

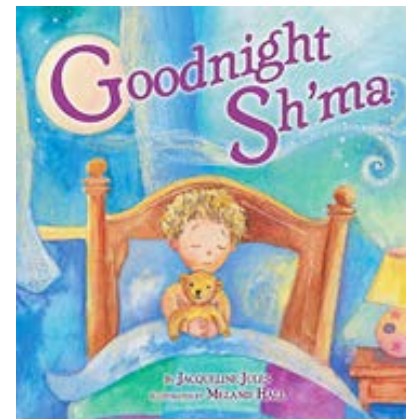
The Bedtime Sh'ma

Adapted by Sarah Gershman

&

Goodnight Sh'ma

By Jacqueline Jules



Program Focus

Age group: Infants to 4 year-olds

Time frame: 45-60 minutes

Central value: Making bedtime moments Jewish moments

Synopsis

Both *The Bedtime Sh'ma* and *Goodnight Sh'ma* feature gentle verse and soft, serene illustrations which follow a young child as he/she prepares for bed. While *Goodnight Sh'ma* focuses on the actions that one small boy takes before going to bed (i.e. reading a book, hugging a bear, reciting a prayer), *The Bedtime Sh'ma* contains child-friendly verses, adapted from various psalms and prayers, which a parent and child recite as a young girl prepares for bed. Each book concludes with the timeless words of the Sh'ma prayer.

Goals

During the course of this program, families will explore several different ways of adding Jewish content to their nightly bedtime routines. In addition to examining the words and meaning of the Sh'ma, a traditional bedtime prayer, families will:

- Discover ways to incorporate the Sh'ma and/or expressions of gratitude into bedtime rituals
- Learn several different tunes for the Sh'ma prayer
- Create a beautiful framed bedtime sign which will encourage families to use bedtime as a time for expressing gratitude for all which has occurred over the course of the day

Additionally, children will create a delicious bedtime snack, and will “practice” putting their stuffed animals and dolls to sleep, while joyfully reciting the Sh'ma.

Submitted by

Vivian Newman, vivian@hgf.org

Plan in advance

General Preparations

- Choose a “comfy” space, one with soft floor that is conducive to cuddling
- Encourage children to bring a well-loved stuffed animal or doll
- Bring extra dolls and stuffed animals for those who forget to bring their own
- For larger groups, consider enlarging or projecting book illustrations
- Choose the introductory and follow-up activities that best suit your community



Prepare Starry Night Murals

Materials Needed

- Large sheet of black paper-cut from a roll of bulletin board paper, or created by stapling several pieces of black paper or craft foam or poster board together
- Gold and silver mini stars- self-stick or the kind which are applied by licking



Advanced Preparations

1. Tape the black paper to the floor or to several small, low tables, lined up in a row.
2. Place small handfuls of stars in plastic containers or bowls so that each child will have his/her own supply of stars to work with.

Prepare Frame Decorating Activity

Materials Needed

- Frames cut from craft foam or construction paper (8.5 x 11 in.)
- Stickers (include star and moon stickers)
- Paper cut outs of stars and moons
- Cut-outs of the Hebrew letters (Shin, Mem, and Ayin) for families who want Hebrew Letters on their frames
- Handout with the word Sh'ma, written in Hebrew
- Glue sticks or white/school glue, bowls, and q-tips
- Sequins, jewels, foam shapes, etc. (optional)

Prepare Stuffed Animals/Dolls Activity

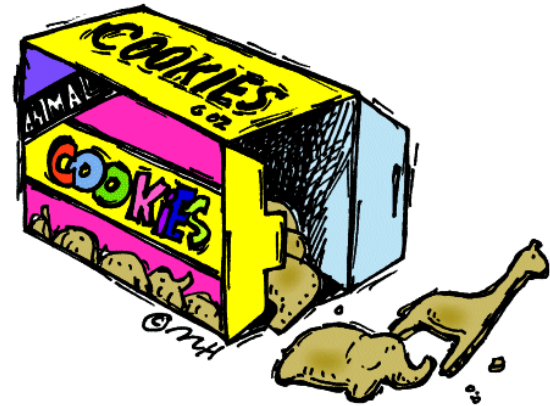
Materials needed

- Pieces of felt, 8.5 x 11” in a variety of colors
- Night sky mural (made during the introductory activities)

