

# Spirituality at Your Fingertips

## Leaving Shabbat:

A Guide  
To *Havdalah*  
and the  
Post-Shabbat  
Experience



## When Shabbat Is Over

As beautiful as Shabbat is, it was certainly not God's intention that humankind live in a constant state of Shabbat. Indeed, it has been understood that because the Torah says, "Six days you shall work and on the seventh day you shall rest," that it is actually a mitzvah to do creative work on the non-Shabbat days. Additionally, there are numerous Torah mitzvot that cannot be performed on Shabbat--they can only be performed on weekdays.

In order to make certain that the sanctity of Shabbat is not violated, very specific definitions of night and day are employed. To mark the entry of Shabbat, the candles are lit on Friday afternoon at least 18 minutes before sunset, when there is no doubt that the new day has not yet begun. Likewise, Shabbat is observed until there is no question that the day is over - technically considered the time when three stars can be observed in the night sky.

While Shabbat may technically end at the time of the appearance of three stars in the sky, Shabbat only completely concludes (spiritually) with the recitation of *Havdalah*.

**Talmud Shabbat 34b:** From sunset as long as the face of the east has a reddish glow, it is day; if the lower [horizon] is pale but not the upper, it is twilight; when the upper is pale and the same as the lower, it is night.

**Talmud Shabbat 34b-35b:** Rabbi Judah said in Samuel's name: When [only] one star [is visible], it is day; when two [appear], it is twilight; three, it is night... Rabbi Yosi ben Avin said: Not the large stars, which are visible by day, nor the small ones, which are visible only at night, but the medium sized.

## Declaring Shabbat Over

After nightfall (when three stars can be visible in the night sky), the weekday Maariv (evening) service is recited. When the regular weekday Amidah is said, a special paragraph is added to the first blessing of the middle section:

*You have graced us with intelligence to study Your Torah and You have taught us to perform the decrees You have willed. Lord, our God, You have distinguished between the sacred and the secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the other nations, between the seventh day and the six days of labor. Our Father, our King, begin the approaching days with peace for us, free from all sin, cleansed from all iniquity and attached to fear of You.*

By reciting this paragraph, the person who says it is partially taken "out of Shabbat." That person may now do *m'lacha* (the creative works prohibited on Shabbat) but may not eat or drink until fully separating Shabbat from the week, by reciting the *Havdalah* service.

In order to begin performing *m'lacha*, those who do not recite the *Maariv* service must at least recite the following abridged blessing:

ברוך המבדיל בין קודש לחול - *Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh l'chol*  
Blessed is He Who separates between the holy and the mundane.

### Extending Shabbat

---

The time between the recitation of the evening service and the recitation of *Havdalah* is an intermediate time when one might perform *m'lacha* (creative work) but may not eat.

If one cannot recite *Havdalah* on Saturday night, they may recite it the next day (as some do in the time zones where Shabbat ends exceptionally late) or even through Tuesday, although this is not considered ideal.

# Havdalah: The Ceremony of Separation

## What Is *Havdalah*?

*Havdalah* is the concluding ceremony of Shabbat. The word *Havdalah* actually means separation. The *Havdalah* ceremony consists of an opening paragraph followed by four blessings. To make *Havdalah* one needs: a cup of wine, pleasant spices (traditionally cloves), and a multi-wick candle. *Spirituality At Your Fingertips* will explain each of these items:

## Introductory Paragraph

Shabbat, the day of rest and peace, the day that is regarded as a “Taste of the World to Come,” is coming to an end, and those who observe Shabbat are about to re-enter the mundane, weekday world. Now is the time to declare our faith in God’s protection and salvation.

While the introductory paragraph and the prayers are only said by the person reciting *Havdalah*, it is customary for the leader to pause before the penultimate line and allow everyone else to recite: “*For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor - so may it be for us,*” before reciting the line and completing the paragraph.

