

## **ReJEWvenate Your Summer**

Summer is a time to relax, play, rejuvenate and celebrate quality time as a family. Having more discretionary time can be liberating to some families while unsettling to other families. Jewish culture has always valued time as “sacred”, and so we have a history of creating rituals to bring meaning to life cycle and holiday events. Inventing “special rituals” to enhance “sacred time” can help bring your family closer together and build a context of meaning as a family. **FAMILY is a Jewish value!**

### **Special Family Rituals**

***Special rituals and ritual items that you can create in order to enhance your summer Jewishly may include the following:***

**-Create an interactive mezuzah case** that accompanies your family or each member of your family throughout the summer.

- An interactive *mezuzah case* could include appropriate prayers or thoughts that your family composed or things that you want each person to have with them when they are away from home.
- It can also include a family covenant that you create together to keep the family intact even when they are not together physically.
- Include some good things about each member of the family that you want to remember or an acrostic of each family member’s name with a good trait for each letter

You can make one family mezuzah you pass from family member to family member throughout the summer or each member of the family can create their own Interactive *Mezuzah Case*.

Be as creative as you’d like. Create a *mezuzah case* that has meaning to you. It can be made out of:

- a small container,
- an empty film canister,
- a juice can,
- a baby food jar
- a soda or other small bottle
- or any other vessel that you choose.

Decorate the outside as a family and create a special symbol such as a ***hamsa*** (good luck amulet) or the Hebrew letter ***shin*** (that stands for *Shadai*, one of God’s names) as part of the outside decoration.

The contents of your interactive *mezuzah cases* can be changed when something meaningful happens that you want to carry with you.

**-Create a car mezuzah** that includes a prayer for travel and an Eco Meditation that you create and say every time you fill your car with gas. You can download the Traveler’s Prayer in Hebrew, English and transliteration from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tefilat\\_HaDerech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tefilat_HaDerech) . It is also attached to the end of this document.

**-Create a *Mizrach***, (literally means east) to take with you on vacation or to send with your child to camp.

A *mizrach* is an artistic “orientation” to remind us of where Jerusalem is so we can remember where the center heart of the Jewish people is, and which direction to pray or to offer special blessings and meditations.

The *mizrach* that you create can be a piece of art made with any medium and any appropriate decoration with the word *mizrach*, east in the middle of it.

Ideas for medium to use to create your *mizrach*:

- popsicle sticks with decorations
- felt
- material
- paper
- aluminum or copper foil
- construction paper
- paper and paint, markers or colored pens
- collage materials
- or any other background you choose

**-Create a special family ritual item such as a *hamsa*** to send with your child to camp that keeps family close even while he/she is away.

*The Hamsa (Arabic: Khamsa, literally “five”, Hebrew: חמסה Khamsa) is a symbol used in amulets, charms and jewelry to protect against the “evil eye.”*

An alternative Jewish name is the *Hand of Miriam*, in reference to Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. It is a kind of “protecting hand” or “hand of God.”

Some associate the significance of the five fingers to the five books of the Torah for Jews, the Five Pillars of Islam for Sunnis, or the five People of the Cloak for Shi’ites. This symbolism may have evolved at a later stage, in view of the fact that archaeological evidence suggests the hamsa predates both religions.

In recent years some activities for Middle East peace have chose to wear the hamsa as a symbol of the similarities of origins and tradition between the Islamic and Jewish faiths. The fingers can point up or down.

Hamsas are popular as charms and decorations in Israel and are not considered to have any Islamic connection other than the Arabic name. Among Jews, fish are considered to be a symbol of good luck, so many hamsas are decorated with fish images. Hamsas are incorporated in wall plaques, mobiles, keychains and necklaces. Sometimes they are inscribed with Hebrew prayers, such as the Sh’ma, the Birkat HaBayit (Blessing for the Home), or the Tefilat HaDerech (Traveler’s Prayer). Hamsas may be displayed in either direction, up or down according to the taste or decoration associated with the Hamsa.

