



WELCOMING SHABBAT

*A Guide to the Blessings and Rituals
of Friday Night*



JewishBoston

The Gift of Shabbat

Imagine taking a day off from work—*completely* off. Imagine a day with no phone calls or replying to emails, no cooking or cleaning, no bill paying or grocery shopping or picking up the dry cleaning. Imagine a day leisurely spent with those you love, enjoying the simple pleasures of talking, laughing, eating good food, and just being together.

This is Shabbat. Each week, Shabbat is a day where we can step out of the pressures of the week and reconnect with our families, our God, and ourselves. It's an oasis, a time when we can just be, and especially be with those we love. For those who have never tried Shabbat before, it can seem unrealistic, strange, or even daunting. But those who keep Shabbat each week often wonder how anyone can ever get along without it.

In the Ten Commandments, it is written that we should “remember” the Sabbath day.

As the seventh day of the week, Shabbat commemorates the way God rested on the seventh day of creation; “*shabbat*” literally means “rested.” Shabbat is also meant to remind us of the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt and of the true meaning of freedom: the power to live our lives in a way that is righteous, fulfilling, joyful, and just.

We are also commanded to “observe” the Sabbath, which refers to refraining from work as well as performing the special *mitzvot* and traditions of the day. We welcome Shabbat on Friday night by lighting candles, and we give blessings to our children.

We share a leisurely meal together, with *kiddush* wine and braided challah bread.

There are blessings for each ritual, and reciting them helps focus our attention on how special these moments are, and how lucky we are to spend them together.



LET THERE BE LIGHT

Lighting the Shabbat Candles

Lighting candles is a beautiful and serene way to symbolize the peace Shabbat brings into the home. Shabbat candles are lit just before sundown on Friday night. Our custom is to light two candles, although some families add an additional candle for each child.

It is also customary to give a few coins to charity before candle lighting. Some like to empty their pockets before Shabbat; it's a simple gesture of leaving the week behind and transitioning into the sabbath, a time when we can put thoughts of money on hold. It's nice to designate a specific box for *tzedakah*; then, once the box has filled up, you can donate its contents to an organization that is meaningful to you and your family.



- 1 Light one candle, and use that candle to light the others.
- 2 Draw your hands up three times around the lights, toward your face, and then place them over your eyes to recite the following:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Ba-rukh a-ta A-do-nai, Elo-bei-nu me-lekh ha-olam,</i>
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	<i>a-sher ki-d'shanu b'mitz-vo-tav,</i>
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת	<i>v'tzi-va-nu l'had-lik ner shel Shabbat.</i>

We praise God, ruler of everything, who made us holy through obligations,
commanding us to light the Shabbat candles.

- 3 With your hands still over your eyes, you can use this private moment to pray for the welfare of those you love, and for anything that is important to you.
- 4 After the prayers are finished, remove your hands from your eyes and say “Good Shabbat”; everyone answers “Good Shabbat.”



MAY HE GRANT YOU PEACE

Blessing Your Children

The custom of parents blessing their children has origins in the Torah, all the way back to the story of Jacob blessing his grandchildren. The texts of the blessings we use today are based on that same language! It is a beautiful tradition, representing the continuity of the generations in a way that is both tender and spiritual. It is also an opportunity for that rare moment of one-on-one, a personal time of parent-child connection.

The blessings make reference to our ancestors from the Torah—great people whom we wish to emulate. Ephraim and Menashe were Joseph’s two sons, and were known for their peaceful natures and good deeds. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah are the matriarchs of the Jewish people; they are known as women who were wise, strong, and kept their faith in God even through hard times.

This custom may be performed in any number of ways. In some homes, the father blesses all the children. In other homes, both parents give blessings, either in unison or one at a time. Others have the father bless the boys and the mother bless the girls, or vice versa. Choose whichever version appeals to you most.

Grandparents can use the same text as well—and remember, you’re never too old
to receive a blessing from your parents!



1 Place your hand on your child's head and recite the following:

for a boy

יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה	<i>Ye'sim-cha Elo-him ke-Ephraim ve-che-Menashe.</i>
יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ	<i>Ye'varech'echa A-do-nai ve-yish'me-re-cha</i>
יֵאָר יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ	<i>ya'eir A-do-nai pa-nav ei-le-cha viy'chuneka</i>
יֵשָׂא יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם	<i>yisa A-do-nai pa-nav eilecha ve'yaseim le-cha shalom.</i>

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

May God bless you and watch over you.

