



Celebrating Shabbat -

Introduction to the Jewish Sabbath

וְקָרָאתָ לַשַּׁבָּת עֵגֶג לְקָרוֹשׁ יְהוָה נֹכָבֵד

...call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable...

- Isaiah 58:13



Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends Saturday night when three stars are visible in the sky (25 hours). On Shabbat we remember that God created the world and then rested from His labors (Genesis 2:2).



Shabbat is considered the most important of the Jewish holidays -- even more important than **Yom Kippur** or the other High Holidays. This special day is to be marked by three qualities: rest (*menuchah*), holiness (*kedushah*), and joy (*oneg*).

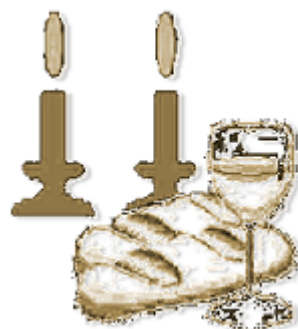
During Shabbat we spend time with family, friends, pray, read, and rejuvenate. We light candles to symbolically drive away darkness and welcome the Light of the Mashiach Jesus into our hearts.

There are three main rituals regarding Shabbat observance:

1. Lighting the Sabbath candles
2. Saying *Kiddush* over wine
3. Reciting HaMotzi over challah

The Shabbat meal is a time when friends and families share highlights from the week, words from Torah, and sing Shabbat table songs, called *zemirot*.

We are called by Scripture to both “remember” (*zakhor*) and to guard (*shamor*) the Sabbath Day, in order to consecrate it as a day devoted to the things that matter most in our spiritual lives before the LORD.





Remembering the Sabbath

In Genesis 2:3 we are told that God rested (*shavat*) from His creative activity and set apart the seventh day as the memorial of the work of His hands. God called the seventh day “holy” (*kodesh*), which means set apart as sacred, exalted, and honored.



The fourth of the ten *mitzvot* (commandments) is:

זְכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

le·ka·de·sho hash·shab·bat et·yom za·khor

to keep it holy the Sabbath the day (of) Remember

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8)

zakhor et-yom ha-Shabbat le-kadesho.

The word translated “**remember**” (*zakhor*) means to recall or recollect past events and experiences and renew them in the present. In a sense, then, such remembering is a form of re-creation, where we reinterpret our lives and our identities in new ways.

How do we so remember the Sabbath? By candle lighting, reciting Kiddush, dining festively, dressing in special clothes, praying, listening to Torah reading in synagogue, and learning and discussing portions of Torah.

Guarding the Sabbath

Interestingly, the fourth commandment is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:12:

שָׁמֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

le·ka·de·sho hash·shab·bat et·yom sha·mor

to keep it holy the Sabbath the day (of) Keep

Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it... (Deuteronomy 5:12)

shamor et-yom ha-Shabbat le-kadesho.

The word translated “**keep**” (*shamor*) means to guard something held in trust, to protect and to watch closely. Not only are we to remember the Sabbath, but we are to guard and protect its sanctity as something of great value.



How are we to guard the Sabbath? By refraining from secular activities, usually regarded as one of the forbidden 39 categories of work (*melachah*) which are not appropriate for this special day.

Just as God set apart a time to focus on and honor the marvelous works of His hands, so we are commanded to regularly set apart a time to focus and honor our own creative life in God. Notice that both God and man set apart the Sabbath day and share in the glory of creative life.

Some Jewish sages have said that the Sabbath is a picture of the *Olam HaBah*, or world to come. In the rhythm of the *Olam HaZeh*, or present world, however, the Sabbath is a sacred time to become spiritually reconnected with our true identities as God's very children. Are we regularly setting apart a time to remember the sacred work of God in our lives? The Sabbath is our God-given opportunity and privilege.