowledge your work? How do you encourage others to concretely participate in social change?

*This is
the day that the
Lord has made—let us
exult and rejoice on it.*

~ Psalm 118

CHOOSING TIME

Balancing our time is a constant challenge.

We have competing priorities that occupy our attention. To be more effective making change, we must prioritize our needs. On Shabbat we have the opportunity to establish separate time apart from the incessant rush of the rest of the week. By creating a framework for rest, the day becomes defined as distinct, holy and significant. In *The Sabbath*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel invites us to think of entering Shabbat as a “palace in time which we build,” a place to dwell. By reserving a space for holy moments, Shabbat can become a structure of comfort and peace. How can you approach time as a place to surround yourself with comfort? What do you think that you will have to change to prioritize Shabbat?

*What we are
depends on what
the Sabbath is to us.*

*~ Abraham
Joshua Heschel*

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Similar to the six days of work, Shabbat is filled with opportunities to take action. However, action on the Sabbath is defined differently; it centers around being joyous, showing gratitude, reflecting and taking care of our entire selves. When we slow down and embrace the present tense, the experience becomes about awareness and appreciation for each moment. This action can take many forms: studying modern or ancient text, praying, singing, playing with children, laughing, sleeping, hiking, walking in nature, dancing, eating a delicious meal, engaging in lively discussions or reading a good book. What activities would fit most comfortably into your Shabbat? What can you do to be more active in how you experience Shabbat?

DEEP REST

Wishing others a Shabbat Shalom, a Sabbath of peace, stems from God's model of rest on the seventh day of creation. Ideas of peace and relaxation, unlike work and productivity, are typically not ingrained and integrated well in our society. We must teach ourselves to take care of our physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Shabbat is an opportunity to metaphorically exhale from the busy week of social justice work. Welcoming moments of tranquility can move us to places of new perspective and celebration of the beauty around us. Taking the time on Shabbat to replenish and reenergize expands our views, not only of what we need, but of what those laboring around us need as well. How can you incorporate rest into your Shabbat paradigm? In what ways can

rest rejuvenate your whole self?

We must always be thinking of a world as a place of infinite possibilities.

~Tracy Chapman

*Do your work, then step back.
The only path to serenity.*

~Tao Te Ching

OPEN MOMENTS

When we think about significant moments in our lives, they are often filled with connection. These moments cannot be forced or contrived. But on Shabbat, the frameworks that give rise to such moments can be noticed and cultivated. Throughout the week we use our voices as activists in many ways to make change. While this is one part of the equation, genuinely listening is equally important. Shabbat reserves a space for dialogue. Being open to dialogue, whether with God through prayer or with others through conversation, allows for new ideas to blossom and relationships to flourish. By entering into these encounters with kindness and gratitude we facilitate exchanges of true significance. Where do you notice moments of connection and with whom? How can you become more open to dialogue?

If you pay attention at every moment, you form a new relationship to time.

~Michael Ray

IMAGINING JUSTICE

When we rest and reflect, we are better able to look beyond the past and the present, to imagine a new world. We can engage in thought and conversation about how to create a world filled with peace and righteousness. Our imaginations help us to create possibilities for taking action toward our ideals and dreams for a more just future. Additionally, the distance from our work offers us a different vantage point to help us understand the justice that we are building. As we begin anew our social justice work, we can assess our current strengths. By building upon them we can cultivate the goodness we see into what could exist as a full reality of social change. Through intentional thought we choose our individual roles in this action toward our ultimate goal of social justice. How do you envision a just world? What could your role be as a change agent toward this ideal?

BLESSING CREATION

Judaism offers blessings for many purposes and occasions. On Shabbat we recite blessings to sanctify the candles, wine, challah and our families. The intention of blessing can include gratitude, praise and/or request. It can be oriented toward healing, peace, justice, appreciation and/or hope. Prayer may be directed toward God, to a concept of a higher power or simply state an intention. Whatever form they take, these blessings make the profane sacred.

As the next step in the composition of a personal Shabbat, take a moment to write your own blessing. You may use the following templates to form your creation or develop your own.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, _____

May you _____

I wish that _____

SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

As Shabbat concludes and the rhythm of the week moves from rest back to work, you too can proceed into the social justice work that continues to heal the world. **Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA)** invites you to join them in their social justice advocacy. As a progressive voice in the Jewish community and a Jewish voice in the progressive community, PJA is a California membership organization dedicated to the Jewish traditions of working for social justice, promoting equality and diversity, and pursuing peace and dialogue. PJA is a new kind of Jewish organization, one that serves as a vehicle connecting Jews to the critical social justice issues of the day, to the life of the cities in which they live, and to the Jewish tradition of working for tikkun olam.

PJA engages young adult Jews through our Jeremiah Federation Fellowship, an innovative project that trains young professionals to be the next generation of Jewish social justice leaders. The program emphasizes local activism in the spirit of the Prophet Jeremiah's teaching: *"And seek the well-being of the city in which you dwell... for in its peace you shall find peace."* ~ Jeremiah 29.7

For more information about Progressive Jewish Alliance visit www.pjalliance.org

This booklet has been written by Erin Tarica, MSW, MAJCS as a part of her participation in the Progressive Jewish Alliance's Jeremiah Federation Fellowship in the Bay Area, 2007-2008.



SUPPORT PJA IN THEIR ONGOING CAMPAIGNS, WHICH INCLUDE:

Kosher Clothes /Kosher Kippot Campaigns:

We focus on anti-sweatshop work through local "Sweatfree" purchasing ordinances and education and outreach in the Jewish community to promote Sweatfree purchasing.

Economic Justice: We organize the Jewish community to join campaigns to improve working conditions and secure a living wage for low-wage and immigrant workers. Our "Just Journeys" campaign allows you to be an ethical traveler and support hotel workers when you travel nation-wide.

Immigrants Rights: We work on community support of immigrants and immigrant workers and on responses to ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) raids.

Equal Rights – Marriage Equality:

We encourage couples to add to their wedding celebration readings or rituals advocating the inclusion of same-sex couples in Jewish and civil marriage. We celebrate the CA Supreme Court decision on May 15, 2008 supporting same-sex marriage and work to advocate for the freedom to marry.