**Title:** Sabbath Anfung, The Start of Shabbat, Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 1865

**Year (Hebrew):** 5625

**Year:** 1865

**Location**: Europe – Western

**Short description**

A painting of a German Jewish family at the start of Shabbat by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim.

**Detailed description**

**​** ​The painting by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim shows a man holding the hand of his son as he looks at his pocket watch, possibly checking if Shabbat has begun. He is holding his son’s hand, and his son is holding a book (presumably a siddur). It looks as if they are about to set out to the synagogue for Shabbat evening prayers. A woman, probably the mother, is lighting the Shabbat candles, which are in a Shabbat lamp called a *Judenstern*(German for a Jewish star) that was common at this time in central Europe, and reciting the blessing. The Shabbat lamp hangs from the ceiling and has six branches, echoing a six-pointed star. The lighting of the candles serves two purposes: to honour the Shabbat and to light up the home and create a homely atmosphere. The table is laid with a white tablecloth, which was traditionally used to express the purity and sanctity of Shabbat. The family are all wearing typical German clothing of the time. On the wall is a plaque that reads “Mizrach” – a traditional reminder of the direction of Jerusalem – and there is also a *havdala*set in the background. The table seems laid ready for the traditional Shabbat meal.

**Would You Like to Know More?**

**Moritz Oppenheim**– Moritz Oppenheim (1800–1882) is considered the first European Jewish painter, since he was the first to receive a classical art education and to gain recognition from non-Jewish German society. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Oppenheim was very connected to his Jewish background and sought to depict it in a positive light through his paintings. He worked during a complicated period for German Jewry: on the one hand, they were trying to become emancipated, free-thinking Jews who were assimilated into German society, while they were also striving to retain their Jewish identity. Oppenheim’s paintings reflect the pre-Emancipation world of the ghetto in a positive light for both his non-Jewish and Jewish audiences. Jewish life in Oppenheim’s paintings is a warm, family experience filled with books and learning in which children look to their elders for guidance and inspiration. Copies of Oppenheim’s works appeared in books and on postcards and porcelain and pewter plates.

**The Jewish Community of Germany**– The first evidence of Jews living in Germany is from the early Middle Ages. As in other European countries, the Jews in Germany prospered in trade, industry, agriculture, and money lending but were also victims of persecution, false accusations, and massacres. The cities of Mainz, Speyer, and Worms were great centres of Jewish learning, but at the time of the Crusades, entire communities were murdered there. In the fourteenth century, Jews were blamed for the outbreak of the Black Death, and following mass slaughter, many fled to Poland. In the following centuries the persecution of German Jews continued, despite the changes of the renaissance period. Change came towards the end of the eighteenth century with new ideas of religious equality and Moses Mendelssohn’s steps to promote integration and a Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala) and to create bonds with the Christian society. The nineteenth century brought pogroms known as the Hep-Hep riots but also gradual emancipation. Jews became increasingly integrated into the German society, and many became part of the intellectual, financial, and political elite of the country. In 1933 more than half a million Jews lived in Germany. However, anti-Semitism was on the rise, and the Nazi party grew in strength. More than 300,000 German Jews fled the country in the early years of the Nazi regime, while the Jews who stayed were victim to pogroms such as the November Pogrom (named by the Nazis Kristallnacht), anti-Jewish laws, and ultimately deportation to ghettos and death camps in Eastern Europe. During the Holocaust more than 130,000 German Jews were murdered. After the war, the Jewish community of Germany slowly began to rebuild itself, and in the 1990s many Jews from the former Soviet Union arrived in the country, such that today the majority of Jews in Germany are of Russian origin. The estimated number of Jews in Germany today is approximately 250,000.

