

Shalom, Shabbat!

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



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Shalom, Shabbat!

Melissa Rosen:

Welcome to Sharsheret's Second Shalom Shabbat program. My name is Melissa Rosen and I'm the director of community education at Sharsheret. So many of my colleagues have worked to create this wonderful program and are joining us now to ensure that the program is seamless.

This type of programming is actually still relatively new for Sharsheret. And although we're always grateful for an opportunity to reconnect and to re-center, we've found, and I'm sure you have, as well, that as we deal with unprecedented, physical isolation, these opportunities are more important than ever. So thank you for joining us.

You were muted as you enter today's program, please stay on mute so that we can clearly hear today's presenters. If you need to mute yourself, there is a button on the bottom of your screen on the left hand side to enable you to do that.

I want to let you know that this program is being recorded. However, no names or faces will show on the recording other than those who are actively presenting. But if you wish to turn your video off now for privacy, that option is also on the bottom left of your screen. You can also choose to rename yourself if you prefer to remain anonymous, and you can do that by clicking the three dots at the top right of your photo square.

Finally, in terms of Zoom etiquette, we recommend that you choose Speaker View. This will allow you to focus on each presenter. When you do that, other participants' images will become small thumbnails across the top or to the right of your screen. You can do that by looking on the top right-hand corner of your screen. Let's get this program started.

However you celebrate, whatever your experience with Shabbat is or has been, we can all use an opportunity to rest and to re-center ourselves in the midst of treatment, survivorship, COVID-19.

I don't know where all of you are from at the moment, but if you live on the East Coast, there was a recent hurricane. That was pretty stressful. If you live on the West Coast, I'm told there was a small earthquake that affected the West Coast. So there are a lot of things going on. And of course, there's just the normal chaos of a life well lived. And that's what today is all about. Together, we'll enjoy some music, explore the concept of light and of candle lighting and come away with a bit of inspiration for the week ahead.

There is always some level of chaos in our lives, work, and family, volunteer commitments. And of course, for those who have faced... are facing cancer or dealing with survivorship, those currently facing, there's even more chaos, physical, emotional, and even spiritual chaos. We all need a break. We need an opportunity to take a breath, a deep breath it's absolutely necessary for our health and for our happiness. Where we are today, like I said, with the addition of the pandemic just adds to that chaos. And yet even with all of that chaos, the world gives us a mandatory pause. We clearly have a worldwide pause because of COVID. Within the Jewish tradition, there is a weekly pause.

By the way, mental health professionals have recommended taking time to pause from this normal chaos on a regular basis. Like I said, our tradition, the Jewish tradition, gives us just that a weekly pause, simply an opportunity to rest and regroup each week to focus on what's important. What gives our lives meaning. And that's different for each of us. It could be our family, our health, perhaps something completely different. And how we experienced that pause is also different for each of us.

Some of us celebrate traditionally; others have found innovative ways to make Shabbat or a pause meaningful. While some prepare, elaborate meals, others choose takeout pizza as a break from cooking, some attend services when we're not confined by a pandemic, others spend time in nature and with their family. The truth of it is that each person can celebrate in a way that is meaningful to them. But I do want to encourage each person to celebrate whether you've always [marked 00:04:58] Shabbat,

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whether you're just exploring it now, our lives deserve the pause that Shabbat provides. Take the time each week to make the important things in life, including yourself, a priority. Our lives, even as the pandemic passes, even as cancer grows distant in the rear-view mirror are filled with chaos, even happy chaos has an impact. So I encourage you to give yourself the gift of a dedicated time for renewal.

One of the ways that Shabbat can be special is through music and music is such a source of joy for people. We want to welcome a Sharsheret friend, Cantor Natalie Young. Cantor Natalie proudly serves temple Beth El in Aliso Viejo, California. She is an award-winning composer, herself, a breast cancer survivor. She's a soul sparker, a memory maker and a community builder who believes in the power of music to heal and transform.

Right now she'll be singing a unique version of Or Zarua, which translated from Hebrew actually means, "Light Is Sown". look out for a bit of a Broadway mashup. Please note that the words will be on your screen. If you'd like, take the opportunity to sing in your own home. Cantor Natalie, I welcome you. And I will get the words up on the screen right now.

Cantor Natalie Young:

Thank you so much, Melissa. It is such a wonderful way to start the day here together. Wishing everybody a Shabbat filled with light.

(singing)

Melissa Rosen:

Wow. That was just simply beautiful. Thank you so much.

