

WELCOMING SHABBAT

Our ancestors cherished Shabbat. In dark times, it was a refuge for them, and in times of prosperity it gave them rest and joy. Steadfast in their faith, they bequeathed Shabbat to us.

We give thanks, therefore, for our home, where we find rest from the day's work, and refuge from cares. May it be warm with love and friendship; may our joys be heightened and our sorrows softened by the love we give and receive.

The following may be recited by all men present in praise of beloved wives, mothers, grandmothers, sisters and friends:

From Proverbs 31

A woman of valor--seek her out; her sense of mitzvah is precious.
Her family and friends may trust in her, secure in her love and support.
She serves and never shirks all the days of her life.
She girds herself with vigor, and performs her tasks with devotion.
She sees that her business thrives; her lamp burns into the night.
She is clothed in strength and dignity, and she faces whatever may come.
She opens her mouth with good sense; intelligence guides her tongue.
She tends to the affairs of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness.
Her loved ones rise up and bless her;
her family sings her praise:
Many women have done valiantly, but you surpass them all.
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain
But a woman of character should be cherished.
Honor her for her deeds; her life proclaims her praise.

The following may be recited by all women present, praise of beloved husbands, fathers, grandfathers, brothers and friends:

In Praise of a Righteous Man: Psalm 112

Happy are those who walk the straight path,
whose lives are lessons in truth.
Their children are called fortunate
and their grandchildren greatly blessed.
They conduct their affairs with justice;
their integrity cannot be shaken.
They give of themselves to the poor
and share themselves with the needy.

They are patient, cheerful, compassionate,
generous, impeccably fair.
They harbor no regrets for the past
and no worries about the future.
Their minds are centered on good purposes,
their lives, on decisive action.
They are modest and quiet in bearing;
respected and honored by others.
Their kindness is radiant as the sunrise,
their warmth sustains those around them.
Their love and loyalty are steadfast;
Their good works endure forever.

(adapted from Stephen Mitchell's translation)

BLESSING FOR CHILDREN

Shabbat celebrates the bonds of family, and is an opportunity to express love and appreciation to those who are close to us. Thus it is an ancient Jewish tradition for parents to bless their children at the Sabbath table on Friday nights. It is customary to place both hands on the child's head or shoulders, to symbolize that our blessing is offered with complete generosity of spirit. Many parents whisper personal words to their child, in addition to speaking the traditional words. The source of the parents' blessing is Genesis chapter 48, in which Joseph brings his two Egyptian-born sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to receive a blessing from their dying grandfather, Jacob.

Blessed is the parent, and blessed is the child, when their hearts are turned to one another. Blessed is the home filled with gladness and light, the spirit of Shabbat. May God bless you and guide you. Seek truth always, be kind in your words, fair and generous in your deeds. A noble heritage has been entrusted to you; guard it well.

For a boy:

Y'sim-cha Elohim k'Ephraim v'chi-Menasheh

יְשִׁימָךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה

May God give you life and strength like Joseph's sons

For a girl:

Y'si-meich Elohim k'Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v'Leah

יְשִׁימָךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה

May God make you like our mothers, like our blessed ones.

For girls and boys:

יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ. כֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן.

Y'va-rech-cha Adonai v'yish-m'recha

May God bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנְּנֶךָ. כֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן.

Ya-eir Adonai panav ei-lecha vi-chu-neka.

May the light of God shine upon you and within you.

יֵשָׁא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם. כֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן.

Yisa Adonai panav ei-lecha v'yasem l'cha shalom.

May God always be with you and give you the gift of peace.

Why do we bless our sons by recalling the names of Ephraim and Manasseh, rather than more well-known figures from the Torah, such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Perhaps it is because Ephraim and Manasseh were the first Jewish children to be born in the Diaspora, who yet remained faithful to their heritage. We bless our daughters by invoking the names of the four heroic “mothers” of the Jewish people: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. They, too, grew up in alien surroundings and surmounted many challenges to become the matriarchs of a nation.

KINDLING THE LIGHTS OF SHABBAT הדלקת נרות לשבת

The custom of lighting candles at the beginning of Shabbat was well established by the 2nd century C.E. A minimum of two candles are lit on Shabbat (reminding us of the Torah's twin commandments to "remember" and "keep" Shabbat), but more may be lit. Some families light one candle for each member. Some circle the flames three times with their hands to draw the warmth and light of Shabbat into themselves, then cover their eyes as they recite the blessing.

God, You are the light by which we see the ones we love. As we kindle these lights, we begin a holy time. May it bring to us refreshment of body and spirit, and the sense that You are near to us at all times.

