

Welcome to 10 Minute Topics

This week's topic is: Shabbat

Shabbat Explained

Shabbat or Shabbos, is the weekly day of rest in Judaism, symbolizing the seventh day in Genesis, after the six days of creation. Though it is commonly said to be the Saturday of each week, it is observed from sundown on Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. The exact time therefore differs from week to week and from place to place, depending on the time of the sunset.¹ The Sabbath lasts for 25 hours. Shabbat begins 18 minutes before sundown on Friday night with the lighting of the Shabbat candles and Kiddush and ends an hour after sunset on Saturday night with the Havdalah celebration.

Shabbat is observed both by positive observances, such as three festive meals (Shabbat-eve dinner, Saturday lunch, and a Saturday-evening meal), and restrictions. Activities forbidden on Shabbat derive from thirty-nine basic actions (*melachot*, loosely translated as "work" or "craft").¹ There are 39 kinds of work that are forbidden on Shabbat that are derived from the Tanach and Talmud (Mishnah Shabbat 7:2). Different streams of Judaism view the prohibition on work in different ways.

Observant Orthodox and Conservative Jews refrain from performing the prohibited activities. These prohibited activities are ... based on juxtaposition of corresponding Biblical passages - from the kinds of work that were necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle. They are not directly listed in the Torah; elsewhere, the Mishnah observes that "the laws of the Sabbath [...] are like mountains hanging by a hair, for they are little Scripture but many laws" (Hagigah 1:8). Many religious scholars have pointed out that these labors have in common, activity that is "creative," or that exercises control or dominion over one's environment.¹

Adherents of Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism, generally speaking, believe that it is up to the individual Jew to determine whether to follow those prohibitions on Shabbat or not. For example, some Jews might find writing or other activities (such as cooking) for leisure and enjoyment purposes to be an enjoyable activity that enhances Shabbat and its holiness, and therefore encourage such practices. Many Reform Jews believe that what constitutes "work" is different for each person; thus only what the person considers "work" is forbidden.¹

On the more rabbinically traditional side of Reform and Reconstructionism, it is believed that these halakhot in general may be valid, but it is up to each individual to decide how and when to apply said laws. Thus one can find a small fraction of Jews in the Progressive Jewish community who accept these laws in much the same way that Orthodox Jews do.¹

Forbidden Work on Shabbat

Sowing
Plowing
Reaping

Tying
Untying
Sewing two stitches

Binding sheaves
Threshing
Winnowing
Selecting
Grinding
Sifting
Kneading
Baking
Shearing wool
Washing wool
Beating wool
Dyeing wool
Spinning
Weaving
Making two loops
Weaving two threads
Separating two threads

Tearing
Trapping
Slaughtering
Flaying
Salting meat
Curing hide
Scraping hide
Cutting hide up
Writing two letters
Erasing two letters
Building
Tearing a building down
Extinguishing a fire
Kindling a fire
Hitting with a hammer
Taking an object from the private domain
to the public, or transporting an object in
the public domain

There are special Shabbatot throughout the year. Some have additional Torah readings (Maftir) that are read after the regular Torah readings - replacing the regular Maftir readings.

The four parshiot:

These are special Torah readings added to the regular weekly parsha in preparation for Pesach.

Shabbat Shekalim is the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh Adar (Adar II in a leap year). The reading recalls the census taken in the wilderness (Exodus 30:11-16).

Shabbat Zachor is the Shabbat before Purim. The reading recalls the treachery of Amalekites and the command to blot out their memory (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

Shabbat Parah is the Shabbat after Purim. The reading recalls the preparation for Pesach (Numbers 19:1-22).

Shabbat HaChodesh is the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh Nisan or Rosh Chodesh Nisan if it falls on Shabbat. The reading recalls the establishment of the Jewish calendar (Exodus 12:1-20).

Other special Shabbatot:

Shabbat Bereishit is the first Shabbat after Simchat Torah when Parsha Bereishit (Genesis 1:1-6:8) is read.

Shabbat Chazon is the Shabbat before Tish B'Av. The reading recalls Isaiah's vision of the destruction of the Temple (Isaiah 1:1-27).

Shabbat HaGadol is the Shabbat before Pesach. The reading recalls the promise of the return of Prophet Elijah and the ushering in of the end times (Malachi 3:4-24).