I want to take the opportunity to introduce another Sharsheret friend. Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow. Rabbi Jackie served as University of Massachusetts Dartmouth for the past 13 years as the Director of the Center For Jewish Culture and the Director of the Center For Religious and Spiritual Life. She's a graduate of Barnard College and Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute Of Religion. She's living in Providence, Rhode Island with her husband, Michael, and they have three children who are young adults.

About Jackie is also a breast cancer survivor and grateful to be alive and healthy six years later. She's going to be sharing some of her own story and about the meaning of light and candle lighting. Rabbi Jackie.

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

Thank you so much for inviting me. And I just want to say, Cantor Natalie, that was so beautiful.

I am going to share my screen. Did that work? Thank you. I was asked to speak on the theme of Shabbat Light and we're going to... But why is it not going to the next slide?

Becky Koren:

It's not going? To try clicking on the arrow.

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

Yeah, of course. Is it not-

Cantor Natalie Young:

Or your space bar.

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

My space bar. Nope. Maybe I should stop it and do it again. Let's try again.

Melissa Rosen:

Try the down arrow, as opposed to the right-hand arrow that sometimes works for me.

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

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Of course I did the... It doesn't... What if I do...

There we go. Sorry. I'm so sorry.

Becky Koren:

Don't worry about it.

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

Thank you so much for inviting me. Of course, I believe we're going to talk a little more about candle lighting further on in the program, but I just want to say, so of course the theme of light on Shabbat starts with a candle lighting just as the sun is setting on Friday afternoon. We like candles. We say the blessing and the candles bring light into the home. I'll say that for me, I enjoy this moment. Also that's when I pray for health and wellbeing for my own family and the world, but I always take a moment for each in my own family.

The theme of light runs through Shabbat, part of the evening, Shabbat liturgy, you can see the siddur here. If we thank God for the natural light, rolling away light uncovering darkness and darkness uncovering light.

On Shabbat morning, of course we thank God, also the creator of natural light and darkness. God invents light, God creates darkness. We continue... That whole prayer [foreign language 00:13:59] is about natural light and thanking God for the creation of natural light. For some reason, all of your faces are covering my Hebrew. Hopefully, you can see the Hebrew, but I can't because I see all your beautiful faces-

That prayer bit is mostly about natural light and thanking God for the creation of natural light. Ends with a switch and theme. And we talk about messianic light or [foreign language 00:14:35]. So we're no longer talking about the light of the stars, the light and darkness, the natural light, but now we're talking about a messianic light that is going to come and shine through us. Someday, this new light, or [foreign language 00:14:54], is going to shine forth, we'll all be illuminated. This is not necessarily natural light here. This is a type of light that we've never seen before or [foreign language 00:15:03].

Then of course, as Shabbat ends, we say, "Havdalah", the separation between Shabbat and the rest of the week. We thank God for creating the light of fire. And I'm sure many of you have participated in Havdalah. A braided candle with multiple wicks is used. It gives off really a lot of light and then it's extinguished. So we have this moment of light and then darkness. But part of the ritual of Havdalah is just as we separate light from darkness, Shabbat is separated from the rest of the week.

Just to say, thank you if you've never seen this, I've got... These pictures are from [inaudible 00:16:01] called Nehalel BeShabbat. I want to give them credit published by Nevarech in 2013 in Jerusalem. To talk a little bit about my own experience, so you can see... So through traditional Jewish prayer, this theme of light and Shabbat is very significant, but Sharsheret asked me to speak a little bit about my own experience as a breast cancer survivor. And I would say that I'm thrilled that it's been more than six years for me, of course, as a rabbi, I've always had... I have an active prayer practice. I pray, I'm well-trained in Jewish liturgy, but I'll say that when I was in the midst of my cancer treatment, the traditional prayer practice that I had developed really wasn't working for me.

I wasn't really feeling there's a lot about sin and God's punishing for sin. And that really wasn't what I was believing at that moment and my head was racing a lot with anxiety. I'll say that I went to... The hospital where I was having my treatment, had a whole series of other events to participate in, one of which was mindfulness meditation. And I went to mindfulness meditation and where I was taught by... Now, the nurse who ran those sessions was mostly a Buddhist. So I'm not a Buddhist, but she did start me down a path that I found very, very helpful through that period. And since then, I've done a lot of reading about Jewish meditation and Jewish mindfulness. And I wanted to just mention a technique

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involving light and meditation that I've really taken on through... That I started with my... When I was in the midst of my cancer treatment and I've really maintained for today. And I'll just describe it here.

