



PART ONE

Shabbat. The Sabbath. The Seventh Day. The Day of Rest.

What's it all about?

Well, like anything in Judaism, it depends on whom you ask!

But if you'd ask us, we'd say:

I. We Were Slaves

It's true. We were slaves. About 3500 years ago, in Egypt, away from our ancestral homeland. And it wasn't fun. But we left, there was an Exodus, and – according to the traditional Jewish narrative – we wandered for 40 years in the desert and in the end came back to the Land of Israel.

Throughout Jewish literature, when mentioning Shabbat, it says: "...in memory of the Exodus from Egypt." Why? So we won't forget what it was like to be a slave. So we'll be sensitive to all forms of slavery, oppression, and persecution. So nobody will ever have to go through what we went through in Egypt.

When looked at from the angle of social justice, Shabbat as "a day of rest" is not just a cessation of work. It is a statement about the basic right of every human (and animal, plant and inanimate object) to be free.

Here are four different sources that can offer insights into the above idea of Shabbat as "Freedom Day."



1. A Weekend is Not Just a Weekend

The test of freedom is control over time. A slave must work all the time; a free man has the choice of not working. By releasing all people from work for a day, Shabbat insists that life is not a prison sentence of hard labor that must be served continually.

“The Jewish Way” - Rabbi Irving Greenberg

2. To Be

There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord - with nature, and with each other.

"The Sabbath: Its Meaning For Modern Man" - A.J. Heschel

3. Power Relationships Cease

And on the seventh day, one does not relate to the world or to other people in terms of power and exploitation...On Shabbat, power relationships cease. There are no masters, no slaves - only creatures standing as equals before the Creator.

"Shabbat & The Human Experience of Labor" - The Hartman Institute

4. No Mastery Over Nature

For six days we can utilize our powers to shape and mold the world, but on the seventh day we are required to refrain from any act, however small, which demonstrates human mastery over nature - be it striking a match or picking a flower.

"Shabbat & The Human Experience of Labor" - The Hartman Institute

II. Cyclical vs. Linear Time-Counting

If we look at time as if it were a straight line, then the starting point of our lives was birth and the finish line is death. But if we look at time like a circle that is constantly rising (not unlike the outside of a screw, looking upwards), then we are often coming back to similar points of time, but with new insights. Let's take, for instance, a birthday. Looked at cyclically, a birthday is a renewed meeting with oneself; how have we progressed in this past year? How are we doing in general since we were put on this earth? How will we progress in the future, until we mark this day again in 365 days?

Shabbat can be looked at in a similar fashion. Potentially, it's a great day for introspection; how have we progressed in this past week? How are we doing in general? What are our goals for the next 7 days?

“The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul and of joy.”
(Abraham Joshua Heschel)



III. Shabbat & Community

Introspection is usually done by a solitary individual; but if you're the only one in town doing it, it can be an unpleasant task. Celebrating freedom can certainly be done alone. But when done in a communal setting, it can be a lot easier. (It should be noted that in most places in the world, banging on tables is not considered normative behavior; and neither is Hitbodedut/Alone Time...)

As Rabbi "Yitz" Greenberg wrote in his book "The Jewish Way":

Jews travel through time in order to enter a perfect world for a night and a day. The goal is to create a reality so complete and absorbing that these time travelers are caught up in its values and renewed. The Shabbat is the foretaste of paradise. But even as this enclave of perfection is carved out in the realm of time, the world goes on as usual in the realm of surrounding space. This is why Shabbat needs a community in order to be credible. By an act of will, the community creates this sacred time and space, and agrees to live by its rules.

Lawrence Hoffman wrote: "Shabbat is an opportunity for meaning, a moment to forge connections and to belong."

PART 2

Tool box

Organizational Tips

1. Let's begin with people. It's always great to be surrounded by good friends at the Shabbat table. Likewise, it's always great to prepare for Shabbat with family and friends. So involve the chevre in Shabbat preparations. Don't work alone! Appoint appropriate people to be responsible for food, a place to eat, equipment (chairs, tables, hot plates), Divrei Torah (Words of Wisdom) and songbooks.

2. A place to sleep for those in need.

3. Things you'll need for the Shabbat table

tablecloths

candles and matches

Kiddush cup

wine

cutting board and knife for the challah

challah covering

salt



food, drinks, cups and napkins

equipment: chairs, tables, hotplates, etc.