Shabbat Mevarchim is the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh when a special blessing (Birkat HaChodesh) is said before the beginning of the mussaf prayer.

Shabbat Nachamu is the Shabbat after Tish B'Av. The reading is one of the first of seven readings between Tish B'Av and Rosh Hashannah that are designed to comfort the Jews with the promise that the Temple will be rebuilt (Lamentations 1:2).

Shabbat Shirah is the Shabbat when Parsha Beshalach (Exodus 13:17-17:16) which includes the Song at the Sea is read.

Shabbat Shuva is the Shabbat between Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur. The readings deal with repentance and G-d's mercy (Hosea 14:2-10, Micah 7:18-20).

The Sabbath candle-lighting is obligatory upon all adults (including teens who are bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah). It is traditional for the woman of the house to light the candles. By her lighting the candles and saying the brocha (blessing) all adults in the house are considered to have lit the candles. If the woman of the house is not present the man is to perform the mitzvot. If neither is at home the mitzvot falls upon a bar/bat mitzvah child (preferably a female). All single adults who live on their own (such as in a dorm) are required to light the Shabbat candles. After the candles have been lit the parents bless their children and the husband blesses his wife. The family performs the mitzvot of Kiddush with the proper brocha and has their festive Shabbat meal.

Synagogue Service

Synagogue services for Shabbat begin on Friday nights after candle-lighting (approximately 18 minutes before sundown). In addition, some men go to the mikveh before services.

Preliminary Service

Shalom Aleikhem - Kabbalistic poem about the connection between Shabbat and angels

Shabbat HaMalkah - Poem written by Chayim Nahcman Bialik (based upon Lecha Dodi)

Yedid Nefesh - Kabbalistic poem written by Rabbi Eliezer Azikri as a love song to G-d

Kabbalat Shabbat

Psalms - Psalms that mark the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat service - the first five Psalms speak about the enthronement of G-d as Sovereign of the world upon the completion of Creation

Psalm 29 (s) - Psalm that describes G-d's enthronement and His Presence moving through the world

Lecha Dodi (s - last paragraph) - Liturgical poem where Israel calls upon G-d to usher in the messianic age - based on an interpretation of the Song of Songs taught by Rabbi Akiva (based on Shabbat 119a, Mekhilta Bachodesh 7, Genesis Rabbah 10:9, Genesis 3:21, Exodus 20:8, Deuteronomy 5:12, Isaiah 52:2)

Psalm 92 - Psalm recited by the Levites in the Beit HaMikdash on Shabbat

Psalm 93 - Psalm recited by the Levites on Fridays in the Beit HaMikdash - connected to the completion of the work of creation on the sixth day

Mourner's Kaddish (m) - Prayer said by mourners and those observing a yahrtzeit in praise of G-d and the hope for G-d's sovereignty to be established on the earth

Bameh Madlikin - Readings from the Mishnah

Kaddish D'Rabbanan (m) - Rabbi's Kaddish said after study of Mishnah

Maariv

Barchu (s,m) - The blessings begin with the call for the congregation to bless G-d, the first blessing praises G-d for the majesty of Creation and the miracle of G-d's ongoing work of creation

Ahava Raba - The second blessing we praise G-d for the gift of Torah and commit ourselves to the study of Torah

Kri'at Sh'ma and Related Blessings - Prayer designated by the Sages as an act of acceptance of G-d's sovereignty and of the observance of the mitzvot

VeShamru (s) - Statement that Shabbat is a sign of the covenant between G-d and Israel

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Shemoneh Esrei/Amidah (s) (m-Amidah repetition) - The "Standing Prayer" is the central prayer of the service that consists of three introductory blessings that are statements about the nature of G-d, a middle portion of thirteen blessings devoted to the theme of redemption, and three concluding blessings expressing thanksgiving

Vehoolo (m) - Seven-faceted blessing and thanksgiving prayer

Kaddish Shalem (m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service said after the Amidah asking also that our prayer - Amidah - be acceptable to G-d

Kiddush - Blessing over wine

Aleinu (s) - Statement - ascribed to Joshua - of the difference between Judaism and idolatry

Mourner's Kaddish (m) - Prayer said by mourners and those observing a yahrtzeit in praise of G-d and the hope for G-d's sovereignty to be established on the earth

Yigdal - 13 Principles as expressed by Maimonides in his Commentary on the Mishnah

Adon Olam - Prayer instituted by Abraham that acknowledges G-d as the Master of the universe but also involved in everyday activities

Bedtime Sh'ma Section

Sh'ma and Related Blessings - Blessing before sleep, prayer for peace and mercy, and praise of G-d

After the service Jews return home for a festive meal. The children are blessed and the husband blesses the wife. Kiddush and the blessing (hamotzi) over the two loaves of challah are recited. After the meal the family says the birkat hamazon (grace after meals).

