**Title:** Shabbat Afternoon

**Location**: Europe – Western

**Short description**

A postcard with a picture of a Jewish family resting and studying in the dining room on a Shabbat afternoon.

**Detailed description**

The picture on the postcard portrays a Jewish family resting and studying in the dining room on Shabbat afternoon. Both the mother and father have books open and are studying. The grandfather appears to be sleeping, while the child stands nearby reading some papers. Their clothing, the decor, and their activities indicate an affluent, cultured, and intellectual family. The text on the bottom of the postcard is in German and includes the title of the picture, *Shabbat Afternoon*, and information about the origin of this image, namely, “After the original painting of Prof. M. Oppenheim.” This postcard was printed around 1904 and, as mentioned in the title, it is based on a picture by Moritz Oppenheim, which was originally in black and white and included another figure.

**Would You Like To Know More?**

**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.

**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.

**German Jews in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries –** After many centuries of oppression, segregation from the general population, and poverty, the German Jewish community went through major changes. Germany, together with other European countries, began to adopt liberal ideas about religious equality and civil emancipation. This was also the time of Enlightenment, and many German Jews received a secular education and began to integrate into general German society. The late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries mark the transition of the Jews to modernity and the integration of many into Germany’s cultural, scientific, and financial elite. Moses Mendelssohn is an example of an Enlightenment thinker who aspired to bringing secular culture into Jewish life. These social changes also brought about a transformation in the identity and practices of the German Jews, as exemplified in a famous saying of the time: “Be a man abroad and a Jew in your tent.” Due to these changes, this period saw both the foundation of Orthodox Judaism and the birth of the Reform Movement in Germany, a movement that aimed to adapt traditional Judaism to modern times. This period did not, however, see an end to the discrimination or riots against the Jews, as can be seen by the 1819 Hep Hep riots, tax legislation against Jews, severe limitations on marriages, dismissals from public office, anti-Semitic literature and preaching, more. This discrimination led to many Jews emigrating, in particular to the United States.

**Teaching Suggestions**

**​Jewish Studies**teachers can use this postcard when teaching about the traditional Shabbat.

**Jewish History**teachers can use the postcard when teaching about Jews in Germany in the nineteenth century.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* Describe the people in the picture.  
  How are they dressed?  
  What are they doing?
* What objects do you see in the picture?
* Describe the room in the picture.

**Reading Between the Lines**

* What day is the picture depicting?
* What are the people doing in the picture?
* What language is the caption written in?
* What do you think the relationship is between the people in the picture?
* The picture on the postcard is a reproduction of a painting by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim.  
  Who was he?  
  Where and when did he live?  
  What types of paintings did he produce?
* Why do you think Oppenheim painted this particular family?  
  Why do you think he shows them studying and resting?

**Connections**

* What emotions do you feel when you look at this painting?
* What do you and your family do on Shabbat afternoon?
* The painting depicts an intergenerational family.  
  Do you live near your extended family?  
  Do you get to visit them often?  
  Would you like to live closer to your relatives? If so, why?

**Creative Ideas**

* Draw a picture of how you like to spend Shabbat afternoon.
* Write a dialogue for the people in the painting. What might they be talking about?

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

**NLI Links**

[Time Travel Ephemera Collection](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/time_journey/Pages/default.aspx)

[Jewish woman cooking on Friday, Alphonse Levy, 1886](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG700344060&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Cshabbat%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D10)  
[Sukkot, Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 1867](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG700343888&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%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%3D10)