Divrei Torah (Words of Wisdom) and songbooks (from the NYC office)

game plan for sharing (“highlight of the week”, “what is your dream?”, etc.)

a leader to run the meal (to make sure things flow smoothly and don’t get too long)

Recipes

Challah

7 ½ -8 cups flour

2 tablespoons dry yeast

¾ cup canola or soy oil

1 ½ cup warm water

¾ cup sugar

1 table spoon salt

3 eggs

(Use 7 ½ -8 cups flour for every 4-5 people)



[Note: Hafrashat Challah (page 13) is done if you use 2 kilograms of more of flour.]

To make whole-wheat challah, use half the quantity of white flour and the other half whole wheat.

Mix yeast with ½ cup warm water. Add ½ teaspoon sugar. Set aside for 5-20 minutes (it will bubble).

In a large bowl, mix half of the flour, all the eggs, sugar, salt, oil, and warm water.

Knead dough in bowl. Add yeast mixture.

Add the rest of the flour and knead until uniform. Spread a bit of oil in a clean bowl and lay in the dough, turning it over a few times until oiled. Cover bowl with damp towel.

Put aside for 20 minutes to 1 ½ hours (best in a warm place). The dough will rise. (Double in size)

Punch the middle of the dough, forcing the air out. Knead a bit more and again leave to rise for 20 minutes to an hour.

Braid in desired shape and again let rise for 20 minutes to a half hour.

Put on baking paper on baking trays.

Beat an egg and paint it over the loaf and add seeds immediately before putting in oven.

Bake at 325 F degrees for 20- 30 minutes, until bottom is brown. Sounds hollow when tapped.



Classic Chicken Soup

1 3 to 5 pound chicken, quartered
12 cups of water
3 carrots
1 stalk celery
1 to 2 parsnips
1 onion
1 Tbsp. Salt
¼ tsp. Pepper

Optional:

1 parsley root
1 clove garlic
Several sprigs of fresh dill
1 sweet potato
1 zucchini



Clean chicken and remove excess fat. Fill an 8-quart pot with the 12 cups of water. Bring to a boil. Place chicken and vegetables in pot. Add salt and pepper. If using optional ingredients, chop parsley root; peel garlic, leaving it whole, pierce with toothpick in order to remove easily. Add both to soup with the dill. Dice the sweet potato, slice zucchini and add to soup.

Simmer covered for about 2 hours. Remove garlic.
Serve hot.

NOTE: To remove excess fat, prepare soup in advance and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Fat will congeal on top. Remove, and heat soup before serving.

USE: 8-quart pot

Yields: 8 to 10 servings

“Kneidlach” - Matzah Balls

1 pound matzah meal or 1 pound ground matzah
3-4 eggs, well beaten
pinch of salt
¾ cup soup stock
¼ cup water

Mix matzah meal, eggs and salt. Form into balls and boil in 6-quart pot filled with salted water for 20-30 minutes.

Remove and drain. Put in soup broth until ready to serve.



A Shabbat Schedule

Shabbat night

Light candles (about 20 minutes before Shabbat starts)

Kabbalat Shabbat

Shalom Aleichem

Eshet Chayil – Woman of Valor

Blessing of the children

Kiddush

Hand washing (here you can start a niggun...)

Challah + salt

The meal; within the meal you should incorporate:

DT (Words of Wisdom)

Songs

Blessing after the food - Birkat Hamazon

Oneg

Shabbat day

Sleep in / go to synagogue

Kiddush

Washing the hands

Challah + salt

Meal; within the meal you should incorporate:

DT

Songs

Blessing after the food- Birkat Hamazon

Rest and rejuvenate

Third meal

Havdallah

Melave Malka (after-party)



PART 3

The meaning of the little things

This part is to be used in a few ways:

- Just for your own personal knowledge
- Copy them and send them to a few of the people who are joining for the Shabbat (so they will share them during the Shabbat experience).
- Copy them and hand them out during the Shabbat to be read out loud.
- We suggest that the facilitator him/herself will not read more than one source.
- We suggest not reading more than a few sources on Shabbat.

Candle lighting

1. No Candle lighter is an Island

There are acts which we do totally for ourselves and others which may be completely altruistic. Generating light, however, defies such limitations. I may light the candle for myself, but I also illuminate the room for others. If I create light for the benefit of others, I, too, can see better.