The *hamsa* that you create can be made out of any medium and might include a family picture in the center to keep your family close at hand while your child is away.

Samples of different *hamsa* designs can be found at:

<http://altreligion.about.com/library/glossary/symbols/bldefshamsa.htm>

## **Free Time is a Jewish Value!**

Make the most of your “sacred”, free time. *Free time is a Jewish value.* If you have down time, and you don’t have specific plans:

- Take time to read a story together and discuss the theme and values. Have fun and act it out!
- Go for a walk and appreciate the awe and wonder of nature around you! Even in a familiar place, look for “God in the details,” by stopping to appreciate the beauty in the flowers, plants, animals and birds that are around you!
- Take a ride to someplace you have not been recently, and look for the wonders of nature—a deer, a sunset or sunrise, a beautiful stream, a mountain, the full moon, a summer storm... Ride bicycles together and look for 5 things you haven’t seen since last summer.
- Walk by a stream and note the lifecycle of the tadpole to the frog.
- Go to a museum and experience the exhibit together!  
When you take your child to a museum, teach them how to appreciate the museum by asking them key questions, and teaching them how to understand all the different things the museum has to offer. Play “I spy with my little eye...” in rooms where they can explore natural/historical/artistic treasures.

Make sure to talk about and reflect on whatever activity you choose after you are finished. Make it part of your collective family memory by creating a ritual to remember the activity such as a poem, song, prayer or meditation, art project, journal. Relate at least one Jewish value to each activity. Thank each other for their time and wisdom.

## **Sacred Time (z’man kodesh)**

Create your signature *Shabbat*, special rest time, when you and your family can relax, talk, study, play and eat together.

- Make time to reflect on the week that passed and things you want to remember, and take with you into the coming week
- Pick something to study together during this time period.
- Choose songs to sing as a family
- Read a story, poem or article together
- Pick a topic to investigate as a family, and share what you learned
- Discuss or dramatize the theme of the Torah portion for that week
- Create a family ritual that will mark Shabbat no matter where you are
- Play board games together and remember how taking turns, being good winners or losers, or dealing with the “luck of the draw” or “spin of the dice” are also life skills
- Buy some Israeli food products to enhance your Shabbat meals

Take time each week (Friday night is a great time) to eat a meal together as a family and catch up, and share what’s going on in their lives. Create rituals that become a part of your day, even if your family is not at the same place at the same time, so that you think about each other.

- Every Friday before dinner create *Shalom bayit*, peace in the home, by taking time to talk about special things that happened during the week, and a good thing that happened with each family member.

### **Make Israel Part of Your Summer Time!**

***Did you know that birthdays are celebrated differently in Israel?*** If your child or a member of your family has a summer birthday, celebrate in the Israeli fashion—lift the special person up in a chair. Make them a crown of plants or flowers to celebrate their special day. In addition, create your own family ritual to celebrate each birthday. Did you know that in Israel instead of Happy Birthday, they say “Mazal Tov”.

Each week, as a family, **add one Hebrew word to your vocabulary** that has something to do with summer or your week for example:

- Boker Tov      Good Morning
- Laila Tov      Good night
- Kayitz          Summer
- Shemesh      Sun
- Yareach      Moon
- Geshem      Rain
- Yam            Sea
- Breicha      Pool
- Har            Mountain
- Mishpacha    Family
- La bryut      To your health – Say that every time someone you know sneezes

### **Social Action (Tikkun Olam) Time**

Judaism teaches that we should take care of our world. It is called the sacred duty of “Tikkun Olam”, fixing the world. Add a Tikkun Olam (Social Action) project or trip to your summer plans. Examples of Tikkun Olam projects are:

- Finding a pen pal in a hospital or with special needs and writing letters to them to make them feel better
- Writing letters to the elderly or to someone with a special challenge
- Visiting with the elderly in a Nursing or Assisted Living facility (honoring the elderly)
- Helping in a Group Home
- Working in a Special Needs camp or program
- Working at an Indian reservation
- Cleaning up a park
- Picking up trash
- Planting a garden and grow your own vegetables
- Protecting and watching the lifecycle of animals in our everyday life—tadpole/frog, caterpillar/butterfly—Celebrate the stages of their lives

Every time we think about our world we are doing Jewish. Take time this summer to be more “green” conscious.

