

Shabbat

A 25-hour Spa for the Soul



This Guide provides suggestions on how to experience the transformative power of Shabbat, with a “how-to” guide to the blessings and rituals for Shabbat dinner.

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With material adapted from OneTable’s Shabbat Dinner Guide. OneTable is an organization dedicated to bringing Shabbat into the lives of Jewish Millennials. See <https://onetable.org> for more information.

Shabbat

The Jewish Sabbath has been called an “oasis in time.” This heavenly gift, “Divine Therapy,” if you will, is a unique opportunity for spiritual and psychological renewal that comes every week - and it's free! Contemporary observers often speak of the need for “quality time.” Shabbat teaches that there cannot be quality time without quantity time. Shabbat is indeed an idea whose time has come. As we enter the 21st century, the world has never needed Shabbat more. Our society desperately needs time to catch its breath, to look inward, not outward, to be introspective. We need an opportunity to hug our children, look our spouses in the eye, and engage in true communication, without constant interruptions of telephones, radios, videos and computer games. For all our valued technological advancements - smartphones, Internet, satellite dishes, etc. - our ability to communicate has greatly diminished. In fact, studies indicate that the average American parent speaks with his/her children no more than 12 minutes a day and watches television 49 hours a week! We, and our families, need “sacred time.” Shabbat provides just that, and much more. It has been said, “More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath - the Sabbath has kept the Jews.” It is an elixir of life. It is God's greatest gift to human-kind. Embrace it! Savor a taste of the world to come.

How to Observe Shabbat

1. Make Shabbat special! Do things differently so that you are aware that it is Shabbat.
2. Have a special meal. Make a point of EVERYONE being home for Shabbat dinner on Friday night—so often during the week we have activities in the evening—set aside at least one night a week to eat together as a family. Light candles, have special foods, nice wine, a special dessert. Invite friends or family to share the meal. For “extra credit,” share some words of Torah—if not about the week’s Torah reading, about anything Jewish you may have read or learned during the week.
3. If at all possible, take the day off. Work and chores—and homework—can all wait until Sunday. You will find the weekend overall more relaxing if you do all your relaxing on one day, and all your chores on the other day (Sunday). Try to disconnect from email, text messages, social media, things that go bling and beep and demand your instant attention. One of the big blessings of Shabbat is having a religious excuse to separate from that incessant pressure.
4. Some people spend the day doing enjoyable activities they otherwise wouldn’t have time for. If you want to try a more traditional Shabbat, spend the day reading, walking, playing games with friends and family. Pray, study or read books on Jewish subjects, take a nap. You might even come to shul! Some people come to connect with God; some come to connect with other Jews.
5. It may seem hard to believe, but with a little experience even kids can come to love Shabbat. Instead of entertaining themselves by watching TV or playing video games, they will entertain themselves by interacting with each other, by reading, or maybe by entertaining you—my kids loved to put on plays they made up for us on Shabbat.
6. Shabbat is a 25-hour spa for the soul. It’s not a tax or burden God imposed on Jews—rather it’s one of the greatest gifts God gave the Jewish people. Enjoy your birthright!

SHABBAT DINNER GUIDE

We invite you to hold tradition in one hand and your beliefs, experiences and passions in the other. Every week Shabbat dinner offers a chance to take a break and be fully present. Ritual and blessings might help carve out a moment to connect with yourself and others.

You're having a bunch of people over to your house for dinner. And now you're supposed to stand up and like, bless things in a foreign language? We get it, it's a lot.
So where do you start when it comes to ritual?

Start with you.

Where are you at? If this is your first time hosting a Shabbat dinner, you don't need to do every ritual, or feel like the rituals you do explore have to be done in a particular way. Experimenting with and claiming ownership over these practices is part of what it means to be Jewish. What feels right to you? Start with one or two rituals, maybe wine and challah. Go from there.

Remember... Shabbat happens every week. There's going to be another chance for you to make Shabbat dinner, and many opportunities to expand your ritual repertoire.

