

Oneg Shabbat

Framing this unit

This is a poster advertising an *oneg Shabbat* (Shabbat celebration) that was held every Friday night at 9:00 pm at the ZOA House in Tel Aviv. The event was co-sponsored by the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the Ministry of Tourism, and the Organization for Tourism. The event featured Israeli songs and dances, quizzes and prizes, and performances by popular Israeli performers. The lettering on the poster is in a style that was popular in the 1960s, which might help to date the poster. The fact that the poster was written in English and that tickets could be obtained at hotels implies that these events were a way of introducing English-speaking tourists and new immigrants to Israeli culture. The event that this poster is promoting is an example of non-traditional ways of celebrating Shabbat.

An *oneg Shabbat* is a Shabbat celebration, which often takes place on Friday night. The content varies depending on the group organizing the event and can include a lecture, singing, refreshments, or any other type of entertainment.

Orthodox Jews who follow the *halachah* (laws originating from the traditional interpretation of the Torah) celebrate Shabbat according to traditional laws that focus on refraining from secular work, business, and study as a day of family, prayers, and rest. These laws include prohibitions on writing, driving, and using electricity and technology. However, Shabbat is also celebrated in many other ways. Many non-Orthodox families also have special Shabbat meals, often including *Kiddush*. People use the day to rest, take trips, visit family, etc. Either way, the Jewish people, who brought the day of rest to the Western world, still finds ways to change their life on the seventh day of the week.

Group Activity

- How do you celebrate Shabbat?
- Have you ever been to an *oneg Shabbat*? If so, what activities took place?

Folk dancing was a central and representative part of Israeli popular culture in the past.

- Does Israeli folk dancing still represent Israeli culture? If not, what represents modern Israeli culture today?

This *oneg Shabbat* involved Israeli songs and dancing.

- Have you ever danced Israeli folk dances? If so, describe your experience.
- Do you know any Israeli songs? Is there any particular song that you like?

The organizers of the *oneg Shabbat* wanted to give those attending a taste of Israeli culture. When you visit a foreign country, do you want to learn about the local culture? How do you do this?

Discussion

- What event is being advertised on the poster?
 - Where and when did the event take place?
 - Who sponsored the event?
 - Where could tickets be obtained?
 - What language is the poster written in?
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- What is an *oneg Shabbat*?
 - Who do you think was the poster's target audience? Explain your answer.
 - What activities were planned for this *oneg Shabbat*?
 - What are the origins of Israeli folk dancing?
 - Why do you think the Ministry of Tourism sponsored events like this?
 - What do you think the people who attended an *oneg Shabbat* gained from the experience?

Creative Activity

- Learn a new Israeli dance from a YouTube video.
- Plan an *oneg Shabbat*.
- Create a flyer to advertise the event. Include where it will be held, the date and time, and a schedule of activities.

Primary sources in this lesson

[Oneg Shabbat Poster](#)