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Shabbat: A Palace in Time

Shabbat is the greatest Jewish invention: a weekly vacation from ordinary time, a chance to unplug from our distractions and reconnect with ourselves and each other. In this class, we'll explore the most essential holiday of the Jewish calendar, a day that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel called "a cathedral in time."



Guard & Remember

The Ten Commandments are articulated twice in the Torah, once in Exodus and again in Deuteronomy. While the two accounts are generally very similar, one commandment — the commandment of to observe Shabbat — takes on a very different form between the two versions. Look at the two texts below and try to identify the similarities and differences:

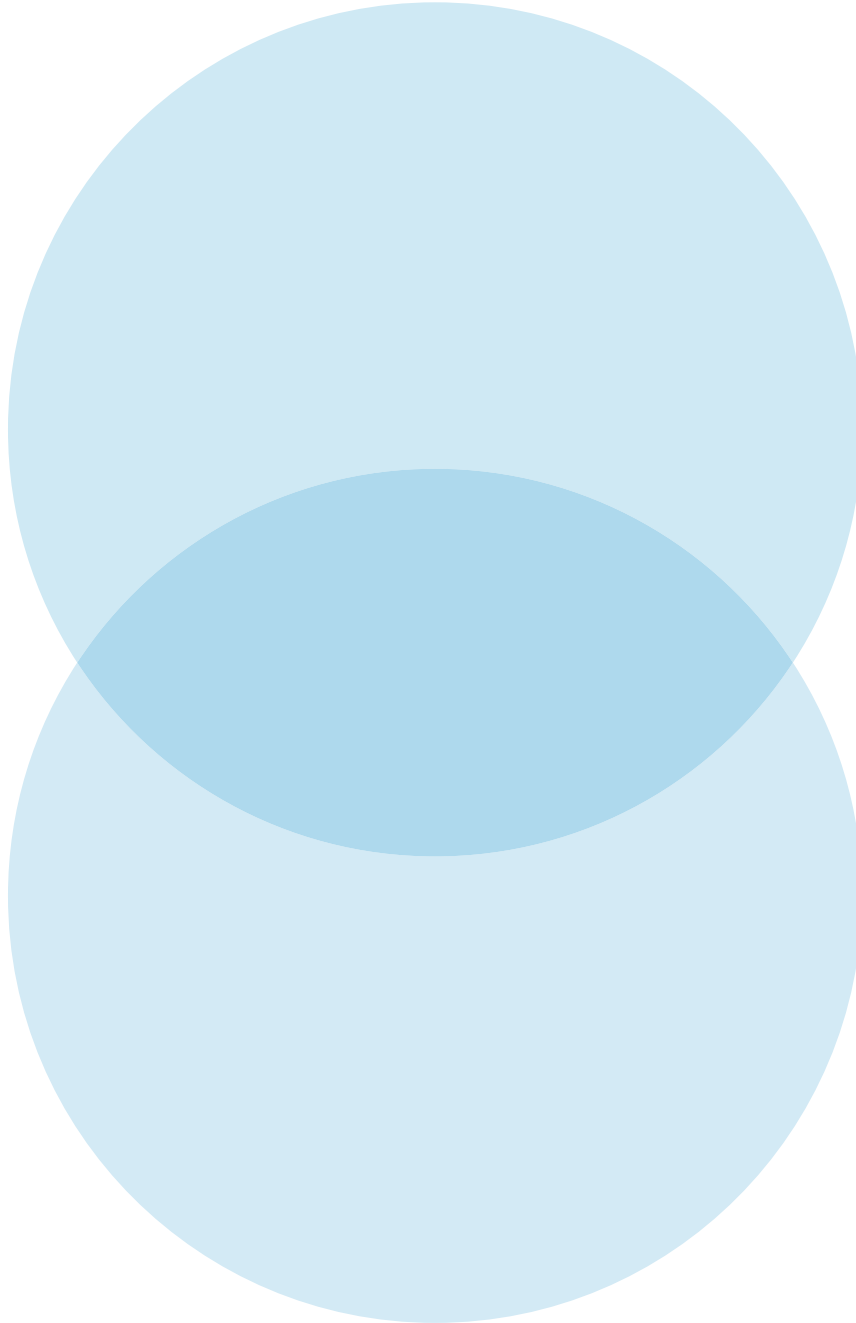
Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Shabbat day, to sanctify it. Six days you will work and do all of your labor. The seventh day is a Sabbath for Adonai your God. Don't do any labor on it, neither you nor your sons or daughters, your servants, your animals, or the strangers who reside within your gates. In six days God made Heaven and Earth, the Sea and all that dwell in it, and God rested on the seventh day. On account of that, God blessed the Shabbat day and set it apart.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Guard the Shabbat day, to sanctify it, as Adonai your God has commanded. Six days you will work and do all your labor. The seventh day is a Sabbath for Adonai your God. Don't do any labor on it, neither you nor your sons or daughters, your servants, your bulls or donkeys or any of your animals, nor the strangers who reside within your gates, in order that your servants shall rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the Land of Egypt, and that Adonai your God took you out of there with a strong hand and outstretched arm, that is why Adonai your God has commanded you to make Shabbat.

