



art by Eli Gale

Queer Shabbat

created in partnership with Eli Gale & Ren Weinstock



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welcome

"Then I discovered there were groups of lesbian and gay Jews reweaving the various threads of our identities. The possibility of integration— of being whole— was a revelation to me."

*— Twice Blessed:
On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*

As two queer Jews, one of us identifying as a lesbian and one of us identifying as nonbinary, we have often experienced tension in our relationships with queerness and Judaism. When we began exploring the intersections of these identities and weaving them together, we found ease and joy.

Though this is our experience, it doesn't have to be yours, and we invite you to bring your truth to the table. Our intention, or *kavanah* in Hebrew, is to cultivate rest in the body and mind, by integrating experiences of queerness and Judaism through the ritual of Shabbat.

We hope to pay tribute to the LGBTQIA2+ Jews that have come before us and honor their work of excavating the queerness in our Jewish lineage. This resource showcases some of the many ways in which queerness and the rituals of Shabbat intersect, and we hope you continue to explore these themes as they feel authentic to you.

Whether you're queer, questioning, or an ally — we wrote this for you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Eli (she/her) & Ren (they/them)

kabbalat shabbat

READ

We hope to create intentional space for your Jewishness and queerness through this Shabbat guide and practice. We invite you to come as you are, dressed in whatever makes you feel at home in your authenticity.

Shabbat centers ritualistic distinction from the rest of the week. Traditionally, within our Jewish culture, Shabbat has been an opportunity to dress intentionally, a practice that we see paralleled in queer community and queer spaces. Historically and presently, LGBTQ+ people have used clothing as a claiming of identity and form of resistance to cis-heteronormative structures.

"The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity."

— Jose Esteban Munoz,
Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity

REFLECT

How has the culture of dressing up for Shabbat in your past felt? How have you had to conform during this time or not? How can we make the ritual of dressing up for Shabbat more aligned with the rituals of joy we create when dressing up in our culture of queerness?

altarmaking

PERSONAL RITUAL SPACE

READ

Altarmaking is a powerful tool to create a personal ritual space for welcoming in Shabbat. This could mean setting up candles, burning incense, or picking certain herbs to sanctify your space. Plants are our ancestors, and by creating a visually intentional space, we can honor them and infuse that space with love and light for our queer and Jewish ancestors.

We want to acknowledge that “naturalness” has been used as a weapon against the queer community. In this practice we look to plants to reclaim and affirm the naturalness of our queerness, our belonging in the world, and our connection to nature.

More ideas for your altar: calming herbs in water, using frankincense and myrrh (which were used in biblical Jewish practices), and incorporating Shabbat ritual items like candles, grape products, and challah.

candle lighting

We invite you to bring your altar to life with the light of your Shabbat candles.

"May the sacred in-between of this evening suspend our certainties, soften our judgments, and widen our vision. May this in-between light illuminate our way to the God who transcends all categories and definitions."

— Rabbi Reuben Zellman, *Twilight People Prayer*

We recognize that Hebrew is a gendered language, and our traditional blessings often include the masculine forms of the words. Below we offer the Hebrew and transliteration of the candle lighting blessing in both the masculine and feminine Hebrew to queer our understanding of gender and these blessings. Feel free to customize which feminine and masculine words you use in your blessing, as this is a space to personalize your practice and integrate your own queerness into Jewish practices.

ברוכה את יי שכינה אלהינו רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Feminine: *Brucha at Yah Shechinah Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Masculine: *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam*

Continue: *asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

Blessed are You, eternal Wellspring, who makes us holy through our actions and teaches us to welcome in the light of Shabbat.

Kiddush

ELEVATING WINE OR GRAPE JUICE

In this ritual, we want to call in the idea of *Doykeit*, which is yiddish for Hereness and translates to “commitment to work for change here and now” (*JB Brager, Doykeit*). Through this blessing and this drink, we hope to be present and commit to change. A toast to hereness and a celebration of life.

ברוכה את יי שכינה אלהינו רוח העולם בורא פרי הגפן.
ברוכה את יי מקדשת השבת.

Feminine: *Brucha at Yah Shekhinah Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam borei pri ha'gafen. Brucha at Yah mikadesh ha'Shabbat.*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן.
ברוך אתה יי מקדש השבת.

Masculine: *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei pri ha'gafen. Baruch atah Adonai mikadesh ha'Shabbat.*

Blessed are You, eternal Wellspring, creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, who sanctifies Shabbat.

challah

INTEGRATING NOURISHMENT & WHOLENESS

READ

Interweaving wisdom from our queer and Jewish cultures allows us to stand fully in our personal power. We see challah as the interweaving of three parts of self, symbolizing the potential to integrate spiritual wholeness into our bodies.

ברוכה את יי שכינה אלהינו רוח העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

Feminine: *Brucha at Yah Shekhinah Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

Masculine: *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed are You, eternal Wellspring, who brings forth bread from the earth.

REFLECT

With the first two strands being Judaism and queerness, what is the third strand you are weaving? (Need some ideas? Eli's third strand is embracing vulnerability and Ren's third strand is self-love.)

with gratitude

Much of our inspiration for this guide came from queer theory and the work of queer Jewish artists who have paved the way for this community. We hope to celebrate some in this guide, and we invite you to learn from them and others further. Your queerness is valid regardless of your knowledge or access to queer theory, and we hope these resources offer solace like they did for us.

TO READ*

Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity by Jose Esteban Munoz

Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish
Edited by Andy Rose, Christie Balka

Twilight People Prayer by Rabbi Reuben Zellman

Doykeit by JB Brager

**We used ideas and concepts from these works to form this document; however, not all of the readings above are accessible on the internet. A few are highly academic, and while they are full of profound thoughts, we had the privilege of analyzing them in university, and we recognize not everyone will have access to do the same.*

TO KNOW

LGBTQIA2+ / LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Two Spirit. This abbreviation is used as an umbrella term to describe the community as a whole. The plus (“+”) signifies the many identities and communities not covered in this abbreviation.

Queer

In this guide, we use queer as an umbrella term to signify identifying on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. This definition from [UC Davis](#) is a great overview: *“One definition of queer is abnormal or strange. Historically, queer has been used as an epithet/slur against people whose gender, gender expression and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. Some people have reclaimed the word queer and self identify as such. For some, this reclamation is a celebration of not fitting into norms/being “abnormal.” Manifestations of oppression within gay and lesbian movements such as racism, sizeism, ableism, cissexism, transmisogyny as well as assimilation politics, resulted in many people being marginalized, thus, for some, queer is a radical and anti-assimilationist stance that captures multiple aspects of identities.”*

Cis-heteronormative

Cisgender: a gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person’s assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means “on this side of” or “not across.” A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender.

Heteronormativity: Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional expectations of society for gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction.

SOME LGBTQ+ ANCESTORS THAT HAVE INSPIRED US



Marsha P. Johnson (1945–1992) A transwoman and LGBTQ+ liberation activist prominent in the Stonewall Riots. This image of her in her floral crown encapsulates naturalness.

Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) A Jewish lesbian poet known for weaving these identities in her works.

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) A French genderqueer Jewish artist and anti-fascist activist known for featuring their gender nonconformity in their art.

TO FOLLOW

Digital platforms like Instagram can be a great way to find inspiration, knowledge, and queer Jewish community. Here's a list of some incredible individuals and accounts to follow:

@adameli
@chellaman
@miz_cracker
@bex_tk
@dorimidnight
@sarahdayarts
@mattxiv

@joeyramonatattooer
@jbrager
@mistressblunt
@abbychavastein
@jewishqueeryouth
@sashavelour
@jakecohen