What better way to begin the Shabbat, the final step in creation of the universe and its ultimate goal, than by lighting the candles, an act which symbolically binds the inhabitants of the world together? None of us can be an island; what I do affects you, and what you do must have bearing upon me. If we could only realize this, we would well understand why candlelighting is referred to in the rabbinic literature as “an Essential for Shlom Bayit,” for peace in the household. (From “Generation to Generation”)



2. Two Kinds of Fire

What is fire? On a simple level, fire symbolizes passion, the libido, all the dangers of the physical world. But fire is also the source of light, especially the light of Shlom Bayit, family peace and harmony.

This is underscored by the lighting of candles every Friday evening. The fire is in our hands - we are saying – and could feed the flames of lust and destruction; or it can be used for pursuit of the Shabbat, representing the oneness, the light of love and peace. The Shabbat teaches us the proper use of fire: to illuminate the physical world with the spirit of the divine. (“Turning the Physical into the Spiritual” by Shlomo Riskin).



Kabbalat Shabbat – welcoming the Sabbath

There is a Jewish idea that the week before a couple gets married, they don't see each other. At the height of their love, when they are about to commit to each other, to stand and become each others, when they are ready to build together something beautiful, a home together, they step back and don't see each other for a week. They are so in love, they have gone through a lot, they are ready to make this big move and stand under the chuppah together, and that's when they say "Wait - Stop" and don't see each other. And for a whole week, leading up to the beginning of their life together, they miss each other, think of each other, yearn for each other.

And the day of the wedding comes. And the bride is getting dressed, thinking of her beloved. And the groom is getting ready, on the way to the hall, missing his beloved... thinking of her.

And then comes the wedding. And the groom is in one room with his friends... and the bride is in another room, with her friends... and they are here, they are ready to become one- and they didn't see each other for a whole week.

And then, comes the moment they both waited for. One of the most beautiful moments there are- the moment when the groom comes, amongst dancing and singing, towards his bride. And there is that moment, that moment that their eyes meet. A whole week they didn't see each other, and then, their eyes meet and you can see the joy, the love, the truth...

That moment, the moment of the eyes meeting, is exactly where we are now! For a whole week we were waiting for our bride. For a whole week we yearned, waited, anticipated... we thought of our beloved, we got ready, we prepared... we got dressed up, and all the time in our mind was the reason why... our beloved... and now, we are at that moment. We light the candles and we run outside to catch that glimpse, to make eye contact with our beloved- to greet our beloved, the Shabbat...

The Table

Finally, we have a night off - no work, no labor - a break from the hectic life we usually have. So... what are our plans for tonight? Maybe drive out and see a movie? Go out to a fancy restaurant? Just relax and listen to some music? But wait a minute: doesn't tradition hint that Shabbat evening is to be spent at home?

SO WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH ALL THIS FREE TIME?

Behind the idea of "Shabbat at home" is this: Buddy, tonight there's nowhere to run; tonight you can't hide behind different occupations, you can't distract yourself with any of the pass-the-time activities mankind has come up with. Tonight you're supposed to be here, really **HERE**, in the present. Sit down with your friends or your family and enjoy just **BEING** with them, talking to them, laughing with them, crying with them.

Because this is what this night is all about: what we have here and now. Don't go out to seek things that are beyond your reach; don't search for entertainment elsewhere. This is one night when you can enjoy everything you have accomplished until now. Sit down with your



chevre, and enjoy this time together - to learn together, to learn more about each other - and to explore things that are within you, and that you never saw before...

Shalom Aleichem

How many times has somebody cut us off on the road or in a line? They hurt us, they angered us, they took from us. How often during the day do I see other peoples' faults?

Has a drug addict ever come up to you and asked for money? You can imagine what he'll buy with that money. It'll probably be another hit (and not the baseball kind). Did you ever get a compliment you didn't deserve? How did it feel? Did it help you grow or did it harm your growth?

In the Talmud, there's a story: Rabbi Yosi Bar-Yehuda says - Two heavenly angels accompany a person on Friday night from the synagogue to his house; one is good and one is bad. And when he arrives at his house and finds everything good, the good angel says: "May it happen that the next Shabbat will be like this one." And the bad angel is forced to say "Amen" against his will. And if everything is not good, the bad angel says: "May it happen that the next Shabbat will be like this one." And the good angel is forced to say "Amen" against his will.

There's a Hasidic teaching that says: the two angels represent two sides of our personality. One side is love, giving and chessed. The other side is judgment, justice, boundaries and criticism. The two are both angels. The two are indeed good, because the two of them are really needed.

The side of chessed and giving allows me to be something greater than myself. But if I give blindly, like giving money to a drug addict, it will be very cruel of me to allow him to hurt himself like that. It will be evil. If I give him what he wants, it's chessed.

