Shalom Parents,

Shabbat, the most important Jewish holiday of the year, is the only holiday commanded of us in the Ten Commandments (“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Exodus 20, v.8).

What’s different about Shabbat? It’s the only day in seven when, on a regular basis, we rest physically, mentally and spiritually; from deadlines, schedules and commitments. It’s a day of great joy, eagerly awaited throughout the week, when we can set aside all weekday concerns and devote ourselves to higher pursuits.

Shabbat is a home holiday. It starts with preparations during the preceding days; cleaning the house, preparing special foods, choosing special clothing to wear, and sometimes inviting special guests for dinner.

Tzedakah (charity) helps us share the joy of Shabbat with others. Prior to sundown, coins are dropped into a tzedakah box to help the needy, or to contribute to planting trees in Israel.

Shabbat begins as the sun descents, the candle lighting blessing is recited, candles are lit, and family and friends greet each other with “Shabbat Shalom” (in Hebrew) or “Good Shabbos” (in Yiddish). Then, with the arrival of Shabbat peacefulness, parents, children and friends talk, play, sing and eat together. Many families welcome Shabbat by singing “Shalom Aleichem” and parents bless their children. The Shabbat table is set with the best tablecloth and dishes. Kiddush is recited over wine (or grape juice) and HaMotzi is said over challah. Together, the family enjoys a meal more elaborate and special and eaten more slowly than on all other days.

Spiritual renewal and communal connection encourages family members to attend synagogue Shabbat services. Personal preference in religious observance determines whether Friday evening and/or Saturday morning services are attended.

Shabbat ends with Havdalah. After 25 hours of rest and fun with family and friends, three stars appear in the sky, and a Havdalah service is conducted with wine, spices and a special braided candle. When the flame is extinguished, everyone wishes each other a good week (“shavuah tou” in Hebrew or “gutta voch” in Yiddish). They return to their ordinary weekday activities and wait for next week’s Shabbat fun.

Want to Know More about Shabbat?
Check on-line for information at JEWFAQ.ORG/HOLIDAY1.HTM
HAVING FUN AT HOME

Preparation for Shabbat adds to its fun. Shabbat has a distinct beginning and ending, and in between there is reading, thinking, discussing, playing, telling and celebrating.

PREPARING

Make A Tzedakah (charity) box as a way to help others. Just before Shabbat begins, many family members drop their loose change in the box. Then they light candles, starting Shabbat. When the box is full, the money is donated to a favorite charity.

With your child: Cover a salt box or coffee can with tempera paint (or wallpaper or wrapping paper or fabric). Use scissors and glue as needed. Let it dry. Cut a slit in the box lid that is big enough for a coin to easily slip through.

Make A Flower Arrangement to beautify your Shabbat table.

With your child: Use a tree or bush twig. Cut colored tissue paper into strips. Wrap the strips around the twig, securing them in place by twisting them tightly around the twig, and extending the ends of the strips, giving the impression of budding flowers. Place the flower in a vase on the Shabbat table.

VISITING

Shabbat is a perfect time to invite guests or visit others.

With your child: Make up a guest list and ask for his help contacting family and friends.

FEELING SPECIAL

Children feel really special on Shabbat, as they wear special clothing, eat special food, do special things, spend time with special people. She loves to wear particular hair ribbons, barrettes and jewelry. He can wear a certain kippah (yarmulka), shirt and belt. Certain special books, games stories and toys can be reserved for use on this day. Bedtime can be a bit later and more leisurely.

With your child: Set up Shabbat lunch with a “salad bar”. Everyone gets a bowl and the table is full of all sorts of choices, according to the tastes of each family member.

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

After placing money in the tzedakah box, followed by candle-lighting, many parents gather their children close, place their hands on the children’s heads and bless them with these words:

Y’varech’cha Adonai v’yishm’recha
Yaer Adonai panav elecha vikhuneka
Yisa Adonai panav elecha, v’yasem le’cha shalom.

May God bless you and keep you.
May God’s light shine on you and be gracious to you.
May God’s face be lifted upon you and give you peace.

Some parents also include some personal words after saying the blessing.

PLAYING

After Kiddush (blessing over wine) and Hamotzi (blessing over challah) have been said, it is time to eat a leisurely, special meal while having fun. Play guessing games (about Shabbat, a Torah story, or something else she’s interested in).

TELLING

Torah stories are traditionally read and discussed on Shabbat.


Family stories can often be shared more leisurely on Shabbat than at other times.