On Saturday morning Jews return to the shul for services which includes the reading of the weekly Parshah and Haftorah and the following sections:

Birkot HaShachar

Birkhot HaShachar - Morning blessings said upon waking to acknowledge G-d's compassion in restoring us to life each day

Netilat Yadayim - The ritual washing of the hands as a sanctification before G-d (as done by the Kohanim before entering the Sanctuary)

Donning the Tzitzit - Blessing before donning the tzitzit (if one wears a Tallit, this bracha is not stated)

Entering the Sanctuary - Blessing upon entering the Sanctuary

Donning the Tallit - Blessing before donning the tallit

Adon Olam - Prayer instituted by Abraham that acknowledges G-d as the Master of the universe but also involved in everyday activities

Talmud Torah - Blessings for the study of Torah - the first expresses gratitude for the privilege of being commanded to study Torah, the second expresses thankfulness for G-d choosing Israel and giving Israel Torah; Readings from Torah and the Talmud

Morning Benedictions (s) - Blessings acknowledging that G-d gave us the ability to make distinctions and deal with new situations and asking for G-d's compassion

Y'hi Ratson (s) - Prayer said by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi asking for G-d's compassion and assistance throughout the day

Akeidah (s) - Meditations and confessional prayers

Morning Supplications/Shema (s) - Declaration of G-d's Oneness as well as prayers asserting the truth and meaning of this declaration

Mishnah Study (s) - Daily readings from the Mishnah

Kaddish D'Rabbanan (m)- Aramaic prayer sanctifying G-d's Name as well as a prayer for the well-being of the rabbis, their disciples, and those who study Torah - the honor of this prayer is given to mourners

Daily Psalms - Recitation of the Psalm 92 - praising G-d to rested on Shabbat and calls on all creation fo praise the Creator

Pesukei DeZimra

Psalm 30 - Psalm of thanksgiving

Mourner's Kaddish (m) - Prayer said by mourners and those observing a yahrtzeit in praise of G-d and the hope for G-d's sovereignty to be established on the earth

Baruch Sheh-Amar (s) - Psalms and songs introducing the Pesukei DeZimra praising the eternal, compassionate Creator and G-d's sovereignty

Psalms/Songs of Praise - Recitation of various Psalms, I Chronicles, Nehemiah, and the Song at the Sea (Exodus)

Shir Shel Yam (s) - Blessing that affirms that G-d will always be praised

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Nishmat - Poetic prayer of praise

Yishtabach (s) - Blessing that affirms that G-d will always be praised

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Sh'ma and Blessings

Barchu (s,m) - The blessings begin with the call for the congregation to bless G-d, the first blessing praises G-d for the majesty of Creation and the miracle of G-d's ongoing work of creation

Ahava Raba - The second blessing we praise G-d for the gift of Torah and commit ourselves to the study of Torah

Kri'at Sh'ma and Related Blessings - Prayer designated by the Sages as an act of acceptance of G-d's sovereignty and of the observance of the mitzvot

Tzur Yisrael - Last blessing of the Sh'ma - leading to the Amidah - recognizing that G-d redeemed Israel

Amidah Section

Shemoneh Esrei/Amidah (s) (m-Amidah repetition) - The "Standing Prayer" is the central prayer of the service that consists of three introductory blessings that are statements about the nature of G-d, a middle portion of thirteen blessings devoted to the theme of redemption, and three concluding blessings expressing thanksgiving

Kedushah (s) - Elaboration of the third Amidah blessing when the congregation and leader proclaim G-d's holiness responsively

Kaddish Shalem (m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service said after the Amidah asking also that our prayer - Amidah - be acceptable to G-d

Torah Reading

Removing the Torah (s,m) - Blessings over the removal of the Torah from the Torah Ark