Prepare Bedtime Snack Activity

Materials Needed

- Animal crackers, Teddy Bear Crackers, or Gingerbread cookies.
- Jelly or cream cheese
- Brown whole wheat bread, each slice cut in half
- White bread or potato bread-cut in half and then cut into a 1/3 and 2/3 piece (to be used as pillows and blankets for the cookie children or animals)



Advanced Preparations (Optional)

1. Arrange small snack plates for each child:
 - Heaping spoonful of jelly or cream cheese
 - Plastic spoons or knives
 - Both white and brown bread(cut to size)
 - One gingerbread man or other animal shaped crackers
 - Raisins (optional)

Prepare Bedtime Signs

Materials

- Liquid water color or food coloring mixed with water (The paint need to be substantially watered down, so picture and words on the page peak through the paint).
- Bowls for storing various colors of diluted water colors
- Paint brushes
- *Sh'ma* cards ideally printed on card stock (templates at the end of program)
- Scotch or masking tape

Advance Preparation

1. Create pages with the *Sh'ma* on them (in Hebrew and English). Prepare several different types of *Sh'ma* cards:
 - Some with Hebrew and some without
 - Some which mention giving thanks to God, and some which avoid mentioning God



Introduce with activities

Create a Starry Night Mural

Introduction

In a few minutes, we are going to read a book about bedtime and going to sleep. When do you and your dolls and stuffed animals usually go to sleep? Do you go to sleep when it's dark outside or when it's light outside? That's right; we usually go to sleep when it's dark outside. So to help set the mood for our story, we're going to make our own night sky. Can you help us add stars and moons to our sky? (Show children how to attach stars to the black paper.)

Decorate a Frame

Introduction

Later, we are going to make a special bedtime sign which can be taken home and hung in your bedroom. We hope that these beautiful signs will help you feel even more relaxed and comfortable at bedtime. Before you paint your bedtime sign, we want you to first decorate the frame which will surround your sign.

Directions

1. Encourage children to spread glue all around the edges of their frame.
2. Ask children to select the shapes, sequins, etc. which they would like to use on their frame.
3. Ask children to place their chosen materials on top of the glue.
4. Have several copies of the word Sh'ma available, they will be able to see how to arrange the letters on their frame.

Introduce the Story

*Invite all to come and join you, bringing their cuddle toys, leaving their art pieces at the table. As everyone settles in, welcome all; encourage little ones to snuggle with their parents. Have families briefly introduce themselves and their special cuddle toy. Pass out extra stuffed animals to those children who did not bring one from home. Comment on how busy everyone was today working on their projects: *Oh, I'm seeing lots of dolls and stuffed animals who are yawning (demonstrate a few yawns) and looking very sleepy. I think that soon it's going to be time for us to put our toys to bed.*"*

(Ask parents to help you hold the completed starry night mural over the children's head).

Look at what time it is? It's dark outside and the stars are out. That means it's time for the dolls and stuffed animals to go to sleep. How should we help them get ready for bed? What do you do before bedtime? (Ask for suggestions and encourage the entire group to pantomime gestures for whatever actions are suggested - brushing teeth, taking a bath, etc).

*In a few minutes, we're going to read a book that shows a child getting ready for bed. The child in our book does something very special before she (**The Bedtime Sh'ma**) /he (**Goodnight Sh'ma**) goes to sleep – He/she says a prayer. There are many different kinds of prayers that children and grown-ups can say at bedtime. Sometimes, people like to think of all of the special things that happened to them during the day and say thank you for those special things. Other people like to think about something that they hope might happen tomorrow. For example, someone might say "Tomorrow, I hope I have fun riding my bike." The child in our book says a special Hebrew prayer before he/she goes to sleep. The prayer is called Sh'ma and its*

words are written and spoken in Hebrew. Can I teach you the words to this Prayer? (Ask the children to repeat the Sh'ma words after you).

