



Unlocking Jewish

GUIDE TO SHABBAT FOR INTERFAITH FAMILIES

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What is Shabbat All About?

Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. The English word Sabbath came from the Hebrew word, *Shabbat*. It's pronounced "shah-baht." An alternative more Yiddish spelling is Shabbos and is pronounced "shah-biss." Shabbat lasts from sundown on Friday until three stars are visible on Saturday night. The greetings for Shabbat are "Shabbat shalom" (Sabbath peace) or the Yiddish "gut Shabbos" ("good Sabbath").

Shabbat features in the Ten Commandments, and the commandment to keep Shabbat is repeated in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew scripture that provides the foundation for Judaism.

Shabbat is a day of rest and enjoyment for us at the end of the work week, just as God did at the end of the week of creation. Traditional Jews avoid doing any work, reserving the time for friends and family, pleasant walks and naps, prayer and study.

Shabbat is a day of peace, rest, reflection, and hospitality for the entire community. The Torah invites all to share in the blessing of rest and explicitly includes those who are not Jewish to take a day of rest as well. Jews were the first community to establish this healthy custom of a day off from work.

The gift of Shabbat is part of God's covenant with the Jewish people. Honoring the Sabbath is one way Jews have of maintaining that agreement.

Variations on Making Shabbat

People talk about keeping Shabbat, observing Shabbat, or making Shabbat. By "keeping" or "observing," they mean following basic principles in Jewish law about not working on Shabbat. By "making" Shabbat, they mean doing the preparatory work of cooking and readying the household, saying the blessings, and creating a special atmosphere. What making Shabbat looks like varies from household to household, according to each family's tradition and custom.

In trying to figure out what it means to refrain from work on Shabbat, the rabbis of the Talmud, the foundational code of Jewish law, turned to Exodus 31, which discusses both the importance of refraining from labor on Shabbat, and the rules for the construction of the portable temple that the Israelites carried in the desert as they journeyed to the land God had promised them. The rabbis took the list of 39 activities prohibited in the building of the portable temple and concluded that because they were in the same verse that talked about not working on the Sabbath, they were also prohibited on Shabbat.

Succeeding generations have had to decide whether new activities that didn't exist in the time of the portable temple fit into these 39 categories. Traditionally observant Jews won't use their cars on Shabbat (because the internal combustion engine is like lighting a fire, and lighting a fire is prohibited) or turn on their lights (because the act of flipping a switch builds a circuit, and building is another category of work). Jews who agree that it's a positive thing not to work on Shabbat often have differences of interpretation about what constitutes work. The challenge of deciding for yourself how to observe Shabbat (and the other laws of the Torah) is a basis of modern day Judaism. Freedom to decide for yourself can be both liberating and challenging.

The particulars of Shabbat observance have become a sort of litmus test separating different groups of Jews. The happy, peaceful day of rest is a huge source of contention. This is not a new problem; we've been arguing about how to do Shabbat for centuries.

Whether or not you choose to adhere to all 39 prohibitions, the attempt to change your behavior to preclude work can have a very positive impact. If you don't cook, drive, use your phone or computer, you really have to relax. Even if you do those things, but set the day apart as time to spend with family and friends, you'll mark Shabbat as distinct from the rest of the week.

Here are some historical examples of the arguments Jews have had over how to do Shabbat:

- In late antiquity, a group of Jews called the Karaites rejected the interpretations of the rabbis who wrote the Talmud and based their behavior on their own reading and understanding of the laws of the Torah. Their disagreement began

over whether they could keep food warm in an oven on Shabbat.

- In early 19th century Germany, the Reform movement decided to incorporate musical instruments in Shabbat services in order to lure music-loving German Jews to synagogue. Orthodox Jews objected, as it was their understanding that this violated Jewish law. It was one of several items of ritual practice that divided the two groups.
- In the early 20th century, some Reform Jews tried to move the main service of the week to Sunday, because it was difficult for some Jews to get Saturdays off of work.
- In 1960, Conservative movement rabbis ruled that it was permissible for Jews to drive on Shabbat, but only to synagogue. Orthodox Jews disagreed.

As you can see, Jews have a history of interpreting and reinterpreting the Torah and what God commanded. But Shabbat isn't something you can do wrong.

You can create your own traditions. Begin with candles, wine, and challah and you too can bring holiness and peace to your home. Bless the food, the day, and each other, in English or Hebrew, before eating your Friday night dinner. Everyone can have Shabbat, If you want it, you can have it – this Friday night!

How You Can Make Shabbat

Prepare

In the Jewish calendar, days begin at sundown as they did in the story of creation. Whether we observe Shabbat or not, it comes each week. It is our choice to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," as it says in the Ten Commandments. It is the remembering that is important. Remember to plan a meal that you can all eat together, with family or friends, at the same time! It can be a special meal or a simple meal. It can be pizza picked up after a hard day at work, a potluck, or something you cooked yourself. It is being together for the purpose of that "remembering" that makes the day special.