- Make sure that you use compact fluorescent light bulbs in your home.
- Make sure you turn lights off when exiting a room.
- Recycle in new ways
- Add recyclable products to your everyday purchases
- Use cloth bags when you go shopping
- Walk at least one place each week that you ordinarily would drive
- Ride your bike instead of driving

The key to **reJewvenating** your summer is to take time each day to reflect, and to relate your activities to finding meaning and inspiration in your Jewish identity. What about this day made you think about being Jewish? Was it an act of kindness? Was your day filled with appreciation? Was your day filled with awe and wonder? Did you do something special to fix the world? Did you create a new memory? Did you create a new ritual? Did you create “*z’mán kodesh*”, holy time?

Have a wonderful relaxing and “*rejewvenating*” summer.

## Appendix 1:

### Tefillat HaDerech- Traveller's Prayer

#### Hebrew Text

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ וְאֱ-לֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם.  
וְתַסְמְכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם. וְתַדְרִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם. וְתַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמַחֲוֹז חַפְצֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וְלִשְׂמֻחָה וְלִשְׁלוֹם  
וְתַצְיִלֵנוּ מִכָּף כָּל אוֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב וְלִקְטָטִים וְחַיּוֹת רָעוֹת בְּדַרְךְךָ וּמִכָּל מִינֵי פּוֹרְעָנִיּוֹת  
הַמְתַּרְגְּשׁוֹת לְבוֹא לְעוֹלָם וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרַכָּה בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ, וְתַתְּנֵנוּ לְחַן וְלִחְסֵד וְלִרְחֻמִּים  
בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל רוֹאֵינוּ וְתִשְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ. כִּי אֱ-לֹהֵי שׁוֹמְעֵ תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּן אַתָּה:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', שׁוֹמְעֵ תְּפִלָּה.

**Transliteration** - Y'hi ratzon milfanekha A-donai E-loheinu ve-lohei avoteinu she-  
tolikhenu l'shalom v'tatz'idenu l'shalom v'tadrikhenu l'shalom, v'tagi'enu limhoz heftzenu  
l'hayim ul-simha ul-shalom. V'tatzilenu mi-kaf kol oyev v'orev v'listim v'hayot ra'ot ba-  
derekh, u-mi-kol minei pur'aniyot ha-mitrag'shot la-vo la-olam. V'tishlah b'rakha b'khol  
ma'a'se yadeinu v'tit'nenu l'hen ul-hesed ul-rahamim b'einekha uv-einei khol ro'einu.  
V'tishma kol tahanuneinu ki E-l sho'me'a t'fila v'tahanun ata. Barukh ata A-donai  
sho'me'a t'fila.

**English Translation** - May it be Your will, [LORD](#), our God and the God of our  
ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make  
us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You rescue us from  
the hand of every foe, ambush along the way, and from all manner of punishments that  
assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us  
grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You  
hear the sound of our humble request because You are God Who hears prayer  
requests. Blessed are You, Adonai, Who hears prayer.

**Spanish Translation** - Haz señor tu voluntad, tú nuestro D-s y D-s de nuestros  
ancestros, guíanos hacia la paz, guía nuestros pasos hacia la paz y haznos alcanzar el  
destino de vida que deseamos, felicidad y paz. Rescátanos de la mano de cada  
enemigo armado, de quien nos aceche en el camino y de cualquier suerte de castigos  
que lleguen a la Tierra. Bendice nuestro trabajo, garantizanos gracia, amabilidad y  
compasión ante tus ojos y ante los ojos de todos los que nos ven. Escucha el sonido de  
nuestra humilde petición porque tú eres D-s, quien escucha las plegarias. Bendito eres  
tu Adonai, tú que escuchas las plegarias.

**Appendix 2: Sample Hamsa designs**