**Shabbat**– Shabbat is the Jewish name for Saturday, the Jewish day of rest. According to Jewish tradition, this day commemorates the final, seventh day of God’s creation of the world. Shabbat is observed from just before sunset on Friday night until the appearance of three stars on Saturday night. The Talmud devotes an entire tractate to the rules of Shabbat and derives 39 types of forbidden activities. These include using electricity, writing, and other actions that are considered forms of creating. Shabbat is, instead, a day for family, community, prayer, and reflection. Traditionally Shabbat is ushered in by lighting candles, reciting the blessings over wine, Kiddush, and over the two loaves of special Shabbat bread, *challah*, and enjoying a festive meal. Shabbat is marked in the synagogue by a special additional prayer, known as *Musaf*, and the reading of the weekly Torah portion. The end of Shabbat is marked by the *Havdalah*ceremony. In Israel, secular Jews also enjoy Shabbat by eating Friday night dinner with their family and friends and spending time together in the countryside or on the beach. Most workplaces are closed on Shabbat.

**Shabbat Candles**– Shabbat candles are lit to usher in Shabbat on Friday night. At least two candles are lit, although many people light more, with two candles represent the two versions of the commandment to celebrate Shabbat found in the ten commandments: one using the word *shamor*(keep) and one using the word *zachor*(remember). Candles are lit for the purpose of *shalom bayit*(peace in the house) and *oneg Shabbat*(Shabbat pleasure), since without the light of the candles, the family would not be able to see or enjoy their Shabbat dinner. The candles are therefore traditionally lit on the dining room table or in the room where the meal will be eaten. The procedure for lighting Shabbat candles includes reciting the blessing for the candles, which officially initiates Shabbat. The candles are usually lit by the women of the family, and while reciting the blessing they traditionally stretch their arms to hide the flames.

**Teaching Suggestions**

**​** **​Jewish Studies** teachers can use this painting when teaching about Shabbat and its traditional practices.

**Art**teachers can use this painting to discuss and compare art on Jewish themes and to learn about the artist Moritz Daniel Oppenheim.

**Fashion Design**students can use this painting to analyse Jewish dress in Germany in the nineteenth century.

**Jewish History** teachers can use this painting when teaching about Jewish life in Germany in the nineteenth century.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* Who is in the picture?
* What are each of the characters doing?
* What day of the week is this?
* What time of day is this?
* Describe the room. What Jewish items do you see?
* What is written on the postcard?  
  What language is it written in?

**Reading Between the Lines**

* What hints are there that this scene is taking place at the beginning of the Shabbat?
  + What was the Judenstern used for?
  + Where was it used?
  + What does the word Judenstern mean?
* What is the purpose of the lighting candles at the start of Shabbat?  
  What does it symbolise?
* When does Shabbat start?
* What is the reason for what the woman is doing?
* What does the sign on the wall reading *mizrach* symbolise?
* What does the picture show about the traditionally different roles of men and women in the Jewish home?
  + Is this still the case?
* This picture painted by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim.  
  Search this [site](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nlis/en/education/pages/results.aspx#query=any%2ccontains%2cOppenheim&indx=9) and other sources for drawings by Oppenheim.  
  What are the subjects of his artwork?  
  Why do you think he chose these subjects?
* What was life like for Jews living in Germany in the nineteenth century?  
  Do you think this picture is representative of German Jewry at the time?  
  If so, in what way?

**Connections**

* What do you feel when you look at this picture?
* This image shows a woman lighting the Judenstern in Germany.  
  What interesting Shabbat traditions are part of your Jewish roots (for example: Polish, Russian, Moroccan, French, British, Yemenite, etc.)?
* Do you celebrate Shabbat?  
  How do you mark the day?

**Creative Ideas**

* **​**Create a meme about lighting Sabbath candles.  
  What image will you include and why? What text will you add to the image?
* Make a class exhibition of photographs of your families preparing to light Shabbat candles.

**Target audience:** Pre-school, Primary School, Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, Ephemera Collection](https://merhav.nli.org.il/primo-explore/search?tab=default_tab&vid=NNL_Ephemera&lang=iw_IL&query=any,contains,oppenheim&sortby=rank)

[Shabbat Afternoon](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG700343896&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=https%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Coppenheim%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D8)  
[Conclusion of Shabbat, later nineteenth century](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG700343995&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=https%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Coppenheim%26indx%3D9%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26bulkSize%3D8)