Exodus
(REMEMBER/DO)



Deuteronomy
(GUARD/DON'T DO)

Guarding Shabbat

Melacha (noun, “creative work”)

The 39 Forbidden Melachot of Shabbat

Mishnah, Shabbat 7:2

sowing	plowing	reaping	gathering	threshing
winnowing	selecting	grinding	sifting	kneading
baking	shearing	bleaching	combing	dyeing
spinning	setting up a loom	preparing to weave	weaving	unweaving
tying a knot	untying a knot	sewing	tearing	trapping
killing	skinning	tanning	tracing	scraping
cutting	writing	erasing	building	demolishing
kindling a fire	extinguishing a fire	finishing	carrying	

Other Terms to Know

Sh’vut

An activity that, while possibly permitted by the letter of the law, is not in keeping with the “spirit of Shabbat.”

Muqtze

An item that has no permitted Shabbat purpose, and so should be put aside for the duration of Shabbat.

Eruv

A boundary erected around a Jewish neighborhood that enables one to carry items on Shabbat.

Pikuach Nefesh

The absolute requirement that concern for life and health supersedes ritual laws, including those of Shabbat.

He who wants to enter into the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of acquisitiveness and the betrayal in embezzling his own life. He must say farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without his help.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

The Sabbath (1951)

Notes & Reflections:



Remembering Shabbat

Order of the Shabbat Day:

LIGHTING CANDLES

Everything looks better by candlelight.

KABBALAT SHABBAT

A highly musical service, composed by the mystics of 16th century Tzfat, to welcome the “Shabbat Bride.”

THE SHABBAT TABLE

After the destruction of the Temple, the table became the altar; and the home, the sanctuary.

RE'IM HA-AHUVIM

Intimacy is a special Shabbat mitzvah — we honor loving partnership as a holy gift.

SHABBAT SERVICE

The community gathers to pray, study Torah, share in lifecycle celebrations, and be together.

SHABBAT DAY

What would you most like to do with a long, lazy afternoon?

SEUDAT SHLISHIT

A final, simple meal as twilight enters — a last taste of Shabbat’s sanctity.

HAVDALAH

Holiness comes through the ability to make separation: between darkness and light, between sacred and ordinary, between Shabbat and the rest of the week.

The Sabbath itself is a sanctuary which we build, a sanctuary in time. It is one thing to race or be driven by the vicissitudes that menace life, and another thing to stand still and to embrace the presence of an eternal moment. The seventh day is the exodus from tension, the liberation of man from his own muddiness, the installation of man as the sovereign in the world of time.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

The Sabbath (1951)

Notes & Reflections:



Shabbat and the Possibility for Transformation

Rabbis Sharon Brous and Aaron Alexander

How do we live in a world that seems to make a mockery of our deepest-held beliefs and our tradition's most profound claims?

The first and most foundational claim that Judaism makes about human beings is that we are created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in God's image. Our tradition teaches that this means that every person, by virtue of being born, has innate dignity and worth. It teaches that every single human life is precious, and that each person is endowed by God with unique qualities that will never be replicated in precisely the same way in another; that the differences between us are a reflection of God's love and God's greatness, and we should work to cultivate rather than suppress them.

