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# Hadlakat Neiroi

## Candlelighting

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### Introduction

*(You may read one of the following.)*

In kindling Sabbath light,  
we preserve life's sanctity.  
With every holy light we kindle,  
the world is brightened to a higher harmony.



*(When children are present,  
more than one reader might share this passage.)*

Shabbat can be different from any other day.  
Shabbat can be many things.

*Shabbat can be the beauty of the candles  
as we light them at our table.*

Shabbat can be singing the Kiddush and tasting sweet wine.

*Shabbat can be biting into the soft, golden challah.*

Shabbat can be a blessing for the family.

*Shabbat can be saying thank you, God, for our whole family.*

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### The Blessing

*Light the candles and then recite the blessing.*

♣ See page 109

*Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai*

*E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,*

*a-sheer ki-de-sha-nu be-mits-vo-tav,*

*ve-tsi-va-nu le-had-lik*

*neir shel Sha-bat.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי

אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,

וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק

נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

### **What is the origin of the Shabbat candles?**

The practice of kindling lights at the beginning of Shabbat is first mentioned in post-biblical literature. By the time of its completion at the end of the second century C.E., the Mishnah assumes that Shabbat begins with the kindling of lights, and it goes into detail about the proper kind of wicks to be used for the oil lamps of that time.<sup>5</sup>

In later times, when the oil lamp was replaced by candles, it became customary to have a minimum of two lights for Shabbat. These two candles correspond to the two different words (*zachor*/remember and *shamor*/observe) that begin the Shabbat commandment in the two versions of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12).

### **Who lights the candles?**

The Jewish codes of law (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, twelfth century and Joseph Caro, *Shulchan Aruch*, sixteenth century) obligate both men and women to light Shabbat candles. Thus if there are no women present in the home or a male is travelling alone, he is responsible for lighting the Shabbat candles.

Despite this ruling of equal obligation for the candles, the lighting of the candles became a mitzvah more closely associated with women. This probably happened because of the traditional Shabbat schedule according to which men would be at the synagogue welcoming Shabbat while women were in the home prior to sunset when the time for candlelighting arrived.

### **How are the candles lit?**

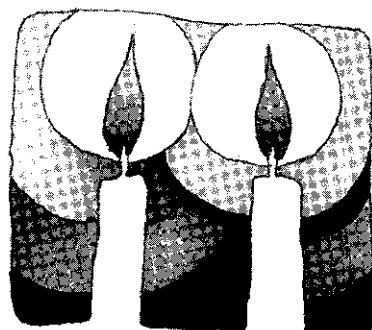
Usually when you perform a mitzvah requiring a blessing, you recite the blessing and then perform the act. For example, with the Kiddush, the blessing is recited first and then the wine is drunk. However, kindling the Shabbat candles follows a different procedure. Since the blessing marks the formal beginning of Shabbat, and since according to the traditional definition of work lighting a fire on Shabbat is prohibited, you first light the candles (technically before Shabbat) and then recite the blessing (thereby beginning Shabbat).

In many homes it is customary for those who light the candles to cover their eyes or use their hands to block the candles from view while saying the blessing. Custom has it that at this moment, when the candles are not seen, it is as if the candles had not been lit. When the blessing is complete and Shabbat has begun, the candles are then revealed as lit.

### **When are the candles lit?**

The lighting of candles marks the formal beginning of Shabbat. Most Reform Jews therefore light their candles whenever they begin their Shabbat meal. Others follow the custom of linking the beginning of Shabbat to the time of sunset on Friday. In this case Jewish calendars, which are printed annually, specify the time for candlelighting

each week. The time is set eighteen minutes before sunset in order to be sure that the candles are not lit any later than sunset.



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# Shalom Aleichem

## A Song of Peace

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(You may sing the following song.)