It's not very nice for me to let my friend walk around an entire day with dirt on his nose. It's best for me to say: "Bro', you got dirt on your nose."

It's very important to give compliments. But blind praise and adoration can blind a person, who might then forget that we all must grow and develop. When I come home for Shabbat, I want to come with those two angels, those two qualities. Love and chessed, justice and truth. That is complete and whole - "shalem." And that is why we greet each other with "Shabbat Shalom" - a complete and whole Shabbat.

Eshet Chayil – Woman of Valor

There's an ancient poem called "Eshet Chayil" that describes a mystery woman who single-handedly uses savvy initiative and takes matters - and her fate - into her own hands. Who is this "Woman of Valor" that people sing about on Friday nights? Is it Wonder Woman? All who helped prepare and cook for Shabbat? Miss America? An oppressed child-bearer and house-maker? An avant-garde feminist? The matriarch of your family? Is it perhaps not a single person, but the entire Jewish People? Maybe it's Shabbat herself?



This question will never be completely answered, for the answers are many. All we know is that King Solomon wrote it almost 3,000 years ago. And since Solomon wrote many parables and symbolic poems (i.e. The Song of Songs), the identity of the “Woman of Valor” remains a mystery.

This mystery works to our benefit. Since we don't know to whom this song is dedicated, it's up to us to direct it to whomever we wish!

So point your “Valor Spotlight” in the direction of your choice, and...sing away!

Blessing of the Children

How many times a day do you tell your loved ones how much they mean to you? Forget about every day; how many times a week? A month?

It's human nature to take for granted the daily gifts we each have, and especially in the hectic lifestyle most of us lead; it's very difficult and almost impossible to stop and appreciate all the great people we have in our life.

Shabbat can be a time especially for this. We can take a step back from our hectic daily schedule, put aside everything we are trying to achieve, and appreciate the things we have here and now.

This is a chance to bring into action all the love that we may feel to people that surround us, but never actually expressed to them.

There's an ancient tradition that on Shabbat evening before dinner, the parents set their hands on their children's heads and wish them all the best that their heart wants for them.

But this doesn't have to be limited to children only; we can take this chance to wish goodness to all of our friends, loved ones and Significant Others. We can let them feel our love and appreciation, and let ourselves get this feeling from them, too.



Kiddush – blessing on the wine

Wine, Alcohol, and Forbidden Fruit

At the beginning of every Shabbat meal is Kiddush: families and friends fill their cups with wine (or grape juice), read some ancient words, say “L'Chaim” and drink up.

Is drinking wine like this, on a regular basis, a positive thing? Is it dangerous? What about the young children who are participating? Could it lead to alcohol abuse...or substance abuse?

There are no definitive answers. But many researchers and educators believe that by using alcohol for Kiddush, Jews gain an understanding of how to use alcohol wisely, tying it to the sanctification of special occasions. By using alcohol for rituals, children learn that alcohol is not just a way “to lose yourself.” Instead, there's a basis of spirituality behind it. Also, by having kids experience alcohol *with* their parents, and under parental supervision, it could lead to more “responsible” drinking.



And Kiddush has an additional message: “it’s not taboo to drink.” Ritual, especially within a familial and religious setting, can help make alcohol less of a “forbidden fruit.” This way, adolescents might be less likely to use alcohol as a means of rebellion.

Boundaries: Wine vs. Drugs

When a child drinks small amounts of alcohol on a regular basis, he or she learns “drinking boundaries.” In this, alcohol is much different than other “substances.” With many drugs – one you take them – you’re “there.” You’re high. From then on, it’s only a matter of *how* high you want to be.

But wine is a different matter. One can drink substantial amounts of wine without getting drunk, without “losing control.” But every sip brings one closer to that “I’m drunk” point. This situation allows for a fascinating “tension” to be experienced every time alcohol is served: Should I have another glass of wine? Have I reached my limit? How will I act if I drink more? Will I look stupid soon?

This tension makes every meeting with alcohol an experience in self-knowledge and self-control (or lack of it).

How interesting that of all the ways Jewish tradition could have chosen to begin the festive Shabbat meal, drinking wine was chosen. Perhaps it was a statement! When compared to the festive drinking behavior of other ancient cultures, the use of the word “Kiddush” (making holy) is a radical departure of understanding. The understanding is: I’m going to take the substance that potentially can make people act like animals, and use it in a moderate way that can actually enhance the Shabbat experience.