Later when it becomes more of a habit, you might invite friends, eat more elaborately, add songs and dancing. You may even arrange to be home early to bake challah, the traditional braided loaf of bread.

Lighting Candles

In biblical times, Jews lit a lamp that had to last them through the next evening, since lighting a fire was work they would not do during Shabbat. This tradition has been carried forward through Jewish history. Still today, we begin Shabbat on Friday evening by lighting the candles and saying a blessing.

You can buy candles that are marked "Shabbat candles" in many supermarkets, though any candles are fine. These candles are left to burn down, so make sure you find a good fire-safe spot for them. Lighting the candles and reciting the blessing brings Shabbat into your home.

For most blessings, you say the blessing then do the action. Because once you light the candles Shabbat begins (with the prohibition about lighting fire), it is traditional to light the candles and then cover your eyes to hide their light while saying the blessing. Many have the additional custom of waving the hands toward the face, as though scooping up the holiness of the light and the day.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַי
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitz'votav
vitz'ivanu l'had'lik ner shel Shabbat.*

Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lights.

After the candles have been blessed, remember not to blow them out.

Family Moments

Some families take a moment to bless their children, each child getting a moment with their parent(s), as the Sabbath starts. Customarily, this moment is after the lighting of the candles and follows the blessings, below. Other families have the custom of sharing something they are thankful for about each member of the family, or telling their children something special they noticed during the week.

Partners may also take a moment to thank each other during this time, point out a trait or moment they appreciated during the busy week, or give each other a blessing.

For boys:

יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה.
Yis'm'cha Elohim k'Efrayim v'ch'Menashe.

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

For girls:

For more Shabbat resources, visit <http://www.18Doors.org/shabbat>.

יְשַׁמְדֵךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה.
Yis'meych Elohim k'Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v'Leah.

May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

For both, continue:

יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ. יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַחַנְדֶּךָ.
יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

Y'varch'e'cha Adonai v'yish'marecha. Ya'er Adonai panav e'lecha vichuneka. Yisa Adonai panev e'lecha v'yasem l'cha shalom.

May God bless you and keep you. May God shine God's Countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May God favor you and give you peace.

Blessings Up to the Meal

Wine. Before both the Friday evening meal and lunchtime on Saturday, there is an opportunity to affirm the holiness of Shabbat through the blessing over wine. This blessing is called "Kiddush" in Hebrew. The blessing combines the acknowledgment of God's role in feeding people with a blessing for Shabbat and remembering creation and liberation. If you are not yet comfortable saying the blessing in Hebrew, you can recite an English translation of all or part of it.

Many Jews grow up drinking a very sweet wine for Kiddush. Sweet wine isn't necessary, however. Kosher wine makers, who make wine according to Jewish law, have created every variety of wine for those who prefer a good table wine to the sweeter alternative. The same blessing that is used for wine can also be made over grape juice.

The Friday evening Kiddush has three parts: a reading of Genesis 1:31-2:3, a short blessing over the wine itself, and a longer sanctification of Shabbat. Some families have the custom of saying the shorter version, which is just the blessing over the wine itself. Others have the custom of saying all three parts. We've included both here:

Abbreviated:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.
Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam boray p'ree hagafen.

Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

Full:

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם. וְכָל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִלְּאֲכֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וַיִּשְׁבֹּת וַיְכַלּוּ

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בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּיִקְדָּשׁ אֹתוֹ, כִּי
בוֹ שָׁבַת מְבֵת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶד הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרָא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶד הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְרָצָה בָּנוּ. וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשׁוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה
וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָנוּ זְכוּר לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית. כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ זְכוּר לִיצִיאַת
מִצְרַיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֵרֶת וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מְכַל הָעַמִּים וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשָׁתָּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִלְתָּנוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מְקִדְּשׁ הַשָּׁבַת.

Va'y'hee erev va'y'hee bo'keir yom ha'shee'shee.

*Va'y'chu'lu ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz v'chol tze'va'am. Va'ye'chal Elohim ba'yom
hash'vee'ee m'lach'to asher asa, va'yeesh'bot ba'yom hash'vee'ee me'kol m'lach'to
asher asa. Va'y'varech Elohim et yom hash'vee'ee by'kadeish oto, key vo sha'vat
mee'vat mee'kol m'lach'to asher bara Elohim la'asot.*

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam boray p'ree hagafen.