### The Introductory Paragraph

הַיְהִי קֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי אֲבִטַח וְלֹא אֶפְחָד, כִּי עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְיָ הִיא, וַיְהִי לִי לְיְשׁוּעָה. וּשְׂאֲבַתֶּם מִיָּם בְּשִׁשׁוֹן,  
מִמְעִינֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה. לְהָ הַיְשׁוּעָה, עַל עֲמֻד בְּרַכְתְּךָ סֵלָה. ה' צָ-בָאוֹת עֲמָנוּ, מִשְׁגָּב לָנוּ אֲ-לֹהֵי יִעֲקֹב סֵלָה.  
ה' צָ-בָאוֹת אֲשֶׁרֵי אָדָם בִּטַח בְּךָ. ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קְרָאֵנוּ.

Listeners recite the bolded line, followed by the leader:

**לְיִהוּדִים הַיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה, וְשִׁשׁוֹן וִיקָר, כֵּן תִּהְיֶה לָנוּ. כּוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲשָׂא וּבָשֵׂם ה' אֶקְרָא.**

*Hee'nay Ayl y'shoo'ah'tee ev'tahch v'lo ef'chahd, kee aw'zee v'zim'raht Yah Ah'doh'nai, vye'hee lee lee'shoo'ah.  
Oosh'ahv'tem ma'yim b'sa'sohn mee'ma'ai'nay hai'shoo'ah. La'Ah'doh'nai hai'shoo'ah ahl'ahm'cha vir'cha'teh'chah  
seh'lah. Ah'doh'nai tz'vah'oht ee'mah'noo mis'gahv lah'noo Eh'lo'hay Ya'akov seh'lah. Ah'doh'nai tz'vah'oht  
ahsh'ray ah'dahm bo'tay'ahch bahch. Ah'doh'nai ho'shee'ah ha'meh'lech yah'ah'nay'noo v'yohm kohr'ay'noo.*

Listeners recite the bolded line, followed by the leader:

***La'ye'hoo'dim ha'yetah oh'rah v'simcha v'sah'sohn vee'kahr, kayn tee'h'yeh lah'noo. Kos y'shoo'oht eh'sah  
oov'shaym Ah'doh'nai ek'rah.***

Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. Because the Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation. Salvation is the Lord's; on Your people is Your blessing, Selah. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our stronghold, Selah. Lord of Hosts: Happy is the one who trusts in You. Lord, save! May the King answer us on the day we call.

Listeners recite the bolded line, followed by the leader:


**For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor, so may it be for us. I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.**

### For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor (Esther 8:16)

Why is a line from the Book of Esther included in *Havdalah*? The Jews of Persia were not only celebrating their survival, they were also rejoicing over what might be considered a Jewish revival. The faith of the nation was renewed as they witnessed the subtle hand of God. Every week, Jews renew their faith in God and their connection to the Almighty by celebrating Shabbat and, because of that, take "light and joy, gladness and honor" into their work week.

## The Blessing Over Wine


The first blessing of the *Havdalah* ceremony is the blessing over wine (or grape juice). Wine is used in most Jewish ceremonies as a symbol of joy and as a means of sanctification. In the case of *Havdalah*, it is also recognized as a means of bringing the joy of Shabbat into the new week.

	<p>The cup of wine is filled to overflowing, symbolic of Psalms 23:5 - “My cup overflows” - a poetic expression of gratitude for one’s blessings.</p> <p>While the blessing over wine is the first blessing recited, the wine is not drunk until after the fourth and final blessing.</p>	<p>בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.</p> <p><i>Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai Eh'lo'hay'nu Melech ha'o'lahm bo'ray p'ree ha'gafen.</i></p> <p>Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.</p>
--	---	--

If wine or grape juice is not available, one may use another significant beverage (but not water). If one is making *Havdalah* over something other than wine or grape juice, such as orange juice or beer, one should make the blessing *Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai Eh'lo'hay'nu Melech ha'o'lahm sheh'hakol nih'yeh bid'varo* (Who created everything with His word).

## The Blessing Over Spices

The blessing over the spices is then recited. Various reasons are given for smelling the spices during the *Havdalah* ceremony--such as bringing the sweet scent of Shabbat into the work week.