ORDER OF OPERATIONS



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1. Light

Officially end the workweek and welcome the weekend with the light of two or more candles

2. Sanctify

Wine serves as a conduit to sanctify the seventh day of the week, the time of Shabbat, as "other," set apart from the daily grind of the other six days

3. Cleanse

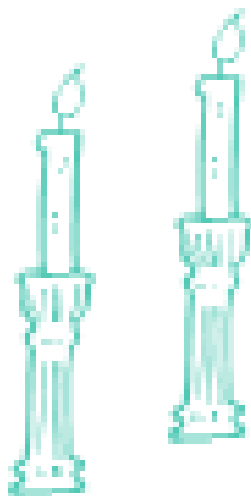
A formal practice of washing hands that recalls an ancient practice during Temple times when Shabbat was accompanied by special offerings

4. Nourish

Breaking bread makes a meal, and Shabbat is a time to enjoy a special braided bread called challah that just might steal the show

5. Appreciate

Friday night is a time when you can end your meal the same way you started it, with intention



LIGHT

Light two candles to begin Shabbat, just prior to sunset.

In Jewish tradition, lighting candles at sundown on Friday is the last act of the workweek, the literal spark that carries us into the weekend. While you will find no verse in the Torah instructing you to light two candles at dusk, the rabbinic sages over the centuries linked the practice to the concepts of *shamor* Shabbat and *zachor* Shabbat, the commandments to keep and remember Shabbat.

The beauty of Jewish tradition is not its certitude but its ambiguity; even the rabbis disagree on what exactly it means to keep and remember Shabbat.

What might it mean for you?

While it's heartening that the rabbis took the time to create a text-based conceptual framework around the practice of creating light, it is possibly more remarkable — and in its way even more spiritually moving — to recognize that the ritual of candle lighting is first and foremost a practical exercise. Before there was electricity, an embedded candle lighting ritual ensured that you and your friends would not be celebrating Shabbat in the dark. In fact the Jewish legal sources clearly state that if you can only afford to buy one thing for Friday night it should be candles, because if you can't see your table, your wine, your food, your guests, it's impossible to enjoy Shabbat.

Many Jewish celebrations begin with the lighting of candles to separate the holy from the mundane. By lighting candles, one is reminded of God's first act of creation. Just as creation began with "let there be light" so does the celebration of Shabbat.

This is the moment when Shabbat begins. By lighting the candles, we begin the transition from the week to Shabbat, from the mundane to the holy.



THE GOODS

CANDLES AND CANDLESTICKS – try for at least two, but this is a place to experiment; some folks like to light two candles per home, others light two per person.

MATCHES – a lighter also works, but we prefer matches for the olfactory effect.

SAFE PLACE TO LET 'EM BURN – ideally your Shabbat candles will burn out on their own over the course of the evening, but do blow them out if you're heading out after dinner.

BLESS

We light the candles before reciting the blessing.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Who makes us holy through our actions and honors us with the light of Shabbat. *or*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who commands us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

Reflection

On Shabbat, the light within everyone and everything is revealed.

We need only the will to see it.

— Sfat Emet (1847-1905, Poland)

THE BREAKDOWN

Ideally candles are lit 18 minutes before sundown, or at least before sundown.

Because lighting candles can be understood as the last act of work we do on Friday, there exists a custom in many homes to light the candles and draw your hands toward yourself three times in a circular motion before covering your eyes and reciting the blessing. When you open your eyes, the light has been transformed.

A LITTLE EXTRA

Because of its home-based nature and Judaism's patriarchal roots, candle lighting has, over the centuries, become one of the few ritual practices traditionally dominated by women. However, as the great 12th century rabbi and scholar Maimonides writes in his legal compendium Mishneh Torah, "Both men and women are obligated to ensure that a candle is lit in the home, and obligated to bless before lighting." So, my friends, by whatever gender you may identify if any, let's get lit. From light of the week into the light of Shabbat.



SHALOM ALEICHEM

After lighting the candles, we sit at the Shabbat table. Many people have the custom of singing Shalom Aleichem, Peace to You, before Kiddush. There's a teaching in the Talmud that angels accompany us on our Shabbat journey. Many have the custom of singing Shalom Aleichem to welcome the Shabbat angels. If you don't know a melody you can find it on YouTube.