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam asher key'd'sha'nu b'mitz'vo'tav v'ratza
vanu. V'Shabbat kod'sho b'a'ha'va uv'ratzon heen'chee'lanu zee'kron l'ma'aseh
v'ray'sheet. Key hoo yom t'chee'la l'meek'ra'ei ko'desh ze'cher lee'tzee'at Meetz'ra'im.
Key vanu va'charta v'otanu key'dash'ta mee'kol ha'a'meem v'Shabbat kod'sh'cha
b'a'ha'va iv'ratzon heen'chee'lanu. Baruch ata Adonai m'ka'desh ha'Shabbat.*

And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

The heavens and the earth were finished, the whole host of them. And on the seventh day God completed the work that He had done and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it

because in it He had rested from all his work that God had created to do.

Blessed art you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed art you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us with commandments. Lovingly You have willingly given us Your holy Shabbat as an inheritance, in memory of creation, a day for holy assembly and for recalling the exodus from Egypt. Because You have chosen us, making us holy among the people and have willingly and lovingly given us Your holy Shabbat as inheritance. Blessed are You, who santifies Shabbat.

Hand Washing. Traditionally, this ritual washing is done with a two handled cup. The cup is filled and the water is poured over first one hand and then the cup is held in the wet hand and poured over the other hand. The hands are dried on a towel while reciting the blessing. It is customary to stay silent until the bread is blessed to maintain the Shabbat mood.

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For the ritual of washing, the blessing is:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַי
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitz'votav
vitz'ivanu al n'tilat ya'dai'im.*

Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to concerning washing of hands.

Challah. A special braided loaf of egg bread is used for Shabbat. In Europe, plain black bread was the daily bread and a loaf made of white flour with eggs was a treat saved for Shabbat. The blessing over the challah or any bread is often called Ha'Motzi, which means "who brings forth" because it acknowledges God bringing forth bread from the earth by giving us the gift of wheat.

There are a lot of small customs associated with performing this blessing. The challah is covered with a decorative cloth when the table is set and it is kept covered until you are ready to bless it. There is a sweet story that maintains that we cover the challah so that it will not be jealous that we blessed the wine first! Some lift the loaf or loaves, others place their hands on the bread while reciting the blessing.

After you've made the blessing you can slice or tear the bread into pieces, and distribute it to your guests (some people salt it first). There's also a custom of throwing a piece of bread to each person at the table. Another, newer custom is for everyone to say the blessing together while touching the loaf, and pull off a piece at the same time.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe ,
who bringest forth bread from the earth.

The blessing for the bread covers all the food in your meal.

All these prayers are in every siddur, or prayerbook, which will also have traditional songs for the Shabbat table. You can also purchase a bencher (the Yiddish word for a a short booklet containing the Shabbat blessings and songs, often distributed to guests at weddings or bar or bat mitzvahs) from a Jewish bookstore.

Saturday Lunch

You can recite the daytime Kiddush and the blessing over bread at Saturday lunch and have a special meal on Saturday as well as on Friday evening.

Traditional observance mandates three meals on Shabbat: Friday night dinner, Saturday lunch, and Saturday supper. This third meal is also referred to as a *Malaveh*

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Malcha or "accompanying the Queen." We think of the Sabbath as a bride when it comes and as a queen when it leaves. The third meal is also sometimes called a *Seudah Shelishit*, Hebrew for "third meal." In the winter, when Shabbat may end before supper time, a third meal may be a simple late-afternoon snack.

If you attend Shabbat morning services or Torah study, it is easy to extend your Shabbat and have friends for lunch on Saturday. You can try this and any other Shabbat custom without immediately making a commitment to do it every week. These are pleasures for you to enjoy as you are ready.

Other Shabbat Activities

If you are exploring Shabbat as a spiritual practice, you may also choose to use it as a day to be in nature, to sit by the ocean, or take a long hike. You may prefer to take a long nap, read a book, or play games with kids or friends. Without any rituals at all, Shabbat can still be a day of rest and relaxation, a needed respite from the regular week.

Shabbat in the Synagogue

Worship Services

Tot Shabbat. Many synagogues host worship services, specially designed for families with young children, on either Friday evening or Saturday morning. These intergenerational services often feature storytelling and music, and are an easy way to learn about Judaism as a family and to learn more about the style and warmth of the synagogue you are visiting.

Kabbalat Shabbat. On Friday evening, medieval Jewish mystics in the Israeli town of Safed went to the field outside of town dressed in white clothing to welcome Shabbat. They pictured Shabbat arriving as a bride who they accompanied to the synagogue with singing. They called this "Kabbalat Shabbat," Hebrew for the "reception of Shabbat." Jews have taken on their custom of singing a series of psalms on Friday evenings as part of a short service of about an hour. Some congregations offer an *oneg Shabbat* (enjoyment of Shabbat), an elaborate snack with a social atmosphere, after the service. Some offer snacks before the service for those who have rushed from work and arrived without dinner.