Which is instead of praying the whole liturgy, I'll choose just one or two words from Jewish liturgy and use them as a meditation technique. In this case, perhaps [foreign language 00:00:18:27], a new light, and it involves closing my eyes and paying close attention to my breath as I start and I imagine this [foreign language 00:18:43], this new light, coming down through my whole body and I imagine God's presence just washing over me with this healthy, loving new light. And as I imagine it going down my whole body, I do stop at particular parts of my body that really have been... That I've had a fight with that needs some more attention and some more healing. I'll say I do that for... I try and do it for at least 10 minutes every day and just a little description of my own experience and the light of Shabbat and God's light and how that's affected my own spiritual work as a rabbi and as a breast cancer survivor.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you so much. That was really insightful and so nice to hear another story. I personally really appreciated it and I am sure those also on the screen did. I'm actually going to take a moment to tell you a little bit about my practice with candle lighting. There are many practices and rituals that accompany Shabbat that we find meaning in them, candle lighting is just one of them, but it is one that has particular meaning to me. I actually volunteered to share something today about my own candle lighting experience. And as I share, I really want to encourage each of you to give some thought to how candle lighting or light in general has impacted you and what you hope you might get from either the action of lighting or the more general concept of light. If you're comfortable, please type them into the chat box at the bottom of your screen. So we can share them afterward as a thoughtful way to enter Shabbat.

I am going to share my screen again and let's hope... [inaudible 00:21:11] There we go. This is how Shabbat candles look in my home. I'll explain to you what each of them represents, but I do want to share first that just like the other two speakers, I am also a breast cancer survivor, as well as a different kind of cancer. The first time I was diagnosed with the lymphoma, I really leaned into my Jewish community and my commitment to Jewish life. I found comfort in it and it helped me get through what I was going through. At the time of my second diagnosis, my breast cancer diagnosis, which was 17 years after the first one, without even realizing it, I turned away from those things. I may have even actually shut them out. I was mad.

Six years later, I'm still working to get back to a place within Judaism that makes me happy. I still struggle with spirituality. And you heard Rabbi Jackie reference that during her presentation. So I look for places that I can find it comfortably. Lighting candles on Friday night is one of the few times each week that I can honestly say that I feel connected. It's a ritual that I look forward to, that I find imbued with meaning that allows me to feel connected to the Jewish community. Personally, I find myself in a relationship with God and I've asked myself, how is it that I'm able to make that connection as I light candles when I often cannot at other times? So obviously light represents renewal and awareness and that's something that we all hope for.

But very much like, also, like Rabbi Jackie said, I've assigned each one of my family members a candle. So in the middle, we have the candles that my husband and I started lighting when we were married. To the left and right, the tall candlesticks are... I have three children, two of them are daughters and when they are home, they light candles. My eldest is going to be home this Shabbat. So we put her candles out so she could light them. But when they're not home, those candles remain empty. The smaller candlesticks that have the little tiny candles in them represent my children. One for each child, including my son-in-law. And finally the candle that's sitting there on the... I guess my right hand side, the single candle is a recent addition. When the world went into lockdown and chaos continued to come our way. I added another candle as I pray for the health of the world each week.

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So I've assigned each person a candle. And as I light, I focus on that person. I wish them well. I ask for protection. I take a moment to appreciate having them in my life. I'm talking to them as I like, but I'm also talking with God. When I say the [foreign language 00:24:33] or the blessing, I sing it and I don't care who's listening. I do it so slowly with my eyes closed. And I take that time to ease into Shabbat. By the way, singing for me, I don't sound like Cantor Natalie. It's maybe the only time of the week that I sing where I don't care who is listening and I just enjoy it myself.

While I do this, everything around me stops, it's the combination of these personal customs that have made my weekly candle lighting, such a significant and meaningful part of my week. I'm grateful for the tradition. Maybe you find you have a similar experience. Maybe you do something completely different that's associated with Shabbat or is not associated with Shabbat, is associated with nature specifically with your children or whatever it is. But this is the ritual that I have found that allows me to connect in so many ways. And for me, it's been beautiful.

I'm going to stop my share, bring us all back on screen and ask my colleagues, Becky Koren, who is the Illinois program coordinator and Jessica Jablon who is the Valley Outreach Program coordinator, who've been monitoring the chat box. I'm going to ask them to share some of your thoughts without names attached to it. Because I'm hopeful that just like when you heard from each of us, I'm hopeful, you got something, but I'm also hopeful that each of us can share so we can all enhance our experiences. So Becky, Jessica, could you start us off?