Shalom aleikhem, malakhei ha-sharet, malakhei elyon, mi-melekh malakhei ham'lakhim, hakadosh barukh hu.	Peace unto you, ministerial angels, messengers of [the] Highest, from the King, king(s) of the kings — the Holy, blessed be He.
Bo-akhem l'shalom, malakhei hashalom, malakhei elyon, mi-melekh malakhei ham'lakhim, hakadosh barukh hu.	{In} [May] your coming [be] to peace, envoys of the peace, messengers of [the] Highest, from the King, king(s) of the kings — the Holy, blessed be He.
Barkhuni l'shalom, malakhei hashalom, malakhei elyon, mi-melekh malakhei ham'lakhim, hakadosh barukh hu.	Bless me for peace, envoys of the peace, messengers of [the] Highest, from the King, king(s) of the kings — the Holy, blessed be He.
<u>Tzetkhem</u> l'shalom, malakhei hashalom, <u>mal-akhei</u> elyon, mi-melekh malakhei ham'lakhim, hakadosh barukh hu.	{In} [May] your departure [be] to peace, envoys of the peace, messengers of [the] Highest, from the King, king(s) of the kings — the Holy, blessed be He.



BLESSING THE CHILDREN

If you have children in your home, there's a custom to give them blessings before making kiddush.

There are different customs in different homes. Some people get up and go to their children's place, others have the children come to them. In some homes the father gives the blessing to each child, in others it is both parents.

In either case, the hands are placed on the child's head and the following blessing is recited appropriate for the girl or boy:

<p>For a son: יְשִׁמְחֵה אֱלֹהִים בְּאַפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה Y'simchah elohim k'efrayim v'chimnasheh. May God make you like Ephraim and Menasha.</p> <p>יְבָרֶכְהָ יי, וְיִשְׁמְרֶהָ (Yevhārēkh-khā Adhōnāy veyishmerēkhā ...) [May] Adonai bless you, and guard you –</p> <p>יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיִהְיֶה ("Yā'ēr Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viḥunnēkkā ...) [May] Adonai make His face shine unto you, and be gracious to you –</p> <p>יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיַשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם ("Yissā Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viyāsēm lekhā shālōm.") [May] Adonai lift up His face unto you, and give to <u>you</u> peace –</p> <p>When we bless our sons, we ask God to give them the qualities of Ephraim and Menashe, who remained committed to the Jewish people despite growing up in luxury in Egypt.</p>	<p>For a daughter: יְשִׁמְיָךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה Y'simaych elohim k'soroh, rivkoh, rochayl v'lay-oh. May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.</p> <p>יְבָרֶכְהָ יי, וְיִשְׁמְרֶהָ (Yevhārēkh-khā Adhōnāy veyishmerēkhā ...) [May] Adonai bless you, and guard you –</p> <p>יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיִהְיֶה ("Yā'ēr Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viḥunnēkkā ...) [May] Adonai make His face shine unto you, and be gracious to you –</p> <p>יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיַשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם ("Yissā Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viyāsēm lekhā shālōm.") [May] Adonai lift up His face unto you, and give to <u>you</u> peace –</p> <p>When we bless our daughters Friday night, we are asking God to endow them with the qualities of their foremothers, and we remind ourselves what real giving is all about.</p>
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SANCTIFY



Pour a glass of wine or grape juice and sanctify Shabbat before drinking.

Pretty much all Jewish ceremonies and celebrations involve wine, and Shabbat dinner is no exception. But ritual doesn't exist for the sake of itself, it exists to accomplish something, almost like an ancient form of technology.

While it's tempting to imagine that our sages simply decided to sweeten celebratory practices from births to weddings with wine because, well, wine, they actually do it because the wine itself is like a switch: flip it, and we've set time apart, made it special, holy, other. It's not about the wine itself, it's about what it has the power to do when we raise our glass with intention.

