



Life

Introduction

This lesson presents a choice between viewing life as “drudgery” or as having the potential for holiness. Work is real, but can be elevated through Torah study, prayer, and acts of kindness. Time off need not be an escape with the aid of a beer bottle, but a Shabbat sanctification with a Kiddush cup.



Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students should be able to...

- identify the less obvious values beneath the primary message of the video
- express and evaluate that message (that life is drudgery and escape is desirable)
- describe a Jewish view of “time off” in terms of Shabbat
- describe a Jewish view of “work” in terms of a meaning-filled life
- contrast drinking alcoholic beverages for pleasure with making Kiddush
- list three ways in which Shabbat could be effective for a student in coping with life’s difficulties. List two ways each for “Torah study”, “Prayer”, and “Deeds of *Hesed*”
- discuss practical methods of making these listed behaviors actual

Video

Amstel Lite Beer Commercial



Sources

Exodus 20:8-11

Shabbat Kiddush

Avot 1:2

After a parable of the Dubner Maggid (Story about rocks in pocket)

Watching the Video

Instruct students to pay close attention, as the video segment is extremely short and images flash by quickly. Ask them to note both the voice-over and the screen images. Expect them to laugh; it's a funny commercial.

Analyzing the Video

Keep initial comments very open-ended to permit students to react directly to the material. They may immediately raise the issue of the “drudgery of life”, or may see the more obvious “drinking” theme. Ask them about the video.

- What did you see?
- What is the main theme of this commercial? What does it teach us?
- What does it tell us about life?
- Is life truly a matter of “doing things you don’t want to do for people who don’t appreciate it anyway”? Is it always that way? In part?
- Need it be that way?
- If life is at least sometimes like drudgery, what should we do with our “one measly day off”? What does drinking the beer do?
- Do we need to escape? Is tuning out our best choice?



- What else is there?

Should students relate almost exclusively to the “drinking” theme, play the video again, asking students to concentrate on the words, even writing them down if possible. (Presenting the first source as a voice-over, as suggested below, can be very effective way to focus the students.) Students will quickly see the “life” theme.

Give students time to react honestly. Be prepared to admit that although the commercial is somewhat exaggerated in its portrayal of meaningless, pressured rushing, life can sometimes feel that way. The commercial strikes a nerve; our smile is a smile of recognition.

Presenting the Sources

1. If there is time, play the video one more time, without the sound. Read the section from Exodus 20:8-11 as a voice-over. The effect can be stunning, juxtaposing the images of Viking slavemasters and beer guzzling with the words of Divine creation and Sabbath rest. You may even receive a “wow” from your students.

זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֶאכֶתֶךָ:
וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל מְלֶאכֶה אַתָּה | וּבִנְךָ
וּבִתֶּךָ עֶבְדְּךָ וְאַמְתֶּךָ וּבַהֶמְתֶּךָ וּגְרֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה
ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ:

שמות כ:ח-יא

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your G-d; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

Exodus 20: 8-11

2. Read the words of the Kiddush.



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו ורצה בנו
ושבת קדשו באהבה וברצון הנחילנו זכרון למעשה בראשית. כי הוא
יום תחילה למקראי קדש זכר ליציאת מצרים, כי בנו בחרת ואתנו
קדשת מכל העמים ושבת קדשך באהבה וברצון הנחלתנו. ברוך
אתה ה' מקדש השבת.

קדוש לליל שבת

Blessed art Thou, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and been gracious to us, and, in love and grace, He has given us His holy Sabbath as a memorial of the work of creation. For it is the first of the holy assemblies, as a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. For He has chosen us and sanctified us from all the nations, and His holy Sabbath, in love and grace has He given to us. Blessed art Thou, Lord, who sanctifies the Sabbath.

Shabbat Kiddush

Begin to sing “*ki vanu vaharta...v'shabbat kodshekha b'ahavah uv'ratzon hinhaltanu...*” The group may join you in the familiar tune. Look at the Kiddush and Exodus 20:8-11. Help the students to see Shabbat as creating a space in time, sanctifying, making the “time-off” holy time rather than escape time.

- Why do we need to “rest” on Shabbat? Who rests?
- What does it mean that G-d gave us Shabbat to be a “gift”?
- How is Shabbat our “inheritance”? Why should we want it? How does it help us?
- What relationship does “creation” have to our lives, that we should remember it?

We do have to work, to create, but there are limits on our creative work -- we do not have to do it all.

- Why should we remember “coming out of Egypt” on Shabbat?

There are limits on our drudgery... no one can force us to do it all. List ways in which we are enslaved today (to work, to money, to unhealthy relationships) and show how Shabbat can free us.



- If G-d chose us, gave us this gift, what does that say about our own importance, the meaning of what we do?

Could it be that someone does appreciate us after all?

3. Point out to the students the primary symbol of both the video commercial and Shabbat is a container filled with an alcoholic beverage. Compare the two -- beer and Kiddush.

- What does Judaism say about drinking? Is it forbidden?

Of course not... Kiddush is drinking.

- How is Kiddush different from “kicking back and having a great tasting beer”?

- How does Kiddush refresh?