With your child: During meals, while taking walks and relaxing together, share tales of relatives, your childhood, her babyhood. Spend time looking at photo albums together It’s fun now and later she will be grateful.

READING

Reading special books together helps create a lasting bond.

With your child: Choose a special book to read together only on Shabbat.
SAYING “GOODBYE” TO SHABBAT

Make a Havdalah spice bag (before Shabbat begins)

With your child: Smell a variety of spices (such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, bay leaf, etc). Place preferred spices in a small mesh bag and close it on top with a rubber band. Use it for the Havdalah service after Shabbat ends.

THE BEST THING ABOUT SHABBAT
After 25 hours of fun and relaxation it’s good to reflect on what made Shabbat special.

With your child: At the conclusion of Shabbat, talk about the best thing that happened that day.

SAYING “GOODBYE”
The Havdalah service, performed at nightfall on Saturday, marks the end of Shabbat.

With your child: Find three stars in the sky.

Three items required for Havdalah are: a cup of wine (or other liquid), fragrant spices, and a special Havdalah candle. Four blessings are made in the following order:

1. While holding the wine (or grape juice) cup:

   Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai, El-lo-hay-nu Me-lech Ha-o-lam Bo-ray P’ree Ha-ga-fen

   Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

2. While holding the fragrant spices (which represent a compensation for the departing special Sabbath spirit and perhaps are contained in the spice bag you created with your child)

   Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai, El-lo-hay-nu Me-lech

   With your child: Pass it around so everyone can smell it

3. While holding the special, multi-wicked Havdalah candle (purchased from a Jewish gift store):

   Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai, El-lo-hay-nu Me-lech Ha-o-lam Bo-ray M’o-ray Ha’aysh

   Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who creates the light of the fire.

4. The final blessing is the Havdalah blessing itself, recited over the wine, expressing separation of holy from ordinary things. After completing the blessing, drink the wine, and extinguish the candle’s flame from the candle in a few drops of wine.

   Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai, El-lo-hay-nu Me-lech Ha-o-lam Ha-ma-av’dil Bayn Kodesh L’chol Bayn Or L’cho-shech Bayn Yis-ra-el La-ameem Bayn Yom Hash-vee-ee L’shay-shet Y’may Ha-ma-ah-seh Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai Ha-ma-av’dil Bayn Ko-desh L’chol

   Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who distinguishes between sacred and secular, light and darkness, Israel and the other nations, and the seventh day and the six days of work

   Blessed are You, Lord, who separates between sacred and secular.

EXTENDING SHABBAT FUN
In addition, on Saturday night, after Shabbat, some people like to prolong family time by having a Melaveh Malkah party (a traditional way of extending the fun with food and music) -- with hot cocoa, popcorn, milk shakes and music.

With your child: Decide how to prepare for the party. What food should you have? What games should you play? What songs should you sing?
BOOKS AND MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR CHILDREN

Once Upon A Shabbos by J. Jules, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 1998. This sweet and whimsical story of a lost bear who finds his way to the home of a grandmother in Brooklyn delights three to five year olds.


Where Shabbat Lives by J. Goldin Fabiyi, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc. 2008. With charming language, and illustrations, this boardbook, appropriate for two and three year olds, explains all the places to find Shabbat.


The Friday Nights of Nana by A. Hest, Candlewich Press, 2001. Jennie and her grandmother work hard together, having fun preparing for Shabbat. At last the house is filled with family members enjoying a wonderful Shabbat dinner. Three to seven year olds love the story and the beautiful illustrations.

Just Enough Room by M.P. Feinberg, United Synagogue of America, 1991. As Joseph and Leah welcome many guests to their Shabbat table, their tiny dark home changes into a bright, sparkly, memorable Shabbat experience. Three to six year olds love to wonder how this is possible.

The Shabbat Box by L. Simpson, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2001. Ira excitedly anticipates bringing his class Shabbat box home. After waiting a long time for his turn, he loses the box, but then finds a novel way to replace it. Four to seven year olds enjoy this book.

The Littlest Candlesticks by S. Rouss, Fitspopany, 2002. Little Abby greatly admires the Shabbat candlesticks lit by her mother and her sisters, so she makes her own candlesticks. Four to seven year olds love this book, and its lovely illustrations.


FOR ADULTS


CDS:

The Z’mirot Sing-Along (collection of well-known Shabbat songs)

Celebrate Shabbat: Shabbat Songs To Treasure (by a variety of well-known Jewish artists)

ShirLaShabbat! (Shira Kline)

I’ve Got That Shabbat Feeling (Sue Epstein)

Bring The Shabbat Home (Peter & Ellen Allard)