The words of the Sh'ma tell us that there is only one God. Does anyone know who or what God is? Many people have many different ideas and thoughts about God. I like to think of God as someone whom I can't see and whom I can't hear and whom I can't feel, but who is all around. Even though I can't see God, I think that God is very important. Many people believe that God helped to make the world, and helped to make everything that we see around us- The trees, the grass, the birds, and people. What else do you think that God helped to make?

Sometimes before, going to bed, people like to talk to God and say "Thank you, God, for all of the special things that you gave me today." Saying Sh'ma is a way of talking to God and saying thank you. Let's read our book and discover what the child in our book likes to do and say before he/she goes to bed.

Read the story

Props

- Completed night sky
- Stuffed animal for the group leader
- Parents to hold up night sky

Adaptations for Group Size and Age

Older Children

With *The Bedtime Sh'ma* – you may pause on the 1st page and encourage parents and children to quietly think about any "I'm sorry" moments that they may have had either today or during the past several days. Ask parents and children to quietly whisper these moments to one another.

Younger Children

If children get restless during the story reading, encourage them to hug and kiss their stuffed animals.

Questions

1. What were some of the things that the child in this book did before going to bed?
2. Whom did the child take to bed with him/her?
3. Do you take someone special to bed with you?
4. What did the child say before going to bed?

Follow Up activities and resources

Put Stuffed Animals and Dolls to Bed

(Invite parents to help you stretch the night sky mural over the children's head.)

“Ohh... I see that it's getting dark out again. Look at how tired these dolls and stuffed animals are- They're eyes keep closing. I think that it's time for us to put our special friends to bed. (Pass out pieces of felt). Here are some blankets for our friends. Before we cover them up, let's help them wash their faces, brush their teeth, and read a book. . Let's give them a hug and a kiss. Now, let's cover them with their blankets. There's one more thing that we need to do before putting them to bed. Do you know what it is? We need to help them say Sh'ma. Can you sing the words with me? Let's see if we can teach this prayer to our cuddly friends.

- Sing Sh'ma to animals. Pretend to let the stuffed animals sleep for a few seconds. Take down the night sky. Announce: *“Morning time. Boker Tov. Everybody up.”* Encourage children to throw back the covers and wake their dolls/stuffed animals.

Hmm...I wonder what our friends will do today. Maybe they'll dance or go on the swings or help cook. (Invite children to pantomime each of these actions). Ask parents to help again with putting up the black sky. Announce: “It's time for our friends to go to sleep again! What do they need to do? What's the last thing that they should do?”

Make a Special Bedtime Snack

Introduction

Wow, you guys are experts on putting your special cuddly friends to bed. To celebrate your excellent skills at putting animals to sleep, we'd like you to make a special snack which involves making a comfy bed for a tasty little gingerbread (or teddy bear) boy or girl cracker.

Directions

1. Demonstrate how to make an edible bed. Using a spoon, spread jelly or cream cheese onto a piece of brown wheat bread.
2. Place the smaller white piece of bread on top of the jelly/cream cheese (representing the cookie's pillow.)
3. Lie the gingerbread boy/girl down on top of the jelly or cream cheese with its head resting on top of the white pillow.
4. Cover the gingerbread boy/girl with the remaining piece of white bread (representing the cookie's blanket).
5. Use raisins to form facial features (optional).



Make a Bedtime Sign

Introduction

We are now going to paint a special bedtime sign which we hope you'll take home and hang in your room. Every night before you go to sleep, we hope that you'll take a look at your bedroom Sh'ma sign, and remember to say a prayer and/or a few words of thanks before you go to sleep. Parents, please note that while all of our Sh'ma signs contain the same picture, they each feature slightly different wording. Please take time to find the wording which best meets your family's beliefs and needs.