May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.

May God look favorably on you and may He grant you peace.

for a girl

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּסָרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה	<i>Ye'si-mech Elo-him ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.</i>
יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ	<i>Ye'varech'echa A-do-nai ve-yish'me-re-cha</i>
יֵאָר יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ	<i>ya'eir A-do-nai pa-nav ei-le-cha viy'chuneka</i>
יֵשָׂא יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם	<i>yisa A-do-nai pa-nav eilecha ve'yaseim le-cha shalom.</i>

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

May God bless you and watch over you.

May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.

May God look favorably on you and may He grant you peace.

2 After you recite the blessing, take a moment to whisper something personal in your child's ear. This is a great time to give praise, or acknowledge something they did this week—use this moment in a meaningful way.



WINE BEFORE YOU DINE

Reciting Kiddush

The commandment to “remember” the Sabbath day is understood to mean a verbal declaration, said over a cup of wine—hence, *Kiddush*. The extended text of *Kiddush* recalls the story of creation, where God rested on the seventh day, as well as the story of our exodus from Egypt, the ultimate tale of redemption.

Any cup can be used for *Kiddush*, but it’s customary to choose something special—a goblet you don’t usually use, an heirloom, or just a cup that you like. We fill the cup to the top with wine or grape juice to represent our overflowing joy in celebrating Shabbat. Traditions vary as to whether the family stands or sits for *Kiddush*; either is fine.



- 1 Fill the *kiddush* cup with wine or grape juice.
- 2 Raise the cup and recite the following:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם *Ba-rukhh a-ta A-do-nai, Elo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-olam,*
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן *bo-rei p'ree ha-ga-fen.*

We praise God, ruler of everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

- 3 Everyone answers “Amen.”
- 4 Take a sip, and then pass the cup to the others at your Shabbat meal so that everyone may have a sip. Some families prefer not to have everyone drink from the same cup, so they'll pour the *kiddush* wine into smaller cups instead.



LET THEM EAT CHALLAH

Blessing over Bread

A festive Jewish meal is hardly complete without delicious loaves of challah. By starting our meal with this special braided bread, we turn the mundane act of eating bread into an opportunity to make a blessing of thanks. On Shabbat, the tradition is to use two challah loaves, symbolizing the double portion of manna that would fall on Friday for the Israelites in the desert: they prepared for Shabbat by gathering twice as much manna on Friday, which allowed them to rest on Shabbat. Two loaves are placed on the Shabbat table and covered by a cloth or napkin. The challah loaves are present on the table during *kiddush*.

Before blessing and eating the challah, it is traditional to perform *Netillat Yadayim*, ritual hand-washing. It's a simple step that slows us down just a bit before we dig in, and it reminds us that the meal we're about to have is special. Many have the custom not to speak between hand-washing and eating bread, and on Shabbat, those few moments of silence can be magical, filled with anticipation and togetherness.

Once everyone has washed and returned to the table, the host recites the blessing on the challah, and everyone gets a piece.



- 1 We first perform ritual hand-washing, known as *Netillat Yadayim*. Fill up a cup with water, and pour the water over your hands, one at a time—twice on the right hand, twice on the left.
- 2 While drying your hands, recite the following blessing, and try to stay silent afterward until the blessing for bread is recited:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Ba-rukh a-ta A-do-nai, Elo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-olam,</i>
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	<i>a-sheer ki-d'shanu b'mitz-vo-tav,</i>
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם	<i>v'tzi-va-nu al ne-ti-lat ya-da-yim.</i>

We praise God, ruler of everything, who made us holy through obligations,
commanding us to wash our hands.

- 3 When everyone has washed and returned to the table, the host uncovers the challot and recites the following:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Ba-rukh a-ta Adonai, Elo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-olam,</i>
הַמוֹצֵיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ	<i>ha'motzee lechem meen ha'aretz.</i>

We praise God, ruler of everything, who brings forth bread from the earth.

- 4 Everyone answers “Amen.”
- 5 The host then cuts the challah with a knife or breaks it into pieces by hand, and everyone at the table gets a piece. Try dipping the challah in salt or honey.