

Edelglass - 10 commandments

SHABBAT ON TRIAL

(A One Act Play)

by Kadish Goldberg
Temple Israel
Charlotte, North Carolina

No. of Characters: 13 Length of Performance: 12-15 min.
Scene: A courtroom Time: The Present

Note: The only prop necessary is a cardboard model of a big fish. Additional props may include a gavel, table, chairs. Costumes and makeup: a black robe for the Judge and a villain's mustache for the prosecutor.

* * * * *

Shamash: Quiet! Order in the court. Everyone rise for the Judge.

Judge: Court is now in session. First case...

Shamash: First case. The prosecution wishes to prosecute the Shabbat.

Judge: Who is the prosecutor?

Prosecutor: My name is Mark Mitbolell, and if all you good people take my advice, you'll find the Shabbat guilty on all counts.

Judge: Mr. Mitbolell, please tell the court why you wish to prosecute the Shabbat.

Prosecutor: Why? Because Shabbat is a waste of time, that's why. It's only for lazy people who want an excuse not to work for a day. And furthermore, Shabbat is bad for business, because Jews can't give our Gentile brothers any business on that day, nor can our Gentile friends get what they need from Jewish stores on Shabbat. Sunday seems to be good enough for everyone else. I say that Shabbat is a dangerous thing, a nuisance, and should be abolished immediately, if not sooner.

Judge: Who is the defense for the Shabbat?

PROGRAM BANK UNITED SYNAGOGUE YOUTH CENTER 165 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK N.Y. 10010

Shamash: Miss Judaea, your honor.

Judge: How does your client plead, Miss Judaea?

Judaea: Not guilty, your honor. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, in my defense I intend to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Shabbat is a blessing to the world, and that the Jewish people could not possibly exist without it.

Judge: Mr. Mitbolell, present your witnesses against the Shabbat.

Prosecutor: Your honor, I don't intend to offer any witnesses. My case is open and shut. It is so obvious that I don't even need witnesses to prove it.

Judge: Your prerogative, Mr. Mitbolell. Miss Judaea, you may call your first witness.

Judaea: First witnesses (ADAM AND EVE ENTER)

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Both: We do.

Eve: He's got his nerve. Why would we want to tell a lie...

Judaea: Please tell the court your names.

Adam: Adam.

Eve: Eve.

Judge: They don't look like Adam and Eve.

Judaea: We were afraid they'd be a little chilly in their usual outfit, so we dressed them a bit. Now tell the court, do you know the Shabbat personally.

Eve: We know the Shabbat from the first day ^{it} she was born.

Adam: In six days the Lord created Heaven and earth, and the seventh day he ceased work and rested.

Judge: When were you created?

Eve: On the sixth day.

Judge: Why you were there when it all started.

Judaea: That's right your honor. God gave the world the Shabbat as soon as he created the world. And when we keep the Shabbat, we tell the world that God created heaven and earth.

Prosecutor: Objection, your honor. We can't trust their testimony.

Judge: Why not?

Prosecutor: (TO ADAM AND EVE): Isn't it true that you disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge?

Adam: Yes.

Prosecutor: And isn't it also true in consequence thereof you were forcibly expelled from the Garden of Eden?

Both: Yes.

Prosecutor: There you are. Your honor, certainly their word cannot be accepted in this court.

Judge: The jury will take this into consideration.

Shamash: Next witness. (TEN COMMANDMENTS STEPS UP)

Judaea: Please tell the court who you are.

Ten Comm: I am the Decalogue.

Judge: The which?

Judaea: That's the proper name for the Ten Commandments, your honor.

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Ten. Comm.: I am the truth.

Judaea: Where were you on the sixth of Sivan, about 3,000 years ago?

Ten Comm.: On Mount Sinai.

Judaea. And please tell the court just what you were doing on the mountain at that time.

Ten. Comm.: God was giving me to the Children of Israel through the hands of his servant Moses.

Judaea. Please tell the court what was written in the fourth commandment engraved upon you.

Ten. Comm.: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Six days shall you do your work, and the seventh shall be a day of rest to the Lord your God.

Judaea: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, God Himself gave the commandments that the Children of Israel keep the Shabbat forever.

Prosecutor: Objection, your honor.

Judge: Now what?

Prosecutor: First of all, since when do stones give testimony in court? This is a court for people, not rocks. Secondly, Moses threw the commandments from the mountain. The witness is cracked, and his evidence is worthless.

Judge: (EXASPERATED) The jury will take that into consideration.

Judaea: Next witness. (ENTER CHANA)

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Chana. I do.

Judaea: Tell the court your name.

Chana: Chana.

Judaea: Chana, do you have any children?

Chana: I did.

Judaea: How many please?

Chana: Seven.

Judaea: Will you please tell the court what happened to these seven children?

Chana: They refused to obey the commands of a wicked king.

Judaea: What were some of the commands of this wicked king.

Chana: He ordered that the study of the Torah be stopped, that we worship strange gods, and that we cease to observe the Shabbat. He was a terribly wicked king.

Prosecutor: Objection, your honor, the witness is obviously prejudiced. The king was probably a real nice guy.

Judge: Order, order. Continue.

Judaea: And your sons refused to give up their God, the Torah and Shabbat.

Chana: Yes.

Judaea: And as a result they were all killed, isn't that so?

Chana: Yes.

Judaea: I'm sorry I have to pursue such a painful subject further, Chana, but your testimony is very critical in this case. Do you think that your seven sons did the correct thing?