	<p>The spice box should be held in the right hand while the blessing is recited. After the blessing, the one who recited the blessing should first smell the spices and then pass the spices around for everyone else to smell.</p>	<p>בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם בוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׂמִים.</p> <p><i>Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai Eh'lo'hay'nu Melech ha'o'lahm bo'ray mee'nay v'sah'meem.</i></p> <p>Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who creates various spices.</p>
--	---	--

“Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: On the eve of Shabbat, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives to man an expanded soul, and at the close of Shabbat He withdraws it from him, for it says: ‘He ceased from work and rested’ (*Sha'vat va'yee'nafash*, the second word shares the same root as *nefesh*, the Hebrew word for soul): once it [Shabbat] has ceased, woe that the [additional] soul is lost!” (*Beitzah* 16a).

The enlarged soul, which is often referred to as an “extra soul,” is called the *n'shama y'tay'ra*. The smelling of the spices during the *Havdalah* ceremony is said to rejuvenate a person from the trauma of the departure of their *n'shama y'tay'ra*.

## The Blessing Over Fire

The third blessing is the blessing over fire. The creation of fire is prohibited on Shabbat because it is a creative act. By reciting the blessing over fire during *Havdalah*, one establishes the distinction between Shabbat and the remainder of the week, when a new flame may be created.



It is preferable that a multi-wicked candle be used for *Havdalah*, as understood from the reference to a “torch” being preferable to a lamp (*Pesachim* 103b).

After the blessing is recited, it is a common practice to hold one’s hands up and either look at one’s fingernails in the candle’s light or at the shadows cast by the candle. In this way, the newly created light is put to use.

ברוך אתה ה' א-לקינו מלך העולם  
בורא מאורי האש.

*Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai  
Eh'lo'hay'nu Melech ha'o'lahm  
bo'ray m'oh'ray ha'aish.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who creates the lights of fire.

According to the Midrash, fire has a distinct connection to Saturday night:

“He [God] decided to create it [fire], but it was not created until the termination of Shabbat. For it was taught, Rabbi Yosi said: ‘...He decided to create [fire] on the eve of Shabbat but [it was] not created until the termination of Shabbat. At the termination of Shabbat, the Holy One, blessed be He, inspired Adam with knowledge similar to Divine [knowledge], and he procured two stones and rubbed them on each other, and fire issued from them” (*Pesachim* 54a).

## The Blessing Of Separation

Just as Shabbat is sanctified with a blessing (Kiddush), the distinction between Shabbat and the rest of the week is sanctified through *Havdalah*. This blessing is recited with the cup of wine/grape juice held in the right hand. At the conclusion of the blessing of separation, the wine/grape juice is drunk.

ברוך אתה ה' א-לקינו מלך העולם המבדיל בין קדש לחול, בין אור לחשך, בין ישראל לעמים, בין יום  
השביעי לששת ימי המעשה. ברוך אתה ה' המבדיל בין קדש לחול.

*Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai Eh'lo'hay'nu Melech ha'o'lahm ha'mahv'deel bayn kodesh l'chol, bayn ohr l'cho'shech, bayn Yisrael lah'ah'mim,  
bayn yom ha'sh'vee'ee, l'shay'shet y'may ha'ma'ah'seh. Ba'ruch Ah'tah Ah'doh'nai ha'mahv'deel bayn kodesh l'chol.*

Blessed Are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the world, Who distinguishes between sacred and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed Are You Lord Who distinguishes between sacred and secular.

In describing the blessing of *Havdalah*, the sages of the Talmud decreed that this final blessing not only elaborate on the distinction between the seventh day and the six working days, but also upon other distinctions that reflect God’s influence on the world and on the Children of Israel. “Rabbi Eleazar said in Rabbi Oshaia’s name: He who would recite but few [distinctions] must recite not less than three; while he who would add, must not add beyond seven” (*Pesachim* 103b). Furthermore, the sages declared that “It was taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania: When one concludes, ‘Who sanctifies Israel and makes a distinction between holy and non-holy,’ his days and years are prolonged” (*Pesachim* 104a).