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As the great doors of night are opening
we come into the clean quiet room of Shabbat.
Let us be thankful, as we light these candles
like eyes of holiness, for this moment of peace.

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בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid-shanu b'mitz-votav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

*Boundless are You, Eternal One
our God, Sovereign of all time and space,
who brings holiness to our lives
with the mitzvah of kindling the lights of Shabbat.*

*May our hearts be lifted,
our spirits refreshed,
as we light the Sabbath candles.*

KIDDUSH -- BLESSING OVER WINE

קדוש לליל שבת

Kiddush means “sanctification.” It is a proclamation of the holiness of the day, and is recited over a cup of wine on the eve of Shabbat and other festivals. In Biblical times the Land of Israel was famed for its abundant wine. In the wilderness, the scouts sent by Moses to “spy out” the land brought back with them a branch with a single cluster of grapes, so large that it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two men (Num.13:23). Wine remains a symbol of joy and abundance, of the sweetness and blessings in our lives. We lift up a full cup in celebration of these blessings, recalling the words of Psalm 23: “My cup runneth over.”

Let us bless the source of life that ripens fruit on the vine
as we hallow the seventh day, the Sabbath day --
in remembrance of creation,
for the Sabbath is first among holy days,
recalling the Exodus and the Covenant.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו ורצה בנו,
ושבת קדשו באהבה וברצון הנחילנו זכרון למעשה בראשית, כי הוא
יום תחלה למקראי קדש, זכר ליציאת מצרים, כי בנו בחרת ואותנו
קדשת מכל העמים, ושבת קדשך באהבה וברצון הנחלתנו. ברוך אתה
יי, מקדש השבת.

Ba-ruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu me-lech ha-o-lam, bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.

Ba-ruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu me-lech ha-o-lam, a-sher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'ra-tza va-nu, v'sha-bat kod-sho b'a-ha-va uv-ra-tzon hin-chi-la-nu zi-ka-ron l'ma-a-seh v-rei-sheet. Ki hu yom t'chi-la l'mik-ra-ei ko-desh ze-cher li-tzi-yat mitz-ra-yim. Ki va-nu va-char-ta v'o-ta-nu ki-dash-ta mi-kol ha-a-mim, v'sha-bat kod-sh'cha b'a-ha-va uv-ra-tzon hin-chal-ta-nu. Ba-ruch ata Adonai, m'ka-desh ha-sha-bat.

In the listing of Jewish festivals that appears in Leviticus chapter 23, the Sabbath comes first. Thus, the Kiddush refers to Shabbat as “the first among holy days.” And indeed, this weekly celebration of freedom, light, joy and peace is the very foundation of a Jewish home, taking precedence over festivals that occur only once a year. As the love between marriage partners depends on regular expressions of affection to keep the relationship alive, so also our relationship to our Jewish heritage is nurtured through regular practices that serve as loving reminders of our identity. As Chaim Raphael writes, “To Jews, the Sabbath is not a rest from life but a reaffirmation of what life is about.”

HAMOTZI -- BLESSING OVER BREAD

הַמּוֹצִיא

It is traditional to place two whole loaves of *challah* on the Shabbat table, recalling the double portion of manna that the Israelites received on Shabbat when they wandered in the wilderness. The manna, received each day, was meant to teach them to appreciate the blessings of every day; the double portion on Shabbat, to help them experience a sense of complete contentment and abundance. In the same way, Shabbat is for us a day to celebrate our abundant blessings. We cover the *challah* because the midrash says that in the desert the manna fell with a layer of dew on top, to preserve its freshness. So do we try to instill in our own consciousness a sense of wonder and fresh appreciation of the blessings in our lives.

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

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-a-retz.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the world, who brings forth bread from the earth.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BLESSING OVER BREAD

When it is time to tear the bread and recite a blessing, I hesitate: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam...*The Hebrew words comfort me; their sounds are ancient lullabies. But they clash with my sense of the universe, where power and reverence are diffused, a bit to each of us, a bit to the flounder and the Japanese maples, too. There is no king -- nor queen, for that matter -- in my prayers.

What I'd like to offer, whether anyone hears it or not, is a blessing of my own invention. I'd like to acknowledge the alchemy of tradition and imagination that it takes for me to serve challah to my partner and friends 3,000 miles from the site of my great-grandfather Samuel's bakery. I'd like to feel glad for a moment that there are still places on this earth where wheat can grow and farmers can tend it.

--Andee Hochman, "Slow Rise: Braiding a Tradition" in *An Invitation to Shabbat*, ed. Ruth Perelson

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Guests at the Shabbat table may want to share one good thing that happened to them that week, or one thing they are grateful for that week.