Directions

1. Encourage children to use several different colors on their sign.
2. Demonstrate how to paint one color next to another, without overlapping colors
3. Families with more than one child might want to create one sign for each child.
4. If time permits (and the paints have sufficiently dried), encourage families to attach their completed picture to their corresponding frame. Use tape to attach the sign to the frame. (If picture has not fully dried, attach at home).



Enjoy a Closing Song

As a closing activity, invite families to once again cuddle. You can again ask if anyone remembered a moment in their day that was “special” that they didn’t share earlier. Invite families to settle back and sing along with or listen quietly to several Jewish bedtime songs and finger plays. Some possibilities include:

- **Kobi's Lullaby** by Rick Recht
Watch Rick performing Kobi's Lullaby and listen and download lyrics from Rick's website <http://rickrecht.com/>
- **Y'varech'cha** and **Bedtime Sh'ma** by Sheldon Low
- **The Angel's Blessing** by Debbie Friedman
- Several different renditions of the Sh'ma can be found at <http://www.totshabbat.com> (Recommended: Kenneth Cohen, and Judy Caplan Ginsburgh 's **Amazing Songs for Amazing Jewish Kids**)

Conclude the program with hugs all around! Be sure everyone has their projects to take home.

Take Home Shema Pillow

Older preschoolers and primary age children can hand make Shema pillow cases or print and give out travel size Shema pillows to program participants (as Toledo and Southern Arizona communities did) at a cost of \$6-7 / piece. Pillows and pillowcases were ordered from PillowXpress.com and printed locally.



Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Following the program, try to e-mail each family, thanking them for coming, providing them with the words to some of the songs that you sang at the program. Parents may also enjoy reading up on Jewish bedtime ritual:

[Goodnight, Sleep Tight: Bedtime Rituals](#)
Interfaith Family.com

[Creative Bedtime Rituals: Ending the Day with a Jewish Connection](#)
[Jewish Federations of North America](#)

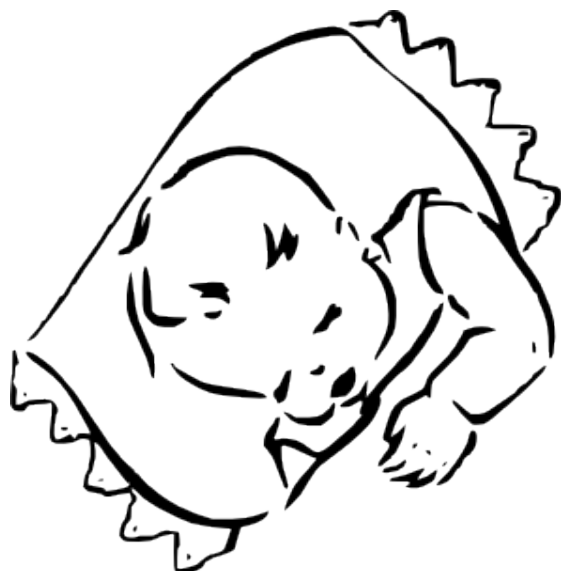
[Jewish Bedtime Rituals](#)
Kveller.com

Ways of Establishing Bedtime Rituals
[PJ Library Blog](#)

Before I close my eyes at night and sleep,
before I drift into my dreams,
I give thanks for the blessings in my life
for the people who care for me...

(from *Kobi's Lullaby* by Rick Recht.)

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai Echad. Listen Israel.
God is our God. God is one.



Before I close my eyes at
night and sleep, before
I drift into my dreams,
I give thanks for
the blessings in my life,
for the people
who care for me...

(from *Kobi's Lullaby* by Rick Recht.)



שמע ישראל "

אלהינו " אחד

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai
Eloheinu Adonai Echad.

Thank you, for this
special day
that is now ending...