Our spirit and mind are refreshed, invigorated, not dulled by Kiddush -- the drinking joined to the blessing -- and what it represents.

- If the beer merely takes away the pain, what positive things can Shabbat give?
- How will Kiddush and Shabbat prepare us differently for the work week of potential drudgery than the beer would have?

4. Read over the selection from Exodus one more time, looking not at what is said about Shabbat, but what is said about the rest of the week.

- What is the difference between the commercial’s voice-over and the quotation from Exodus? Don’t both say you have to work?

We are indeed told, “six days shall you labor!” We do work, and may hate our jobs and find them like drudgery. But Torah says that even drudgery has meaning. Work itself, in this context is a mitzvah!



5. Shabbat comes once a week to refresh us with its special holiness. But there must be holiness in our working lives, too, especially when this work is seen as a mitzvah. Remind the students that our commercial offered a “lite beer for a heavy world”. What does Torah provide to hold up this heavy world? Read Avot, and explain the concepts of *Torah*, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Hasadim*.

שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר על
שלשה דברים העולם עומד. על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות
חסדים:

אבות א:ב

Simon the Just was among the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world stands on three things -- on Torah, on Divine Service, and on deeds of lovingkindness.

Avot 1:2

Torah should be presented as a combination of study and practice, bringing a better understanding of the world through learning and ritual, feeding both mind and emotions. *Avodah* should be presented as the Divine service of prayer, an opportunity to reach beyond yourself, and to re-image your world. *Gemilut Hasadim* should be presented as helping others, not because you are touched by their plight, but as a responsibility.

- How does each of the above “hold up the world”?
- How can each help us through the sense that the world is “heavy”?
- What do we learn from Torah study? How does it direct our minds? How do we feel when doing it?
- What about prayer? How can it direct our hearts? Can it help us to see our world differently?
- To Whom does prayer connect us? In what ways?



Unlike in the video, our true “boss” does see and appreciate.

- How do deeds of kindness -- acts of *hesed* -- help? Can we lift each other's drudgery? What kind of world can we create together?
- How can these three activities become a part of your lives?

This is a time to encourage and foster any steps, however incremental, in these directions. Seek achievable, realistic suggestions.

6. Tell the diamond story. It will give a concrete image to work. Picking up rocks while climbing a mountain does make you pant harder; it may even make you lose your race. But if the rocks are diamonds, it's worth it.

Two men were racing up a steep mountain, each burdened by a heavy backpack. The second, huffing and puffing up the slope, saw his fellow bending down and picking up heavy rocks, and putting them in his pack. “Why are you doing that?” he asked. “Isn't this a difficult climb? And isn't your pack already heavy?” “Yes,” replied his friend. “Then why do you put more rocks in your backpack?” “Ah”, smiled the first climber, “because these rocks are diamonds!”

After a parable of the Dubner Maggid

Summary of Lesson

Instead of beer, Kiddush. Instead of a few measly days off, Shabbat 52 times a year. Instead of the DMV and the assembly line, Torah, prayer and *hesed*. Let students talk about how they feel seeing life this way, rather than the usual way. Encourage any practical suggestions that have been made. It may be difficult for secular-minded students to view the world in terms of holiness -- *kedushah* -- rather than as the commercial does. They may suggest that it is difficult to live that way in the “real world”. Do not deny it. Rather, review the diamond story.

Life - Source Sheet

1. זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֹאכֶתֶךָ: וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת לַיהוָה אֵלֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל מְלֹאכֶה אַתָּה | וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאֹמְתֶיךָ וּבְהֵמֶתֶךָ וּגְרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ: שְׁמוֹת

כ:ח-יא

1. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your G-d; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

Exodus 20:8-11

2. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְרָצָה בְּנוֹ וּשְׁבַת קִדְּשׁוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָנוּ זְכוֹר לְמַעֲשֶׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית. כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִילָה לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ זִכְרֵ לִיְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. כִּי בְנוּ בַחֲרַת וְאַתָּנוּ קִדְּשַׁת מְכַל הָעַמִּים וּשְׁבַת קִדְּשׁ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מִקְדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

קְדוֹשׁ לַלַּיִל שַׁבַּת

2. Blessed art Thou, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and been gracious to us, and, in love and grace, He has given us His holy Sabbath as a memorial of the work of creation. For it is the first of the holy assemblies, as a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. For He has chosen us and sanctified us from all the nations, and His holy Sabbath, in love and grace has He given to us. Blessed art Thou, Lord, who sanctifies the Sabbath.



Shabbat Kiddush

3. שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד. על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים:

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3. Simon the Just was among the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world stands on three things -- on Torah, on Divine Service, and on deeds of lovingkindness.

Avot 1:2

4. Two men were racing up a steep mountain, each burdened by a heavy backpack. The second, huffing and puffing up the slope, saw his fellow bending down and picking up heavy rocks, and putting them in his pack. "Why are you doing that?" he asked. "Isn't this a difficult climb? And isn't your pack already heavy?" "Yes," replied his friend. "Then why do you put more rocks in your backpack?" "Ah", smiled the first climber, "because these rocks are diamonds!"

(After a parable of the Dubner Maggid)



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