Kiddush (daytime)

In the Talmud, the word for marriage is Kiddushin – a word in Hebrew that notes holiness, uniqueness, and specialness. “You are hereby special to me with this ring, according to the law of Moses and Israel.” You are special to me, and I am special to you...Kadosh.

From here we can understand the idea of “Kiddush” on Shabbat. As evening falls and Shabbat comes down to the world, everybody gathers together in the house or community, and makes the day special, as if to say: “You are hereby a special day for us.” Even if a person is alone, the day can be made special for self-exploration and introspection.

I want to share a personal story with you. Once, when I was a soldier, it was the Sukkot holiday, and I was very cold and wet. A friend and I were standing at a guard-post watching people come back from the synagogue wearing festive clothes, happy, and singing. We were wearing army fatigues, full of equipment and radios. I felt so faraway from my home and my holiday. Suddenly, a happy-faced man came up to me and said: “Can you come with me to my Sukkah booth? At least to hear Kiddush?” I wanted to say: “Yes, I really want to come with you, but I can’t, I can’t leave my post. Who will guard here and protect all those returning from the synagogue?” But the words got stuck in my throat and I uttered no sound. That very moment, the commander’s patrol came by, and the officer in charge came up to me and asked: “Did you already do Kiddush in the Sukkah? No? Then listen, I’ll stand guard here, and you guys go to the Sukkah and hear Kiddush.” So we went, and the Sukkah



was so beautiful, lit up as if in daytime. And we were filthy, full of equipment and radios humming, but the family was smiling from ear to ear. When the Kiddush was over, we started to go back to our post, and the father said to us: "Todah. Thank you for coming to join us." And I said to him: "Thank *you*! Thanks to you I could feel the specialness of the holiday, and feel special myself, too."

(as told by Yehonatan Shumer)

Niggun (Naynay)

In a small town in Poland, there was an orphan shepherd boy who grew up knowing very little about being Jewish. One day, shortly before Yom Kippur, he met a group of people who were traveling to Mezibush to spend the holiday with the Ba'al Shem Tov. The boy decided to join them and soon, he was standing with the many people in the Ba'al Shem Tov's synagogue.

But the boy did not know how to say the prayers he couldn't even read the Aleph-Bet (the Hebrew Alpha-Beta). He saw all the people praying earnestly from the depths of their hearts, and he also wanted to express his inner voice that came from deep inside. So he drew a deep breath and let out the shrill whistle that he would sound every evening when he gathered the sheep from the fields. Right in the middle of the Ne'ila prayer (the closing service) on Yom Kippur, the shepherd boy whistled as loud as he could.

The people in the synagogue were shocked, but the Ba'al Shem Tov calmed them and said, "A terrible decree was hanging over us. The shepherd boy's whistle pierced the heavens and erased the decree. His whistle saved us, because it was sincere and came from the very bottom of his heart, where he feels love for his people, for his source, even though he doesn't know or understand why."

Although we ourselves may know how to read and write, sometimes- we also may face difficulties when trying to express our emotions in words. When experiencing strong emotions and feelings, the effort in capturing what's evolving in our hearts with verbal tools can often detract from the emotion itself.

This is where Judaism offers a "plan B". If you feel that your emotions are beyond words- don't use words at all!!! Instead we offer the Niggun- a melody with no words attached. It's a song that is sung directly from the heart. It has no beginning and no end, no limits and no barriers. It's usually a simple melody that repeats itself again and again, reaching highs and lows, according to the emotions that are put into it. The power of the Niggun comes from the people singing it. It's up to them to choose if it will be strong, or subtle; calm, or extreme. They can lift the niggun up high, and in return the Niggun can lift them up high, too.

Netilat Yadayim: "Hands Up!"

Once a visitor came to Livnot for a Friday night meal towards the end of the program. The chevre went through the rituals, said Kiddush, and the guest was ready to dig in. Instead, everybody got up and went to wash their hands (which were clean already), sang a niggun the



whole time, and didn't talk until the last person was finished, and one person said "HaMotzi" over the challah.

The befuddled yet bemused guest said: "Either you guys are really into water sports, or you're all just obsessive-compulsive!"

He was right; it did look kind of weird. But after an explanation, it was more understandable.

In a nutshell, this is the gist of it: it's not that we want to have clean hands all the time; we just want to reach a higher level of spirituality.