Aliyot (m) - Blessings over the reading of the Torah

Birkat HaGomel - Blessing for surviving illness or danger recited by someone who has recovered from a serious illness, returned safely from a long journey, or who has survived danger - including childbirth

Mi Sheberach - Blessing over the one who has finished his/her aliyah (may also include aufruf, bar/bat mitzvah, for the ill, mother who just gave birth, and parents of newborns)

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Hagbah/Gelilah (s,m) - Raising of the Torah with a statement declaring the Torah was brought to Israel by G-d through Moses - then dressing the Torah

Haftarah (m) - Blessings and reading of the Haftarah

Additional Blessings - Blessings for congregation, those serving the community, the country, State of Israel, prayer for peace, and personal meditation

Announcing the New Moon - Proclamation made on the Shabbat prior to Rosh Chodesh regarding the new moon (new month)

Ashrei - Prayer of thanksgiving

Returning Torah (s,m) - Statement that G-d's Glory encompasses heaven and earth and the revelation at Har Sinai, chanting of Psalm 29

Musaf Service

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Shemoneh Esrei/Amidah (s) (m-Amidah repetition) - The "Standing Prayer" is the central prayer of the service that consists of three introductory blessings that are statements about the nature of G-d, a middle portion of thirteen blessings devoted to the theme of redemption, and three concluding blessings expressing thanksgiving

Kedushah (s) - Elaboration of the third Amidah blessing when the congregation and leader proclaim G-d's holiness responsively

Kaddish Shalem (m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service said after the Amidah asking also that our prayer - Amidah - be acceptable to G-d

Ein Keiloheinu - Prayer extolling G-d's sovereignty

Aleinu (s) - Statement - ascribed to Joshua - of the difference between Judaism and idolatry

Mourner's Kaddish (m) - Prayer said by mourners and those observing a yahrtzeit in praise of G-d and the hope for G-d's sovereignty to be established on the earth

An'im Z'mirot - Poem extolling G-d's Glory

Adon Olam - Prayer instituted by Abraham that acknowledges G-d as the Master of the universe but also involved in everyday activities

Minchah Service

Ashrei - Prayer of thanksgiving

Kedushah D'Sidra - Prayer that has four sections: Verses of comfort from Isaiah; Verses of Holiness; Verses announcing G-d's forgiving nature; and A blessing concerning the truth of Torah

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Removing the Torah (s,m) - Blessings over the removal of the Torah from the Torah Ark

Aliyot (m) - Blessings over the reading of the Torah

Hagbah/Gelilah (s,m) - Raising of the Torah with a statement declaring the Torah was brought to Israel by G-d through Moses - then dressing the Torah

Returning Torah (s,m) - Statement that G-d's Glory encompasses heaven and earth and the revelation at Har Sinai, chanting of Psalm 24

Hatzi-Kaddish (s,m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service

Shemoneh Esrei/Amidah (s) (m-Amidah repetition) - The "Standing Prayer" is the central prayer of the service that consists of three introductory blessings that are statements about the nature of G-d, a middle portion of thirteen blessings devoted to the theme of redemption, and three concluding blessings expressing thanksgiving

Kedushah (s) - Elaboration of the third Amidah blessing when the congregation and leader proclaim G-d's holiness responsively

Kaddish Shalem (m) - Aramaic prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven recited at the conclusion of major parts of a public service said after the Amidah asking also that our prayer - Amidah - be acceptable to G-d

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Mourner's Kaddish (m) - Prayer said by mourners and those observing a yahrtzeit in praise of G-d and the hope for G-d's sovereignty to be established on the earth

After the service the family returns home for a festive meal (generally cholent). Kiddush is recited and after the meal, birkat hamazon is recited. The afternoon is spent in leisurely activities and/or Torah and Talmud study.

Before the end of Shabbat it is traditional to have a light, third meal. Shabbat ends when three stars are seen in the sky (approximately 42 minutes after sundown). At this point the Havdalah ceremony is performed.

The Havdalah ceremony represents the end of Shabbat. It is performed when the first three stars are seen in the sky (approximately 42 minutes after candle-lighting time). The ceremony uses wine, spices, and a special twisted candle. The wine represents the sweetness of Shabbat. The spices represent the feelings of peace and hope of Shabbat. The twisted candle represents light, the first element of G-d at the beginning of creation.

¹Wikipedia: Shabbat (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat>)

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