That's the magic of kiddush, from the Hebrew word for holy — our ability to demarcate time, to say that this Friday night, this Shabbat dinner, this exact moment, which has never occurred before and never will again, is special.

Cheers to that.

Through the blessing of the wine (kiddush), one acknowledges two of God's greatest gifts: creation of the world and the exodus from Egypt. Kiddush also creates a moment to express gratitude for Shabbat. It is composed of two blessings: to bless the wine and to sanctify the day.

In Judaism, wine represents joy. By taking a moment to bless the wine, we acknowledge joy as a value onto itself, not as it serves something else.



THE GOODS

TASTY BEVERAGE - the traditional go-to is the fruit of the vine, wine or grape juice. If you don't have wine or grape juice, or just feel like experimenting, use a beverage you don't normally drink throughout the week, perhaps another type of juice, a mocktail, or maybe beer or whiskey (depending on what kind of week you had).

KIDDUSH CUP - your favorite cup, a cup reserved for this purpose, not your everyday cup. At some point, people got the idea that a kiddush cup has to be a chalice or a goblet or something. Nope. As long as it holds about four ounces of liquid or more, what matters about the cup is that it's different, special, other.

BLESS

Traditional kiddush in its entirety is pretty long, as it includes an introductory passage taken directly from the book of Genesis, a one line blessing (borei pri ha'gafen) that acknowledges the wine itself, and a closing passage that evokes both the creation narrative and the exodus from Egypt. It's the final line of that closing passage (mikadesh ha'Shabbat) that makes the wine a symbolic conduit for marking this time as sacred.

There are two main approaches to a traditional kiddush, one short and sweet, sort of like a light bodied Pinot Noir, the other full and robust, more like a Bordeaux. In other words, you can't make a bad choice.

If you're going for a Pinot Noir vibe...

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen. Baruch Atah Adonai mikadesh ha'Shabbat.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Infinite One, Who sanctifies Shabbat. or

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





If it's a Bordeaux kinda night...

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.
וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם.
וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ
כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְנִרְצָה בָּנוּ
וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשׁוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָנוּ זְכָרוֹן לַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְּרִשִׁית.
כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה לְמִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ זִכָּר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם.
כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֶרֶת וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מְכַל הָעַמִּים וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשָׁהּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשָּׁבַת.

va'yihl erev, va'yihl boker, yom ha'shishi

Va'yichulu ha'shamayim va'ha'aretz v'chol tziva'am.

Va'yichol Elohim ba'yom ha'shivi'i milachto asher asah va'yishbot ba'yom ha'shivi'i mi'kol milachto asher asah.

Va'yivarech Elohim et yom ha'shivi'i va'yikadesh oto ki vo shavat mi'kol melachto asher bara Elohim la'asot.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'ratzah vanu v'Shabbat kodsho b'ahavah
uv'ratzon hinchilanu zikaron l'ma'aseh v'reishit.*

Ki hu yom tehilah l'mikra'ei kodesh zeicher litziat Mitzrayim.

Ki vanu vacharta v'otanu k'dashta mi'kol ha'amim v'Shabbat kodshicha b'ahavah uv'ratzon chinchaltanu.

Baruch Atah Adonai mikadesh ha'Shabbat.





It was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. So the heavens and the earth were finished, with all their complement. On the seventh day, God had completed the work that God had undertaken, and rested on the seventh day from all the work that God had been doing. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God ceased from all creative work that God had brought into being to fulfill its purpose.

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

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who made us holy with commandments and favored us, and gave us this holy Shabbat in love and favor to be our heritage as a reminder of Creation. It is the foremost day of the holy festivals marking the Exodus from Egypt. For out of all the nations You chose us and made us holy, and You gave us Your holy Shabbat in love and favor as our heritage. Blessed are You God, Who sanctifies Shabbat.



Reflection

During the week ... we lose some of the light in our eyes; it is restored to us by the reflection of light in our kiddush cup. — Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 113b

All of creation comes closer to its origin on Shabbat. That moment, that movement, begins with kiddush. — Likutei Moharan

THE BREAKDOWN

Often one person recites or chants kiddush on behalf of everyone present. Short or long, that's a tall order. It is undeniably intimidating to stand up in front of your guests make kiddush.