And yet, the reality of our world seems to deny the truth of these claims. Judaism is rooted in an understanding of God and humanity that fundamentally rejects the degradation, exploitation, and diminution of human spirit that is characteristic of human society. Millions die of hunger and treatable diseases every year. War, hatred, prejudice, terror — all of these are about denying the sanctity and worth of human life. This leaves Jews with a great dilemma: Do we disengage from a reality that seems to make a joke of our core principles or do we abandon core principles that seem naïve, impossible and fantastic?

“Living with a dream,” writes Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, “is treacherous business. The dream gives and the dream takes away. Dreams can brighten an oppressive reality or they can make the everyday appear drab

and repellent. Dreams can give life purpose or rob it of value and meaning. Dealing with this double edge has been a major challenge for the Jewish people on their great trek through history toward redemption. Without the dream, it hardly seems worth living. With it, everyday unredeemed life hardly seems worth living at all.”

So Torah offers us an eternal prescription, a holy formula that will make it possible for us to engage, live and work in the world as it is, but also to remember to dream about the world as it could be: Six days a week you will engage and do all of your work, but the seventh day will be a Sabbath — a day for God (Exodus 20:8-11). Built into the Jewish consciousness is a way to live with what is and simultaneously reject its limitations.

Paradoxically, Judaism affirms both the dream and the reality, both the perfect, redeemed world to be brought into being by human effort and the imperfect, unredeemed world of today.

Rabbi Greenberg's stunning interpretation of Shabbat places the Jewish people as a timeless voice of dissent against the status quo, ever-seeking to allow people to experience and enjoy the world as it is, while still

voicing critique, through a weekly rhythmic vision of perfection, Shabbat. He ends his vision by declaring:

“Through total immersion in the Shabbat experience, Jews live the dream [of an alternative, more perfect reality] now. By an act of [sheer] will, the community creates sacred time and space.”

Shabbat is so much more than a day of rest. It is a day of reconnecting with our deepest dreams for our world and our own lives. Shabbat becomes the holy time that saves us from falling into despair when everything seems to be crumbling beneath us, when the light in our lives seems to be eclipsed in darkness. It comes to remind us that love will ultimately triumph over loneliness, understanding over violence, dignity over degradation. Through praying, singing, talking, walking, dreaming, and sleeping we fortify the part of ourselves that knows that things can be better; we reawaken the part of ourselves that may have forgotten that we are more than our work, our conflicts, our fears, or our inbox.

In Kiddush, the blessing sanctifying Shabbat that is said over wine every Friday night, we evoke the memory of the Exodus from Egypt. What does Egypt have to do with our celebration of Shabbat? The Rabbis knew that it was not enough to reaffirm to the great redemptive vision that grew out of the experience of leaving Egypt only once a year, at Passover. Instead, we need to remind ourselves of the possibility of freedom and transformation — personal and national — constantly. And especially on Shabbat. But, that exercise in memory must never be only for its own sake. In the words of the Slonimer Rebbe, a great 20th century Hassidic teacher:

“Every Shabbat has the power to bring redemption to the world. And this is why the commandment is written, ‘Keep the Shabbat, and sanctify it. And you must remember, because you were a slave in Egypt.’ It is incumbent upon every Jew to remember and truly know [the experience of the liberation from slavery], because it is on Shabbat that the possibility of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, (the liberation of those enslaved)

is renewed. And this is not exclusively for the sake of memory, rather it is for the sake of actually doing the work of Shabbat. A Jew must rise up from a place of degradation, a devastating situation, and find within herself ultimate freedom. And as our teacher taught: the essence of Shabbat is the memory of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* because it is upon every Jew to remember that it is her life’s work to leave Egypt, and with the strength of the holy Shabbat, to bring redemption to the world.”

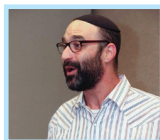
Shabbat, then, is not just about affirming that things can be different. Shabbat actually has redemptive power — a power that can shape our experience of the world and help turn the tide of human history — because it leaves us with a mandate to live differently in the coming week than we did in the past; to see our personal liberation from exhaustion, overwork, anxiety, despair as a microcosm for the liberation of the Jewish people and all people; to see each week as an opportunity to elevate our reality to reflect a bit more of what ought to be.

Week after week, year after year, century after century, the Jewish people walk through history with this charge: Things can be better. They must be better. Do not forget the great dreams our people have carried, encoded in our rituals and our traditions, for thousands of years. Now go — and become agents of the change you want to see.