# Customs of *Havdalah*

After the final blessing is recited and the wine/grape juice has been drunk, there are several beautiful additional customs that are connected to the conclusion of the *Havdalah* ceremony:

- 1) **Lighting Candles:** Before extinguishing the multi-wicked candle of *Havdalah*, some people light a pair of candles as a way of bringing the light of Shabbat into the week.
- 2) **Extinguishing the Candle:** After the wine/grape juice is drunk, many people have the custom to extinguish the *Havdalah* candle by either pouring some of the remaining wine/grape juice over the flame or by dipping the flame into some of the remaining wine/grape juice. This is done to demonstrate the fact that the flame of the *Havdalah* candle was lit solely for the purpose of the mitzvah.
- 3) The wine is regarded as a *segulah* (an action that is reputed to lead to a favorable change in one's fortunes). Another common custom is to dip one's pinkies into the wine/grape juice and then rub it on one's eyes, a reference to Psalms 19:9: "...the commandment of God is pure, enlightening the eyes." This custom is sometimes expanded to other symbolic motions, including rubbing some on the back of one's neck - said to be the location of the "luz" bone, which is the bone through which God will resurrect the dead in the time of the Messiah. (Some also rub wine in their pockets as a *segulah* for economic success and prosperity.)

## *The Songs Of Havdalah*

There are several songs that are customarily recited at the post-Shabbat celebration.

### ***Eliyahu Ha'Navi/Elijah the Prophet:***

*Eliyahu ha'Navi, Eliyahu ha'Tishbi, Eliyahu ha'Giladi,  
Bim'hayrah yavo ay'lay'nu im Mashiach ben David.*

Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Giladite,  
May he soon come to us, with the Messiah, the son of David.

This simple song is sung after Shabbat because Jewish tradition teaches that Elijah the Prophet will be the harbinger of the Messianic age. As there is also a tradition that the Messiah will not come on Shabbat, each Saturday night this song is sung to serve as a prayer that the week to come will bring about the final redemption.

### ***Ha'mavdil:***

*Ha'mavdil bein kodesh l'chol, cha'totay'nu hoo yim'chol  
Zar'aynu v'chas'paynu yarbeh ka'chol, v'cha'ko'cha'veem ba'lye'la.*

He Who separates between holy and secular, may He forgive our sins;  
Our offspring and wealth may He increase, like dust and like the nighttime stars.

This is the chorus of a nine verse song about whose author we know only his name (*Yitzchak Hakatan* - Isaac the Small) from the acrostic built into the verses. Although some believe that this was written for the end of Yom Kippur, due to its references to forgiveness, it has become a customary post-Shabbat song.

## Motza'ei Shabbat

The Jewish week focuses entirely around Shabbat. All other days of the week have no name and are referred to as a count toward Shabbat: Day One - Sunday, Day Two - Monday, etc. Friday is Day Six and is referred to as *Erev Shabbat*, the eve of Shabbat. Similarly, Saturday following *Havdalah* is referred to as *Motza'ei Shabbat*, the going out of Shabbat. The term itself is informative as to the nature of the time. Shabbat does not just end...it goes out, leaving us with a sense of emptiness.

There are several customary greetings for *Motza'ei Shabbat*. Many people wish each other *Shavua Tov*, which is Hebrew for "a good week," while others will use the Yiddish expression *Goot Voch*.

## Melave Malka A Saturday Night Feast

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 119a) describes how the sages would greet Shabbat: "Rabbi Chaninah would wrap himself in his cloak and say: 'Come, let us go and greet the Shabbat Queen.'" Since Shabbat is regarded as a Queen, we must ask: What occurs at the end of a royal visit? The Queen is bid farewell with great fanfare. So too, there is a tradition of escorting the Shabbat Queen on her departure each *Motza'ei Shabbat* (literally "going out of Shabbat"). It is known as the *Melave Malka* (literally "escorting the Queen").