The words are hard enough. Then there's the choreography. In some circles, everyone remains seated for kiddush, in others everyone stands, and in still others you stand while reciting the kiddush but sit down to drink the wine. What about the wine itself?

Does the person who chants kiddush pass their cup around the table for everyone to taste? Or do you invite your guests to pour wine from the bottle into their own glasses before kiddush, recite the blessing, then everyone drinks their own?

The short answer is yes. There are as many ways to make kiddush as there are words in the kiddush itself. Some hosts recite on behalf of everyone present. Some people sit during kiddush and others stand. Women can make kiddush according to some interpretations, while in others kiddush is always recited by men. Some people even have nifty wine fountains that allow the host to divide their own glass of wine into servings for their guests in a single pour.

There are also ways to use wine as a conduit to sanctify Shabbat without the formal recitation of kiddush. In fact, the best part about kiddush might be its parallels to a modern ritual everyone can relate to: making a toast.

Framing kiddush in terms of toasting is a perfect way to step into ritual without feeling stepped on. Every language has a different word for cheers — in Hebrew it's l'chaim, "to life" — and your guests will most probably bring to the table some expertise in this regard. Another approach is to explain the purpose of kiddush, to use wine as a conduit to sanctify time, then go around the table and invite each guest to say, as they raise their glass to the weekend, what they're putting down from the week. At the end, you can raise your glasses and toast together, l'chaim.

CLEANSE



THE RITUAL

Wash your hands before the meal.

The practice of hand washing dates back, all the way back to the time of the first and second Temple period when the Israelites made special offerings on Shabbat. The priests in the Temple had to eat their food in a state of ritual purity, and part of that was to cleanse their hands with fresh water then raise up their hands and recite a blessing.

The rabbis transferred the Temple rituals to the home; we are the priests, and our table is the altar.

THE GOODS

FRESH TAP WATER - head to the kitchen

A CUP FOR WASHING - ideally one with two handles, although any cup with a handle works

BLESS

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al netilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Who makes us holy through our actions and honors us as we raise up our hands. or
Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who sanctifies us with commandments and
commands us to raise up our hands.





THE BREAKDOWN

Ritual hand washing isn't for everyone, and you shouldn't feel any pressure to try it out until you're ready to, um, get your hands wet.

Invite your guests to the kitchen sink. Even if you're familiar with the blessing, it's a good idea to have a copy of it by the sink as a prompt for your guests. Fill your cup with fresh water from the tap. Take the cup in your left hand and cleanse your right hand with three splashes of water. Pass the cup directly to your right hand and cleanse your left hand with three splashes of water. Put the cup down, raise your hands up, and as the water trickles down recite the blessing. Dry off, you're good to go.

A LITTLE EXTRA

Two splashes or three? They're both correct, according to Jewish tradition. As long as you're generous with your splashes, even one splash is enough, especially in cases when water is scarce. The Kabbalists, who wanted every ritual to be imbued with as much intention as possible, opted for three splashes, a practice followed by many today.

As a mark of hospitality, many people will place the empty cup back under the tap and begin to refill it for the person behind them in line. Similarly, it is common to hold the towel after drying your own hands, and pass it directly to the person behind you.

You may notice that it gets quiet around the Shabbat dinner table around the time of ritual hand washing. This practice comes from the idea that you shouldn't interrupt yourself between rituals. Because the cleansing of hands is understood as directly connected to the blessing of the bread, many have the custom of not speaking between hand washing and eating the first piece of challah to connect the two rituals as seamlessly as possible.

NOURISH



THE RITUAL

Bless (then eat) the challah.

THE GOODS

BREAD - preferably challah because it's delicious in every conceivable way. But don't stress — any bread will do. Two full loaves is ideal. Small crowd? Waste not! Serve up two pitas or two dinner rolls. Or one challah and one dinner roll. Whatever kind of bread you use, take it out of its packaging and place it on its own plate on the table.