♯ See page 110

*Sha-lom a-lei-chem, mal-a-chei  
ha-sha-reit, mal-a-chei El-yon,  
mi-me-lech ma-le-chei ha-me-la-chim,  
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch Hu.*

שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם, מַלְאָכֵי  
הַשָּׁרֵת, מַלְאָכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,  
מִמְלֶךְ הַמַּלְכִּים,  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

*Bo-a-chem le-sha-lom, mal-a-chei  
ha-sha-lom, mal-a-chei El-yon,  
mi-me-lech ma-le-chei ha-me-la-chim,  
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch Hu.*

בּוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי  
הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,  
מִמְלֶךְ הַמַּלְכִּים,  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

*Ba-re-chu-ni le-sha-lom, mal-a-chei  
ha-sha-lom, mal-a-chei El-yon,  
mi-me-lech ma-le-chei ha-me-la-chim,  
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch Hu.*

בְּרַכּוּנִי לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי  
הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,  
מִמְלֶךְ הַמַּלְכִּים,  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

*Tsei-te-chem le-sha-lom, mal-a-chei  
ha-sha-lom, mal-a-chei El-yon,  
mi-me-lech ma-le-chei ha-me-la-chim,  
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch Hu.*

צֵאתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי  
הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאָכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,  
מִמְלֶךְ הַמַּלְכִּים,  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Peace be to you, O ministering angels, messengers of the Most High, the supreme Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of blessing. Enter in peace, O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, the supreme Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of blessing. Bless me with peace, O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, the supreme Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of blessing.

Depart in peace, O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, the supreme Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of blessing.

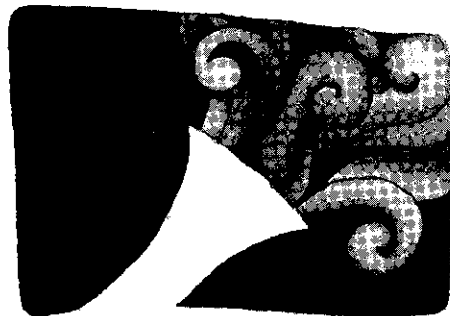
(The service continues on page 20.)

**What is the connection between this song and the Friday evening home service?**

"Shalom Aleichem," which dates from the seventeenth century, became a customary home song because of its connection with the talmudic legend that two angels accompany a Jew on the way home from synagogue on Friday evening. If the home has been prepared to honor Shabbat, the good angel says, "So may it be next Shabbat," and the evil angel reluctantly says, "Amen." If the home is not ready for Shabbat, the evil angel can say, "So may it be next Shabbat," and the good angel must respond, "Amen."<sup>6</sup>

**Why is music used to welcome Shabbat?**

The singing and chanting of songs and blessings have become a customary part of Shabbat because Jewish tradition has always associated Shabbat with oneg/joy. Although music is not necessary around your table (you can recite the blessings as opposed to chanting them), you certainly ought to try singing on Shabbat. With a bit of practice, your chanting of the blessings and singing of Shalom Aleichem or other songs can become an integral part of your observance.



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# Birkat Hamishpacha

## Family Blessing

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*Place your hands on your child's head or shoulders  
or hold your child's hands and recite the following blessings.*

*(You can also supplement the prayers written here  
with your own words or a silent prayer.)*

**For a boy:**

*Ye-sim-cha E-lo-him ke-ef-ra-yim*                      יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶפְרַיִם  
*ve-chi-me-na-sheh.*    וּבְמְנַשֶּׁה.

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Ephraim and Manasseh, who carried forward the life of our people.

**For a girl:**

*Ye-si-meich E-lo-him*    יְשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים  
*ke-sa-ra, riv-ka, ra-cheil, ve-lei-a.*                      בְּסָרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל, וְלֵאָה.

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Sarah and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, who carried forward the life of our people.

*After the separate prayers for boys or girls, continue for both:*

*Ye-va-re-che-cha A-do-nai*    יְבָרְכֶךָ יי  
*ve-yish-me-re-cha.*    וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.  
*Ya-eir A-do-nai pa-nav*    יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו  
*ei-le-cha vi-chu-ne-ka.*    אֶלְיָה וּיְחַנְּךָ.  
*Yi-sa A-do-nai pa-nav ei-le-cha*                                      יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֶלְיָה  
*ve-ya-seim le-cha sha-lom.*                                      וְיִשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

May God bless you and guard you. May the light of God shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you. May the presence of God be with you and give you peace.

### **Where does the custom of blessing children originate?**

The Torah presents several instances of children being blessed. For example, Isaac blesses his sons, Jacob and Esau, and Jacob blesses his twelve sons (Genesis 27, 49). Jacob also blesses his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, and the words he uses in Genesis 48:20 provide the customary wording of the blessing used for sons at the Shabbat table.

The blessing for girls incorporates the names of the matriarchs whose actions in the Book of Genesis helped shape the earliest experiences of our people.