Historically, it all started thousands of years ago, when the Kohanim (priests) in the Temple in Jerusalem had to wash their hands before starting the daily ritual. This symbolized the removal of impurity. The act was not called "washing of hands," but rather "lifting of hands." This "hands-up" movement, reaching up with our ten fingers, was a statement: our hands are not just for picking our nose or tying our shoelaces; they're able to change the world! They can be used for lofty deeds, for doing justice, for giving, for loving.

Likewise, at the table. Eating can be so much more than just stuffing food in your mouth. There's a restaurant in southern California that – if you finish their 3-steak meal – awards you with a small trophy...in the shape of a trough. There can be so much more to a meal than just finishing it. It can be an experience of heightened senses that brings on an experience of heightened spirituality. It can bring one to appreciate; to be thankful for the plenty that we have; to think for a moment about those who *don't* have this plenty (and perhaps do something about it!). If there is discussion or contemplation or social interaction or even "words of wisdom," then it can be not only an intake of food, but also an intake of ideas and values.

Just imagine: Your table is an altar, and you are the high priest. That food on your plate is the offering. You wash your hands, symbolically lift them up towards the sky, and then elevate all those carbs and proteins into a divine experience.



Challah

Many of you might remember the excitement of baking challah before Shabbat in Tzfat. We all started from scratch, just combining some flour, eggs, oil and some yeast, and with our own hands we put together this wonderful heavenly-tasting masterpiece.

So wait! Why are you taking a piece of my dough and letting it burn?

This is what we call "Hafrashat Challah" – Hebrew for "taking aside a piece of the challah." For any significant amount of dough we make, we put aside a small portion that we won't use or enjoy; we just let it burn. Why? This little piece of dough is a contradiction to everything we mentioned above! Exactly when we're feeling accomplished and fulfilled with ourselves, this little piece of dough comes and reminds us of something: Despite all the effort that we put into the making of this dough, we are only one part of the equation. We are not "the challah masters", but only "the challah partners."

We are partners with the farmer who plowed, planted, reaped, and harvested. We are partners with the earth. We are partners with the truck driver who drove to and from the



flour mill. We're partners with the millers who ground the kernels into flour, and sieved. With those that dealt with transporting the flour to our local store. With the water that joined the flour. With the good hands that made the dough with such love. And just so we'll remember them all, we're taking a little bit of dough and saying: "Dear universe, this I put aside as a small sign of gratitude..."

Salt

It has finally come... the moment we were all waiting for... after smelling the aroma of the challah the whole afternoon, we finally get to have a taste of it... but wait a second! Before we get to feast on it, we dip it in salt? Why?

One of the reasons has to do with the similarity between salt and honey. Despite the extreme difference in taste between the two, they both share two very interesting traits:

1. Both never spoil
2. Both are used for dipping challah

Those two facts, although they seem not to be related at all, are exactly the reasons why we dip our challah in salt (or honey in certain holidays). These two things, that never spoil and never go bad, signify our desire (and ability) to be everlasting.

How, in your opinion, can a human - that lives a finite life - live forever?

In Judaism there is no specific deed to be done in order to achieve immortality. It's not about what you do, but how and why you do it...

So in fact, you can dip any part of your life in salt or honey.

What do they symbolize for you?

Divrei Torah: Words of Wisdom

In the Talmud, there's a beautiful saying: "Who is wise? One who learns from every person." A wise person doesn't need a doctorate or even a college degree. A wise person doesn't need to say witty things or even have a high IQ. All you have to do is be able to learn from others. That's a fascinating and very deep idea.

To help make that learning process happen, there's a Jewish tradition that during meals (especially Shabbat meals), participants share their wisdom at the table.

Often, people discuss events that happened to them during the past week, and analyze them and learn from them, in a Jewish context. Some bring up subjects they're very passionate about, and compare them to similar subjects in Jewish literature. For instance: someone is very passionate about animal rights, and mentions a story from the Talmud in which a famous rabbi saves a family of mice. Or maybe the speaker does *not* agree with something expressed in Jewish literature. Have a debate! By doing this, both past and present meet. It's like having a discussion with someone sitting next to you from 2000 years ago...

As Jews, we have access to one of the greatest, longest-developed library in history: the Jewish library. It contains hundreds of thousands of volumes and has been passed on for



generations and developed for thousands of years. There are books on values and interpersonal relationships, love and hate, birth and death, with a focus on personal growth as well as bettering the entire world. These books can be read and discussed, struggled with and internalized. This is part of our heritage and today it is more accessible than ever before.

Shabbat, that time when we take a break from our "daily routines," is a good chance to explore some of the questions that we have about life and Judaism. By looking into the sources, we can use the precious time we set aside for ourselves on Shabbat to digest and integrate what we learn.