Becky Koren:

Sure. So somebody shared that to her, candle lighting represents hope and survival.

Jessica Jablon:

And another person shared that it represents a connection with our community to her.

Becky Koren:

And someone else shared that in the moment between circling the flames with her hands and starting the blessings, she takes a deep inhale to bring in Shabbat and a long exhale to let go of the past week. Her husband says he looks forward to that exhale all week.

Melissa Rosen:

I love that.

Becky Koren:

And feel free to send the messages privately to Sharsheret, if you want, if you don't want to send them to everyone.

Melissa Rosen:

Absolutely. So if there are any more, we'll stop back at the very end to see if there are additional, but I hope that us sharing has given you something to think about. And again, it could be you take on a tradition we've talked about, it could be just now realize the importance of a tradition to feel connected, to feel re-centered, to feel whole.

As we get ready to conclude, we're going to finish with Cantor Natalie joining us again. And she's going to lead us in Oseh Shalom, a song that asks for peace, which is of course what we're asking for when we ask for awareness and wholeness and health. It's the perfect way to welcome the chance to rest and reset. And although we're all in our own homes and we happen to be muted, please, the lyrics are going to be on the screen. Please feel free to join in Cantor Natalie.

Cantor Natalie Young:

Yes. A beautiful teaching in our tradition is that within each of us resides the spark of the divine, we are each created in God's image. And while at times we may experience the feeling of brokenness, God is in that with us. As we light our Shabbat candles each Friday night, we have the opportunity to renew

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ourselves and invite God in with deep intention. I want to share an acronym that a friend shared with me on light, love, inspire, give, heal, and transform.

And as we light our Shabbat candles, we can bring that intentionality into wherever we are, whatever mindset we are in remembering that as we invite in that Shabbat light, as we invite God into that space, we, too, can be renewed, we, too, can find wholeness.

This beautiful melody by Elana Arian, a good friend of mine.

(singing)

Rabbi Jacqueline Romm Satlow:

Wow. Thank you for sharing your voice with us today.

I want to conclude, I want to remind you that Sharsheret continues to be there for you through these unprecedented times, we continue to offer online content about once a week and you can always go online view the webinars that you may have missed. If it's possible to post that link in the chat box, that would be great, but you can also just go to sharsheret.org and it'll be one of the main pieces scrolling across the top of the page. And of course our wonderful, dedicated team of social workers and our genetic counselor are there to help you manage your concerns.

Sharsheret's been providing telehealth services to Jewish breast and ovarian cancer communities for close to 20 years now, and although we could never have imagined the world as it is right now through our services, we've really been preparing for this moment and continue to be there for each and every one of you. So please do not hesitate to reach out. And if you want to reach out, we can post that link also, but you can simply do info@sharsheret.org or clinical@sharsheret.org and we'll get you to the right person.

I want to remind you that we have another webinar this Sunday, it's the start of a three-Sunday-in-a-row series of physical health, yoga, we begin with yoga this Sunday, so that information is also easily found on our website.

I'd like to thank each and every one of you for joining us today. And we hope you will come back, you'll bring friends for our next scheduled Shalom Shabbat, which is on October 30th, wishing you a Shabbat filled with quiet, with joy, with comfort, a Shabbat filled with Shalom.

Thank you so much. Shabbat Shalom everyone.

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About Sharsheret

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Sharsheret, Hebrew for “chain”, is a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

With four offices (California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), Sharsheret serves 150,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students, in all 50 states. Sharsheret creates a safe community for women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and their families at every stage of life and at every stage of cancer - from before diagnosis, during treatment and into the survivorship years. While our expertise is focused on young women and Jewish families, more than 15% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, Sharsheret’s Executive Director chairs the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, Sharsheret works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and participates in psychosocial research studies and evaluations with major cancer centers, including Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years.

Sharsheret offers the following national programs:

The Link Program

- Peer Support Network, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- Embrace™, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer • Genetics for Life®, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer
- Thriving Again®, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors • Busy Box®, for young parents facing breast cancer
- Best Face Forward®, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- Family Focus®, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- Ovarian Cancer Program, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer • Sharsheret Supports™, developing local support groups and programs

Education and Outreach Programs

- Health Care Symposia, on issues unique to younger women facing breast cancer
- Sharsheret on Campus, outreach and education to students on campus
- Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series, culturally-relevant publications for Jewish women and their families and healthcare Professionals

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