Shabbat morning services. Morning worship includes a reading from the Torah which may include a youngster's first reading, marking their bar or bat mitzvah. There may also be a sermon or a teaching (d'var Torah) on the Torah reading of the week.

There are always guests at morning services who are strangers to the liturgy. If you have trouble following, ask someone to be your buddy and help you track the pages, though in many congregations the service leader will announce them. People like to be experts and they will be happy to help you.

At the end of the service, in many congregations, there is a light lunch served after the blessing over the wine (Kiddush) by the service leader.

In some congregations, there is a Saturday afternoon service (*minchah*) that is shorter than the Saturday morning service. It features a shorter Torah reading of the portion for the coming Shabbat.

Havdalah

A beautiful ceremony marks the end of Shabbat - Havdalah, or "separation." It's a lovely way to greet the new week. You can say Havdalah as part of the evening service after Shabbat in synagogue, or recite the blessings over the multi-flame candle, the spices, and the wine at home. It's nice to look into the eyes of the people in your family and see the candle flame reflected in them.

The short ceremony comprises four blessings. At the end, it is customary to sing songs or greet each other with wishes for a good week.

First Blessing:

Light the braided *Havdalah* candle, but don't say a blessing yet.

The first blessing that we say is over the wine. Lift the cup of wine and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.
Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Second Blessing:

The second blessing is over the spices. Lift the spices and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיַּי בְּשָׂמִים.
Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei minei v'samim.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of many kinds of spices.

After saying the blessing, inhale the sweet smell. Pass around the spice box so that everybody can inhale the scent deeply.

Third Blessing:

The third blessing is over the lights of the candle, which we have already lit. We say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.

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Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei m'orei ha-eish.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the lights of fire.

After the blessing, hold up your hands to feel the warmth of the braided candle. To make use of the light, some people look for the reflection of the candle light in their fingernails. Another custom has people start with fingers cupped toward their palms and slowly opening them to see the light on their palms.

Fourth Blessing:

The last blessing is the *Havdalah*, separation, blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין-קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל,
בֵּין-אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים. בֵּין-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יְמֵי-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין-קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל.

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, ha-mavdil bein kodesh l'chol, bein or-le'choshekh, bein Yisrael la-amim, bein yom ha-shevi'i l'sheshet y'mai ha-ma'aseh.
Barukh ata Adonai, ha-mavdil bein kodesh l'chol.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who distinguishes between the sacred and the profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and other people of the world, between the seventh day and the six days of the week. Blessed are You, Who distinguishes between the sacred and the profane.

Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation. You separate the holy from the profane, light from darkness, Israel from the other peoples, Shabbat from the six other days. Holy One of Blessing You separate the holy from the profane.

We then sip the wine and sing *Eliyahu Ha'Navi* while slowly lowering the *Havdalah* candle into the wine so that the candle is extinguished as the song ends.

Eliyahu ha'Navi, Eliyahu ha'Tishbi, Eliyahu ha-Giladi. Bim'heira v'yameinu yavo eleinu, im Mashiach ben David.

May Elijah the Prophet come to us, heralding the Messiah, soon and in our days!

Conclusion:

It is customary, at the ritual's conclusion, to sing "*Shavua Tov*" (a good week) and turn on the room's lights as it ends.

Shavua tov (8x)

A good week, a week of peace, may gladness reign and joy increase. (2x)

Additional Resources

Falk, Marcia. *The Book of Blessings*. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.
A completely untraditional, innovative rereading of Jewish liturgy, emphasizing the immanence of God in nature.

Gimbel, Jeremy. *Birkon Mikdash Me'at: NFTY's Bencher*. New York: URJ Press, 2005.
The Reform youth movement booklet with the grace after meals, blessings and [Hebrew](#) songs popular in the Reform movement.

Haruni, Mike and Munishor, Phillip. *The Nevarech Bencher*. Jerusalem: Israel Observer Publications, 1999.
A booklet with the grace after meals, blessings and Hebrew songs, featuring color photographs as illustrations and clear, easy to read translation.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.
This is a classic work of Jewish theology.

Olivestone, David. *The NCSY Benscher*. New York: Artscroll Publications, 1993.
This is the Orthodox youth movement booklet with the grace after meals, blessings and Hebrew songs, featuring a very complete transliteration.

Shabbat on Ritualwell.org. <http://www.ritualwell.org/shabbat/shabbatlife/>
Articles about personal practice from a feminist spiritual perspective.

Wolfson, Ron. *The Shabbat Seder*. Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002.
Everything you need to know to observe Shabbat. This book has an accompanying booklet with prayers for use at your table.