

Paul & Michelle: Shabbat Shalom from the Kitchen Floor

Noah was teething and not yet crawling; Rachel was five, and Daniel was three. It was Friday night, and after a full week of work, neither of us had the oomph for cooking or setting a special table, yet we relished the candlelight and wanted to keep our Shabbat family ritual.

Paul ordered a pizza and we slid to the kitchen floor for an impromptu picnic. Daniel grinned while sitting atop Paul's shoulders, and Noah snuggled into Michelle. Rachel swung her legs from her perch on the counter. We lit the candles, and the older kids led us in the ritual of closing our eyes and circling our hands three times. They explained proudly they learned in temple nursery school that we were bringing three rings of blessing—light, warmth, and love—toward our faces. Nestled close to one another we sang a boisterous *Kiddush* over the grape juice and *Hamotzi* over the challah. Daniel danced to the melodies, while Rachel belted out the words with confidence. Noah grinned and drooled. We blessed our children and each other with *Birkat Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing), all the while struggling to keep from bursting out with laughter at the decidedly unorthodox setting. Pizza on paper plates with tomato sauce dripping everywhere made the moment especially delicious. We gave the kids a quick bath, slipped on their pajamas, put them in their beds, and collapsed beside each other on our bed.

We routinely welcomed Shabbat on Friday nights with the traditional rituals but on that particular night, Shabbat never seemed sweeter. The impromptu informality of the kitchen floor picnic felt just right for our young family.

Source: *Jewish Spiritual Parenting: Wisdom, Activities, Rituals and Prayers for Raising Children with Spiritual Balance and Emotional Wholeness*
by Rabbi Paul Kipnes and Michelle November