CHALLAH COVER - any kind of cover to place over your bread, from a napkin on short notice to an ornate embroidered cloth.

SALT or HONEY - Celebrating something special like a birthday or a wedding? Skip the salt and add honey to your challah instead. We also use honey at Rosh Hashanah, to symbolize a sweet New Year.

BLESS

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Who brings forth bread from the earth. or

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

Reflection

Challah is one of the three things for which God created the world.

— Bamidbar Rabbah 15

On Shabbat, challah represents a taste of tikkun olam, the possibility of the world restored.

— The Maharal of Prague



THE BREAKDOWN



In the ancient near east, if there wasn't bread on the table it wasn't a meal, and as a result the Jewish sages viewed bread as the primary source of nourishment, both literally and spiritually. **Challah**, the slightly sweet, ridiculously good braided bread many enjoy at modern Shabbat dinners, comes from a commandment in the Torah requiring the Israelites to set aside a portion of dough every week as an offering; that donation was called challah. The practice of braiding the bread evolved over time, some with three strands, others six, each with their own referential symbolism to Temple times.

On many tables you will find two loaves of challah rather than one. On Shabbat, we revel in possibility and abundance. We have a double portion of everything just as the Israelites received a double portion of manna on Shabbat during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Also, challah French toast is the best, so don't feel pressure to make it through both loaves in one sitting.

Why cover the bread? In general when faced with more than one food, Jewish tradition dictates that the first blessing offered should be on the species that comes first in the list of the Seven Species (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates) mentioned in the Torah. As such, you would say the blessing on the bread (wheat) before wine (grapes). But since you definitely say kiddush to sanctify Shabbat before blessing the bread, there is a dilemma of precedence. So, the sages (in the Jerusalem Talmud, redacted around ca. 400 CE) suggest covering the challah to hide it while we drink the wine first. No one wants a jealous challah.

Yes, the custom anthropomorphizes the bread. No, the bread doesn't actually know what's going on. But that's ritual. It accomplished something for our ancestors and it can accomplish something for us, in this case turning our Shabbat dinner table into a stage upon which Jewish history and learning and drama is enacted in our very homes. It's kind of fantastic.

Once we uncover the challah, the blessing over the bread connects us to the process of work that has to happen in order for the challah to get to our table. Bread isn't just brought forth from the earth, it requires the work of many hands. The possibility and abundance of Shabbat comes with the responsibility to work to make a better world the other six days of the week.

Pass it, rip it, cut it, tear into it like you mean it. There's no right or wrong, as long as the bread makes its way around the table. Lastly, it is common to **add some salt** to the pieces challah before sharing them with your guests. While this practice has its roots in, you guessed it, Temple times (when offerings were accompanied by salt) it also has a more mystical explanation.

According to Isaac Luria, the great 16th century Kabbalist, both bread (לחם) and salt (מלח) are representations of the divine; salt is divine severity and bread is divine kindness. We seek to overpower the severity of the salt with the kindness of the bread. Therefore, when you salt your challah, do not sprinkle the salt on top the bread, but instead to touch the bread to the salt — kindness over severity.

If you're feeling ambitious, find a recipe in a book or online, and make your own challah. Nothing beats fresh, home-made challah!

And with that, we head mouth-first into dinner.

APPRECIATE



THE RITUAL

Many faiths and cultures have a grace before meals, not quite as many have a grace after meals. The blessing after the meal, or Birkat ha'Mazon in Hebrew, like all Shabbat dinner rituals, evolved over time. We do however have a source text for this practice in the Torah, from Deuteronomy 8:10:
“When you have eaten and are satisfied, bless.”

It's actually pretty radical that in Judaism, the ritual of grace after meals isn't about expressing gratitude for food itself, but for food and a full feeling. To say grace therefore requires a sense of intention around the act of consumption, nourishment, and feeling good as a result.

The traditional grace after meals is long. So long it makes the long version of kiddush seem short. It's long because the sages kept finding more and more things to be grateful for. Food, the earth, God, dinner hosts, parents, Shabbat, Torah, the exodus from Egypt, the list goes on.