So...join the club: ask a question, give voice to your thoughts and check your Jewish library to develop the issues that are important to you. By consulting with the thoughts of the ancients and sharing your own thoughts with your fellow diners, you're keeping the "wisdom flame" alive. "Who is wise? One who learns from every person." Wise up!

The Meals

Just like any other Jewish celebration, an integral part of the Shabbat is (any guesses?) FOOD. On this day we eat three meals: one in the night, one in the morning and another one in the afternoon, just before sunset when Shabbat leaves. In ancient times, we used to eat two meals per day. So to help make Shabbat special, the tradition was to eat three meals.

Why those three meals, in those three different times? Some relate these three meals to our three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and not in that order).

So, we have three forefathers, and three meals (for you matriarch fans, the number four is associated with the four matriarchs). To understand the connection between them, we need to understand some of the character traits of each of them. Let's start with Isaac.

Isaac, Abraham's son, was a family man. He never left the country, and even within the country itself he traveled very little; he spent most of his days in his tent, and anyone who wanted to associate with him, came to him. His family was his life, and that's where he invested his strength.

Isaac was the kind of man we all become at the end of the day, when the night falls. After spending our hours and energy out in the world, we want to go back home and give our attention to our personal space. Leave behind whatever great goals you're trying to achieve out there, and focus on the small details of your home that is here.

Abraham is the opposite of his son. From his youth, Abraham was out there, asking, searching, and questioning people, nature and the existence of God. When he got answers to his questions and felt like he found some truth, he didn't keep it to himself; he reached out for other people which he felt needed guidance and tried to help them, too. Abraham was an "outgoing" person in the physical world, too. He traveled cross-country, from his place of birth to the Land of Israel where he felt he belonged. Furthermore, his personal home was always open to strangers, and before he had sons of his own - he adopted others. Abraham invested all his strength in helping others, in performing "Tikkun Olam"- doing things out there for the greater good.



Abraham can be an inspiration to each of us, every morning when the sun shines. We can learn from him what it really means to go out there, and give whatever you can for the benefit of others. Before we start our day and whatever occupations it involves, it's good to think of a person whose whole existence was devoted to others.

Jacob, the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham, contained within his personality a combination of both. First of all, he was a man of his family: "Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents". Unlike his brother Esau, who liked to hunt and fight, Jacob liked sitting in his home and learning. Also later on in his life it is evident that he was a man of his family. Jacob (also known as "Israel") spent many of his years in servitude just so he could build the family. That family grew to be a great one: the "Children of Israel" – the twelve tribes.

On the other hand, Jacob was always "out there" as well. From a young age he traveled far away from home, had to stand up for himself in a foreign land, and deal with different outsiders that tried to destroy him in various ways (from his own father-in-law who tried to cheat him, to a "wrestler" who physically fought him). Jacob had the ability to stand up for his own rights and not give in even when exposed to great pressure; all these show of his great talent in dealing with "international affairs."

So... the three meals: they are a great opportunity to just get together with the people you love, have some great food, drink some wine...but once you finally have everyone together, why not take advantage of the situation and learn from these meals something that will last longer than our fulfilled appetites? Because there is much we can learn from them.

The three meals, when looked at through their connection to the patriarchs, give us a chance to connect to three aspects that can be a part of each of our identities: working inwards - in our home; working outwards - "Tikkun Olam"; and most important of all - the harmony that can exist between these two aspects.

Birkat Hamazon – the blessing after the meal

It's so easy, especially in our generation, to take things for granted. It's so easy to forget that in previous generations, there were no refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, and cell phones (how did they manage?).

In Judaism there was always a great importance in giving thanks (in Hebrew: "Hakarat Hatov"). But especially in our generation, when we often hear "I should have", "I deserve", "I created". Now, as we conclude our festive Shabbat meal together, let's take a few minutes to stop and think...and give thanks. Thanks to whoever made this food, thanks to the people who shared from their wisdom and elevated our meal to a higher level, thanks to everyone for being here and joining in... Todah. How often do we stop and thank people? How often do we take a minute to say thank you to the waiter, to the gas station attendant, to the janitor? And what about those people who we're sometimes uncomfortable thanking? How often do we say thanks to our parents, to our friends? Let's try and step out of the circle of "me"... let's stop for a moment and appreciate everything we have. It can be something small, it can be something huge; let's take a few moments and say "Todah."



