

The Sabbath (Shabbat)



In Judaism there is one holiday that occurs every week - the Sabbath. Known in Hebrew as *Shabbat* and in Yiddish as *Shabbos*, this holiday is central to Jewish Life. The Sabbath truly has been a unifying force for Jews the world over.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. It is observed on the seventh day of the week in fulfillment of the biblical commandment: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Adonai your God." (Exodus 20:9-10) . This commemorates God's day of rest as the work of creation was completed. God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy. Thus, the pattern of work and rest is woven into the very fabric of the universe. Rest means more than physical cessation of work. It implies taking oneself out of the ordinary, out of the routine, out of the rat race. This kind of rest gives us the opportunity to re-create our spirit and restore our soul. Shabbat is a time that is set aside to take notice of the wonders around us. Not only is the Sabbath an integral part of the Creation story, it is the only holiday mentioned in the Ten Commandments

In accordance with the Jewish calendar, the Sabbath begins on Friday evening at sunset and ends on Saturday night with the appearance of three stars. Sabbath traditions include a special family meal, lighting of candles, chanting the Kiddush, blessing over the wine and the blessing over the bread (challah).



A very important aspect of the Sabbath is community. The community gathers for worship reaffirming the covenant with God and to one another. Some synagogues have their major Sabbath service on Friday evening while others have it on Saturday morning. MRT has its service every Friday evening and Saturday morning when there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or special occasion. At the conclusion of Sabbath evening services, MRT has an Oneg (joy of the Sabbath) in the social hall.



Refreshments are served and there is an opportunity to socialize.

MRT also welcomes Shabbat with a brief, lay led experience every Saturday morning. Our lay leaders look at each week's portion through the lens of the years in which we live, not just the years when it was written. No Hebrew or prior biblical knowledge required. Everyone is encouraged to come and experience Shabbat in a unique and relevant way.



There is a ceremony that marks the conclusion of the Sabbath called the Havdalah which means “separation”. This takes place on Saturday night after sunset. The lights are usually off or kept dim. It consists of blessings over wine, spices, and a braided candle. Many conservative and orthodox synagogues have Havdalah Services. MRT typically has Havdalah services on certain holidays and special occasions.



Sabbath at Home



Friday night is a time for family to gather together for a special meal.

On the table are the candlesticks and candles, a Kiddush cup and wine, and one or two loaves of challah covered with a challah cover.



It is traditional to greet one another with a special greeting on the Sabbath. A common greeting is "Shabbat Shalom." This is Hebrew for "Sabbath Peace" and expresses the hope that one will have a peaceful Sabbath.



Many households begin the Sabbath by observing the mitzvah of tzedakah. The word is based on a Hebrew root meaning "righteousness" or "justice." The mitzvah (a religious obligation, which flows from the covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and God) of tzedakah places on every Jew the obligation to right the injustices of society. One of the ways we do this is by contributing money to help individuals or groups who are in need themselves or who are engaged in helping others.

The lighting of candles ushers in the Sabbath.

According to Jewish tradition, the woman of the household generally lights the Sabbath candles. However, since the lighting of candles is a requirement of Sabbath observance, not necessarily tied to gender, men or women may light them. Jewish custom requires a minimum of two candles. It is customary to use white candles made especially for the Sabbath, but candles of any color may be utilized so long as they will burn for a substantial length of time into the evening. Candles are typically lit before sundown or in some Reform Jewish homes they are sometimes lit immediately prior to the Sabbath meal, whether before or after sunset.