Chana: Yes, there can be no life for the Jew without Torah and its commandments.

Judaea: Thank you. You see, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Jews have always been ready to sacrifice, even die in order to preserve the Shabbat.

Prosecutor: Objection. You can't believe what a woman says - they're always exaggerating, always making things sound worse than they really are.

Judge: Objection overruled. Next witness. (YOSEF TAKES STAND)

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Yosef: Yes.

Judaea: What is your full name?

Yosef: Yosef Mokir Shabbat.

Judge: What's that?

Judaea: That ^{means} ~~means~~ Yosef who holds the Shabbat very dearly.

Judge: How did you ever get a name like that?

Yosef: Just...just because I love the Shabbat very much. The whole week I work hard and save every penny. Then on Friday, I buy good food for Shabbat, meat, fish, challah, and wine for Kiddush. And, of course, I always wear my newest and best clothes for Shabbat.

Judge: (POINTING AT BIG FISH YOSEF IS CARRYING) Uh... would you explain....

Judaea: Oh, yes - Yosef, would you please tell the court what you are doing with that big fish?

Yosef: Well, - I used to work for a rich man - who used to treat me very meanly. One night he had a dream, He dreamt that he was going to lose all his money. So the very next day he sold all his property and instead bought a precious stone.

Judaea: And where did he put this stone?

Yosef: He sewed it into his cap. But one day, while walking over a bridge, a big wind came along and blew his cap into the river. But it seems along came a big fish and swallowed the cap. A Gentile fisherman caught it. Well, like everybody else in town, he knew how I liked fish right away. I bought it, opened it, and sure enough there was the diamond. I returned it to my master and he rewarded me handsomely and now treats me well.

Judaea: So you see, ladies and gentlemen, one who respects the Shabbat is rewarded for his faithfulness. Doesn't that prove that it is very important to keep the Shabbat?

Prosecutor: Objection.

Judge: Why this time?

Prosecutor: Because it's a fish story, that's why.

Judge: Overruled. Next witness.

Prosecutor: Another objection. Every witness Miss Judaea has produced is either rock or fish or someone long gone from the world of the living. All right, the prosecution is willing to concede that in olden times, people had to keep the Sabbath, but these are modern times! People don't keep the Shabbat any more. I challenge the defense to produce a single living witness who finds value in the Shabbat today.

Judaea: I'll give you two. (ENTER HALUTZ AND HALUTZAN)

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Both: We do.

Judaea: Please tell the court your names.

Halutz: Tzuri.

Halutzah: Rinah.

Judaea: Please tell the court where your home is.

Halutzah: We live in a kibbutz in the Israel Negev.

Judaea: You are pioneers then?

Both: Yes.

Judaea: How modern is your settlement?

Halutz: We are still a young kibbutz, but we have many modern machines and we use the latest scientific methods in our work.

Judaea: And what do you do for your recreation?

Halutz: We have study groups in literature and art, we have a choral group, we are beginning an orchestra, and once a week we have a lecturer from the outside come and speak to us.

Judaea: I trust the jury agrees that this kibbutz is certainly a modern settlement, and that these young people are not at all old-fashioned. Now tell the court, how many days a week do you work?

Halutz: Six.

Judaea: And what about the seventh?

Halutzah: The seventh day is Shabbat. On Shabbat we rest.

Judaea: Don't you feel that Shabbat is a little old-fashioned for a modern pioneer?

Halutzah: Not at all. Shabbat gives us a chance to rest and relax, to take time out to think, to study, to pray. It gives us time to devote to our families. We are very thankful for Shabbat.

Judaea: Thank you very much. There you are. Young modern Jews who keep and enjoy the Shabbat.

Prosecutor: Objection.

Judge: Overruled. Any more witnesses.

Judaea: The defendant will now take the stand
(SHABBAT STEPS UP)

Shamash: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole
truth, and nothing but the truth?

Shabbat: I do.

Judaea: Your name please?

Shabbat: Shabbat Hamalkah, the Shabbat Queen.

Judaea: Would you please tell the court in your own
words why you feel you should continue to
exist?

Shabbat: I bring a blessing to Israel and the world.
With me comes peace and rest. I bring holi-
ness and love into every Jewish home where I
am invited. I feel that without me, the
Jewish people would not be alive today.

Judaea: Thank you. The defense rests.

Prosecutor: Your honor....

Judge: Out of order! Ladies and gentlemen of the
jury, you have heard all the evidence. It is
now up to you to decide whether or not
Shabbat will continue to exist, or whether it
will die out. It is a very serious decision.
Think it over carefully. Remember, if you
decide the Shabbat will continue to live, you
must bear the responsibility of keeping it
alive. (FOREMAN RISES FROM AUDIENCE) Have
you reached a decision?

*{Foreman: Yes, your honor.)
()
(Judge: Will the Shabbat Queen please rise and face)
(the jury? What is your verdict?)
()
(Foreman: The jury agrees unanimously that the Shab..)
(bat must continue to exist.)

(Prosecutor. Curses! Foiled again! :)
(:)
(Judge: The case is closed. (POINTS TO PROSECUTOR)
(:)
(Shamash: Court adjourned till next session.)

...THE END...

*Instead of including the above bracketed ending in your presentation, you may wish to end the play at this point and open it up to jury discussion. The jury should be made up of all who are present in the audience. The "foreman" should be a good, well prepared discussion leader.