Oneg Shabbat – an evening celebration

Meditation isn't about feeling good all the time - that's narcotics, not spirituality. But, *nu*, it doesn't hurt to feel good either, right? On Shabbat, to enjoy life is actually a *mitzvah* called “Oneg Shabbat” - the enjoyment of Shabbat.

Oneg Shabbat actively invites delight in the senses, as well as in the soul. In less opulent times, simply having a bit of chicken soup would have been a delectable and rare treat. Nowadays, though, I think we have to make an effort to enjoy. With so many improved means for unimproved ends, we probably have too many pleasures, not too few. And the result is less enjoyment of any.

Thus, Oneg Shabbat - becoming ever more exquisitely attuned to pleasure - takes some effort. Suppose you're about to take that first bite of challah on Friday night. Make the challah the subject of meditation. Hold it in your hand, notice its feel, its smell. When you eat it, don't scarf it all down right away; chew it ten, twenty, even thirty times, tasting the doughiness, the silkiness of it. Let yourself enjoy it the way you would a gourmet meal - why not?

Or even when you're taking a walk: save the marathon for another day. Walk more slowly than usual, noticing how your perception shifts when you move a little slower. Make Oneg Shabbat part of your weekly practice, in whatever form makes sense for you: not adding more cherries onto the sundae, but deeply, sensuously enjoying the scoops you've already got.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslav said: "The world is full of light and mysteries both wonderful and awesome, but our tiny little hand shades our eyes and prevents them from seeing." Shabbat is a day for moving away the hand; the small self; the relentless pull of the ego. These are very simple meditation practices - no chants to remember, no postures to master - but they do the trick.

Shabbat Shalom!

(Written by Jay Michaelson , a teacher of Jewish contemplative practice)

Havdallah – welcoming the new week

That's it! Shabbat is over. Take out the wine, the candle and the spices (and if you have a guitar, that's a nice addition). Ladies and gentlemen: it's now time to let the Shabbat “out.”

But why make such a great celebration for the exit of Shabbat? After praising it and sanctifying it for the last 25 hours, shouldn't we mourn over her departure?

Perhaps the fact that Shabbat leaves us is a big part of what makes her so special. If Shabbat would come every other day, or if she stayed for more than one day a week; if we had the ability to stretch it out, or simply declare a day of Shabbat whenever we needed a little rest...then the actual Shabbat would no longer have the significance it carries in its original form.

Did it ever happen to you that you learned to appreciate something only after it was gone already?



There is a Jewish idea that sometimes you need to separate yourself from something in order to appreciate it. This separation (in Hebrew: “Havdalah”) of this day from the others is what makes it so unique. By setting borders and timelines between Shabbat and the other days, we are saying: this day is like no other, this day is special to us and we will celebrate its arrival - and yes - its departure, too.

PART 4

Suggestions for Shabbat activities

Beside the meals, singing, “naynaying”, table banging and Words of wisdom, you can add to your Shabbat celebration other spontaneous fun activities (during the meals or between them).

Here are few suggestions:

Chevruta session (you can find sources yourself or on the www.livnot.com web site).

Surprise your Chevre with a Jewish source under their plate, and ask them to comment on it in a way that relates to their own life.

Open a discussion on any thing in the world. Here are few suggestions for a topic:

If I'm not for myself who will be for me?

What personal attributes create constant struggle for you?

What's your passion? How does it or how can it connect to Judaism?

If you could be a super hero, who would you be? What power would you want?

What has been your greatest challenge in life? Have you ever attempted what you thought to be impossible, only to discover unknown internal strengths that helped you to succeed?

Take 10 seconds, just listen to your thoughts, just be in the present, in the here and now.

When I am only for myself, who am I?

If you could build a city, what kind of city would it be? What kind of authority would be in charge? What values would it be built on?

Family:

What have your grandparents given to you that you would like to pass on to your grandchildren?

On what value(s) do you wish to build your family?

What is the most important thing that anyone has ever taught you?



What's one really simple thing that you did to someone or that someone did to you that really touched you?

There's a Jewish tradition that the words we say have creative power. What blessing would you like to give to our group, thereby creating for them this reality?

The Rambam lists 8 levels of charity, the highest being helping someone help himself or herself. Why do you think this is the highest level of charity?

If you could meet anyone in the whole world who would you like to meet and why?

Who do you look up to? Who do you idealize? Why?

Has anyone ever saved your life in some way? Have you ever saved the life of someone else?

If not now, when?

What injustice would make you get up and do something about it?

Fixing the world. What is my first step in doing this?