### **What are the component parts of the Shabbat evening blessing?**

1. The blessing begins with separate prayers for boys and girls.
2. The threefold "priestly blessing" follows. It is taken from the Book of Numbers (6:24-26).

### **How do I do the blessing? How will my children feel about it?**

Since the blessing does involve communicating with your child in what is probably not your usual style, you and your child may feel strange when you first do it. The formal nature of the recitation may almost obscure the wonderful intimacy of the moment.

Because of that you may at first choose to abbreviate the experience by doing only part 1 or part 2 of the blessing. You might also have all the adults and children gathered around the table hold hands so as not to focus solely on the children during the blessing.

However you proceed, remember that the family blessing adds something beautiful to your family's experience of Shabbat.

### **Are there ways to extend the idea of blessing beyond the children to include adults?**

There most certainly are ways to share blessings among adults. A husband can recite verses from chapter 31 of the Book of Proverbs referring to his wife as "a woman of valor" (see page 74). A wife can recite from Psalm 112 for her husband (see page 74). A family prayer can also be read for all those at the table (see page 82).

Finally, rather than using a prewritten text, people at the table can consider sharing some of their own reflections on the week gone and the week yet to come.

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# Kiddush

## *Sanctifying Shabbat*

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### Introduction

*(You may read one of the following.)*

The seventh day is consecrated to God. With wine, our symbol of joy, we celebrate this day and its holiness. We give thanks for all our blessings, for life and health, for work and rest, for home and love and friendship. On Shabbat, eternal sign of creation, we remember that we are created in the divine image. We therefore raise the cup in thanksgiving.



*(When children are present, more than one reader might share this passage.)*

When God made the world, God made it full of light:  
the sun to shine by day, the moon and stars by night.

*And God said, "Let the earth bring forth plants and trees  
of every kind."*

God made the world full of living things,  
walking and flying, hopping and swimming.

*And the Torah tells us God saw that the world was good.*

And God made man and woman and gave them  
minds and hearts and hands,  
to think and to feel, to work and to play.

*And God saw everything in the world, and, behold,  
it was very good.*

So there was morning and evening, and after six days of creation,  
heaven and earth, the entire world, was made.

*Only one thing more remained to be created.  
As a ruler needs a crown, the world needed its own crown.  
So God made the seventh day into Shabbat  
and called it a crown for the world.*

Shabbat...A time to look at our world and enjoy its beauty. A day  
for thanking God for health and love, for family and for friends.

*We thank God now for our blessings by singing the Kiddush.*



When we taste the sweetness of the grapes, we say:  
Thank You, God, for all that is sweet in our lives.

**The Concluding  
Day of Creation**

(As a reminder of the origin of Shabbat, you can use the following Torah verses to introduce the Kiddush. The verses can be said in Hebrew or English.)

<i>Va-ye-hi e-rev, va-ye-hi vo-ker,</i>	וַיְהִי עֶרֶב, וַיְהִי בֹקֶר,
<i>yom ha-shi-shi.</i>	יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.
<i>Va-ye-chu-lu</i>	וַיֵּכְלוּ
<i>ha-sha-ma-yim ve-ha-a-rets</i>	הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ
<i>ve-chol tse-va-am,</i>	וְכָל-צִבְאָם,
<i>va-ye-chal E-lo-him</i>	וַיֵּכַל אֱלֹהִים
<i>ba-yom ha-she-vi-i</i>	בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
<i>me-lach-to a-she-r a-sa;</i>	מִלְאֲכָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה;
<i>va-yish-bot ba-yom ha-she-vi-i</i>	וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
<i>mi-kol me-lach-to a-she-r a-sa.</i>	מִכָּל-מְלֶאכֶתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.
<i>Va-ye-va-rech E-lo-him</i>	וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים
<i>et yom ha-she-vi-i</i>	אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
<i>va-ye-ka-deish o-to,</i>	וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ,
<i>ki vo sha-vat mi-kol me-lach-to</i>	כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל-מְלֶאכֶתוֹ
<i>a-she-r ba-ra E-lo-him la-a-sot.</i>	אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. The heaven and the earth were finished and all their array. And on the seventh day God finished the work which God had been doing, and God ceased on the seventh day from all the work which had been done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which had been done.