You can find the full version here, courtesy of our friends at Hillel International.
(<https://www.hillel.org/docs/default-source/mcms-file-archives/birkathamazon.pdf?sfvrsn=2>)

We are grateful that there is also a succinct grace after meals recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Brachot 40b) that serves precisely the same purpose in seven words of beautiful second century Aramaic.
Way to show up, sages.

THE GOODS



All you need is the intention to end your Shabbat dinner with gratitude.

BLESS

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא דְעֵלְמָא מְרִיבָה דְהָאִי פִּיטָא.

Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita.

We are blessed with compassion by You, Infinite One, Who sustains us with bread. *or*

Blessed are You, Merciful One, Ruler of the universe, Who sustains life with bread. *or*

You are the Source of life for all that is, and Your blessing flows through me.

Reflection

What shifts in your experience of gratitude at the Shabbat dinner table?

What else nourishes you, besides food itself?



THE BREAKDOWN

Shabbat dinner doesn't end with the food runs out or the drinks stop flowing. Shabbat dinner doesn't even end with grace after meals. Shabbat dinner ends when you walk your guests to the door. It's a last act of ritual hospitality, and one that makes hosting on Shabbat so deeply rooted in Jewish practice.

As Maimonides wrote: "The reward you receive for accompanying guests on their way is greater than for all other mitzvot. Our sages teach that showing hospitality for guests is the greatest expression of gratitude, greater even than study or prayer. Accompanying guests on their way is greater still."

Shabbat shalom.

ADD YOUR OWN CUSTOMS

In my family, we have a custom to go around the table and have everyone share a blessing, something good that happened to them in the preceding week. It often takes the entire meal to get through everyone's blessings with the inevitable detours.

Feel free to borrow that custom, or make up some new ones of your own!

SONGS

SINGING ON FRIDAY NIGHT

The singing of songs has a purpose on Shabbat - both to honor Shabbat and to enhance one's spiritual closeness to the Divine.

NIGGUNIM

On Friday night, some forego songs with words altogether in favor of niggunim, melodies without words. In Jewish tradition, songs without words are often more meaningful and moving, because words (especially when they're in a language everyone at your table might not know) can be distancing and limiting.

ZEMIROT

Zemirot literally means "songs" in Hebrew, and generally refer to traditional songs in Hebrew or Aramaic. Most songs have many different tunes, and new tunes are always being written... there's no "right" melody.





אני מאמין | ANI MA'AMIN

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בביאת המשיח, ואף על פי שיתמהמה, עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא

Ani ma'amin b'emuna shelema be'viat hamashiach, Vi'af al pi sheyit'mame'ha im kol zeh achakeh lo
bechol yom sheyavo.

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may delay,
I will await him every day.

כי-בא מועד | KI VA MOED

אתה תקום תרחם ציון כי-עת לקננה כי-בא מועד

Ata takum terachem Tzion ki et lechenena ki va moed

You will rise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the time has come.

כל העולם כולו | KOL HA'OLAM KULO

כל העולם כולו גשר צר מאד והעיקר לא לפחד כלל

Kol ha'olam kulo, gesher tzar me'od. Vecha'ikar lo lifached K'lal

The whole world is a very narrow bridge, and the most important part is not to be afraid.

עבדו | IVDU

עבדו את-ה' בשמחה באו לפניו ברננה

Ivdu et Hashem be-simchah, bo'u lefanav bir'nana

Serve the Divine with gladness, come before Him with joyous song.

טוב להודות | TOV L'HODOT

טוב להודות לה', ולזמר לשמחה עליון. להגיד בבקר חסדה, ואמונתה בלילות

Tov l'hodot la'hashem, ulizamer l'shimcha elyon, l'hagid baboker chasdecha v'emunatcha baleylot
It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Divine, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most
High; To declare Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness in the night seasons.