For the complete article, see intro.aju.edu/readings



Rabbi Sharon Brous is the founding rabbi of IKAR, a progressive spiritual community in Los Angeles.



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Sabbath Manifesto

sabbathmanifesto.org

The Sabbath Manifesto was developed by a group of Jewish thinkers with a deep feeling that life had been taken over by technology and the grind of work. They envisioned people of all denominations taking a time-out every week to slow down, reclaim time, and re-connect with friends, family, their communities and themselves. The Manifesto proposes 10 principles that can serve as an antidote to our increasingly fast-paced way of living.

Powered by Reboot, a Jewish think-tank and incubator.

- 01.** AVOID TECHNOLOGY.
- 02.** CONNECT WITH LOVED ONES.
- 03.** NURTURE YOUR HEALTH.
- 04.** GET OUTSIDE.
- 05.** AVOID COMMERCE.
- 06.** LIGHT CANDLES.
- 07.** DRINK WINE.
- 08.** EAT BREAD.
- 09.** FIND SILENCE.
- 10.** GIVE BACK.



Create your own Sabbath Manifesto:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Aviva and Lirona Kadosh's "World's Best Challah"



Challah Dough:

3 cups bread flour
1 tbs wheat gluten
1.5 tps salt
2 tps yeast
¾ cup water
2 eggs

Bread Machine Directions:

Place all ingredients in bread machine in order suggested by manufacturer. Set for dough cycle. If desired, add raisins when suggested by manufacturer (many bread machines will beep when it is the correct time to add). When dough cycle is complete, follow baking instructions below.

Kitchen-Aid Mixer Directions:

Mix dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix wet ingredients in the Kitchen-Aid mixer. Add dry ingredients gradually until all the ingredients are incorporated. Knead with the dough hook for 10 minutes until the dough is soft and smooth. If desired, add raisins after about 9 minutes of kneading. If too wet, add more flour. Place dough into a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a slightly damp cloth and let rise for 2 hours or until doubled in size. Gently deflate (i.e. punch down dough). Follow baking instructions below.

By Hand:

Mix dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix wet ingredients in a large bowl. Slowly add dry ingredients to wet ingredients. If desired, add raisins. Mix with a

2 tbs honey
3 tbs oil (light olive or vegetable oil)
1 cup raisins (optional)

Egg Wash:

1 egg yolk
1 tsp of water

wooden spoon until the dough becomes too difficult to mix with a spoon. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 10 minutes until the dough is soft and smooth. If the dough is too wet, add more flour. Place dough in lightly oiled bowl, then cover with a slightly damp cloth and let rise for 2 hours or until doubled in size. Gently deflate dough (i.e. punch down dough). Follow baking instructions below.

Baking Directions:

Braid dough into the form desired and place onto lightly oiled baking sheet. Cover with the cloth again and let rise for an hour. Prepare egg wash by beating egg yolk and water together until frothy. Brush challah with egg wash.

Bake challah in a preheated 375 degree oven on a lower middle rack for about 35 minutes. Doneness is best determined by an instant read thermometer. The challah should reach 160 degrees Fahrenheit (at least). If the challah becomes browned too quickly, tent it with aluminum foil. Place finished challah on a cooling rack to cool.

Additional Readings

Books

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*
There is a good case to be made that if you read only one book about Judaism, this should be it. Full of poetry that will take your breath away, this slim volume captures the transformational power of the day that Heschel calls “our cathedral in time.”
- Noam Zion and Shawn Fields-Meyer, *A Day Apart: Shabbat At Home*
An excellent, clear, and beautifully illustrated guide to at-home Shabbat observance. All of the prayers are written in English, Hebrew, and transliteration. We keep our copy next to the dining room table.
- Ron Wolfson, *Shabbat: The Family Guide for Preparing for and Welcoming the Sabbath*
A practical introduction to the ins-and-outs of making Shabbat, together with Hebrew and English prayers, transliterations are also included.
- Eitan Fishbein, *The Sabbath Soul*
A collection of reflections from the Hasidic and mystical traditions about the meaning of Shabbat. A wonderful source of inspiration to explore on a long Shabbat afternoon.