*Melave Malka* is generally celebrated with a simple meal.\* This tradition is based on *Shabbat* 119b: "Rabbi Chanina said: One should always set his table at the end of Shabbat, even if he merely needs [desires to eat] only a *k'zayit* [a small amount of food the size of an olive]." Even if one is not really hungry, one should try to eat something in honor of the *Melave Malka*. Some authorities maintain that one can fulfill the requirement of *Melave Malka* with just a cup of fresh coffee or hot tea, based on the statement in the Talmud: "Hot water after the termination of Shabbat is soothing; fresh [warm] bread after the termination of Shabbat is soothing."

The Saturday night meal is often referred to as *Seudat David Ha'Melech*, the Meal of King David. This tradition is traced back to David's foreknowledge that his death would occur on a Shabbat (*Shabbat* 30a). Tradition records that every *Motza'ei Shabbat*, King David and his family would eat a special meal to celebrate that he was still alive.

\*It need not be simple, of course.

**Talmud Shabbat 119b:** Rabbi Chaninah said: One should always set his table on the termination of Shabbat, even if he only hungers for as little as an olive. Hot water after the termination of Shabbat is soothing; fresh [warm] bread after the termination of Shabbat is soothing.

A three-year old calf used to be prepared for Rabbi Abbahu at the termination of Shabbat, of which he ate only one kidney. When his son, Avimi, grew up he said to him, "Why should you waste so much? Let us leave over a kidney from Shabbat eve [to eat on *Motza'ei Shabbat*]." So he left it over, and a lion came and devoured it. [Demonstrating that it is proper to beautify the mitzvah of *Melave Malka* by preparing something on *Motza'ei Shabbat*.]

# Mid-Month *Motza'ei* Shabbat Moon

Pass by a traditional synagogue on the first Saturday night of a Hebrew month and you might see a strange sight--a group of people, prayerbooks in hand, looking at the moon and shaking hands with one another.

The first commandment given to the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 12) is to count and begin the months with the new moon (*Rosh Chodesh* in Hebrew). One ancient custom is to recite *kiddush levana* - the sanctification of the newly visible moon - on the first Saturday night of the new month while the moon is visible. *Kiddush levana* is recited outdoors, standing underneath the open sky.

In addition to several Psalms, a special blessing is recited praising the system God created in the world and the cycle of renewal that He created.



Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who with His word created the heavens, and with His breath all their host. He set them laws and times, so that they should not deviate from their appointed task. They are joyous and glad to perform the will of their Owner, the Worker of truth Whose work is truth. To the moon He said that it should renew itself as a crown of beauty for those He carried from the womb [Israel], for they are destined to be renewed like it, and to praise their Creator for the sake of His glorious majesty. Blessed are You, Lord, Who renews the months.

One of the most interesting and beautiful rituals of this ceremony is the custom for each of those assembled in prayer to greet three individuals by saying "*Shalom aleichem*" - Peace unto you. They respond "*Aleichem shalom*" - peace is upon you. Why? Having greeted God in the original blessing, we wish the blessing of peace upon each other. Our religion emphasizes that our relationship with God must not be at the expense of our relations with fellow humans.

## About NJOP

NJOP was established in 1987, by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald and has become one of the world's largest and most successful Jewish outreach organizations. NJOP offers free programs at thousands of locations across North America and in 41 countries worldwide. Through programs such as SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA AND CANADA and READ HEBREW AMERICA AND CANADA, NJOP has successfully reached hundreds of thousands of North American Jews and engaged them in Jewish life.

NJOP has also become the most influential leader in Jewish social media, generating hundreds of thousands of impressions daily with *@JewishTweets* and *Jewish Treats*. Through these programs and the acclaimed Jewish consciousness raising advertising campaigns, NJOP has successfully reached more than one million North American Jews and engaged them in Jewish life.

Written and designed by Sarah Rochel Hewitt

*Dedicated by Andrew Siegel  
in honor of Amy and Dr. Martin Post  
for all the people whom they have helped  
and all the good deeds that they do.*