HAVDALAH

Just as we have a ceremony to welcome Shabbat, we have a ceremony to bid Shabbat farewell at the end of Shabbat. Traditionally Shabbat is said to be over when you can see three stars in the sky. With light pollution, clouds, etc..., those of us living in urban areas can have a hard time spotting the stars. According to Rabbi Isaac Klein, anywhere in North America you're good to go if you wait until 27 minutes after sunset. Others wait longer – some wait as long as 72 minutes.

How To Make Havdalah



A Havdalah candle has multiple wicks and is lit after the conclusion of Shabbat.

To make Havdalah, a braided candle, a spice box filled with spices, and a kiddush cup for wine or grape juice are needed.

Form a circle in a fairly dark room and have different people hold the candle, the spice box, and the kiddush cup.

The Havdalah blessings are recited in Hebrew or English, either by one person or all together. As each blessing is said, the relevant item is made accessible to the group: The kiddush cup is held up for all to see, but the wine is not sipped yet. The spices are passed around, and each person takes a moment to smell their sweetness. The candle is held high, and every person puts a hand up into the candle's light, turning the hands over, palms in, and bending the fingers. Some people look into the eyes of those near them to see the light reflected there.

When the blessings are concluded, each person takes a sip from the wine. The remainder is poured into a nonflammable dish or basin in which the candle is then extinguished.

An alternative, which is more fun but also more dangerous, is to pour whiskey or vodka into the dish and extinguish the candle in it. It will burst into a big, quick burning flame, sure to enchant the children.

The Havdalah Blessings

Full Havdalah Text in Hebrew (Courtesy of Sefaria)

הנה אל ישועתי אֶבְטַח וְלֹא אֶפְחֹד כִּי עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יִי וְיִהי לִי לִישׁוּעָה

וּשְׁאַבְתֶּם מִים בְּשִׁשׁוֹן מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה

לִי הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל עֲמֻד בְּרַכְתְּךָ סֵלָה

יִי צְבָאוֹת עֲמֻנו מְשַׁגֵּב לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה

יִי צְבָאוֹת, אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם בּוֹטֵחַ בְּךָ

יִי הוֹשִׁיעָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קִרְאֵנוּ

לְיִהוּדִים הַיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׁמְחָה וְשִׁשׁוֹן וִיקָר

כֵּן תִּהְיֶה לָנוּ

כּוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲשֶׁא וּבָשִׂם יִי אֶקְרָא

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי בְשָׂמִים

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמְבָדִיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים, בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשִׁשֶּׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

יִי, הַמְבָדִיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל

Havdalah Text in Transliteration and English

Hinei El yeshu'ati, evtach v'-lo efchad. Ki ozi ve-zimrat Yah Adonai, vayhi li liyshu'a. Ush'avtem mayim b'sason mi-ma'y'nei ha-yshu'a. L'Adonai ha-y'shu'a, al amkha virkhatekha selah. Adonai tz'vaot imanu, misgav lanu Elohei Ya'akov selah. Adonai tz'vaot ashrei adam boteakh bach. Adonai hosheea, ha-Melech ya'aneinu b'yom kor'einu. La-Yhudim hayta orah ve-simcha ve-sason viykar, ken tihyeh lanu. Kos yeshu'ot esa uvshem Adonai ekra.

Behold, God is my unfailing help; I will trust in God and will not be afraid. God is strength and song, my Deliverer. With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. God alone is our help; may God bless His people. God of the universe is with us; the God of Jacob is our protection. There was light and joy; gladness and honor for the Jewish people. So may we be blessed. I will lift the cup of salvation and call upon God's Name.

Blessing over the wine:

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

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

Blessing over the spices:

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei minei v'samim.

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

Blessing over the flames of the Havdalah candle:

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

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fire's light.

Concluding blessing:

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'sheset y'mai ha-ma'aseh. Barukh ata Adonai, ha-mavdil bein kodesh l'chol.

Blessed are You, Eternal 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.

Post-Havdalah Songs

In the dim twilight, the people in the circle (often joining hands) sing "Shavua Tov" (a good week), which is sung in Hebrew and English. This is followed by "Eliyahu Ha-navi," sung in Hebrew only. Some people add "Miriam Ha-nevi'ah."