(Genesis 1:31, 2:1-3)

**Blessing over the  
Wine**

Raise the Kiddush cups filled with wine or grape juice.  
(The Kiddush can be said or sung with those present either standing or sitting.)

‡ See page 111

<i>Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
<i>E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,</i>	אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
<i>bo-rei pe-ri ha-ga-fen.</i>	בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

We praise You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

**Sanctifying  
Shabbat**

*Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai  
E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,  
a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mits-vo-tav  
ve-ra-tsa va-nu,  
ve-sha-bat kod-sho  
be-a-ha-va u-ve-ra-tson  
hin-chi-la-nu, zi-ka-ron  
le-ma-a-sei ve-rei-shit.  
Ki hu yom te-chi-la,  
le-mik-ra-ei ko-desh,  
zei-cher li-tsi-at Mits-ra-yim.  
Ki va-nu va-char-ta,  
ve-o-ta-nu ki-dash-ta  
mi-kol ha-a-mim,  
ve-sha-bat kod-she-cha  
be-a-ha-va u-ve-ra-tson  
hin-chal-ta-nu.  
Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai,  
me-ka-deish ha-sha-bat.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וּרְצָה בָּנוּ,  
וְשַׁבַּת קִדְּשׁוֹ  
בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן  
הִנְחִילָנוּ, זְכוֹרֹן  
לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית.  
כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה  
לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ,  
זְכוֹר לְיִצְיַאת מִצְרַיִם.  
כִּי בָּנוּ בְּחַרְתָּ,  
וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ  
מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים,  
וְשַׁבַּת קִדְּשָׁךְ  
בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן  
הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,  
מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who hallows us with mitzvot and favors us with the holy Shabbat, lovingly and graciously bestowed upon us, a memorial of the act of creation, first of the holy assemblies, a remembrance of the going forth from Egypt.

You have chosen us and hallowed us from among all peoples, by lovingly and graciously bestowing upon us Your holy Sabbath. We praise You, O God, who sanctifies Shabbat.

*Drink the wine.*

### **What does "Kiddush" mean?**

Kiddush is the Hebrew word for "sanctification." It comes from the same Hebrew root as the word *kadosh*, which means "holy" or "set apart."

### **What is the structure of the Kiddush?**

The Friday evening Kiddush consists of:

1. The one line blessing over the wine (...*borei peri hagafen* / Creator of the fruit of the vine).
2. The blessing sanctifying the day of Shabbat. (This is the full Hebrew paragraph on page 24, concluding with the words of blessing: *Baruch ata, Adonai, mekadeish hashabat* / We praise You, O God, who sanctifies Shabbat.)

### **What is the purpose of the Kiddush?**

The Kiddush is the prayer with which we sanctify Shabbat. The rabbis reasoned that there was an obligation to sanctify Shabbat as a result of their reading of the Shabbat commandment in the Book of Exodus (20:8). Where that text says "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," the rabbis determined that making Shabbat holy meant sanctifying it with a blessing.<sup>7</sup> The two-part Kiddush on Friday night is that blessing.

### **How does wine become involved in the Kiddush?**

Because Shabbat is associated with joy ("You shall call the Sabbath a *joy*," Isaiah 58:13) and because wine is also understood in Jewish tradition to be a symbol of joy ("Wine makes *glad* the human heart," Psalms 104:15), the rabbis declared that Shabbat should be sanctified using wine.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that the Kiddush is not a prayer in which the wine is sanctified. Rather, it is a prayer in which the wine is used in order to sanctify Shabbat.

If you do not have wine, you may omit the blessing, "...*borei peri hagafen*." Instead, recite the Motsi over bread followed by the Kiddush paragraph which sanctifies Shabbat.

### **What kind of wine is appropriate for Kiddush?**

The kosher wine associated through the ages with Jewish ceremonies was kosher, by definition of the Talmud, if it was produced by Jews alone under rabbinic supervision.<sup>9</sup> Special precautions to ensure that Jews were the only ones involved in producing the wine were taken long ago, because, in the ancient world, wine was used in the libations for idol worship. Lest they unwittingly use wine intended for idolatry, Jews chose to use only their own wine. When idol worship ceased, the rabbinic exclusion of non-Jews from the production of wine persisted as a way of minimizing social contact between Jews and non-Jews.

In our time the rationale for the earlier definition of kosher wine no longer obtains. Some Jews will, therefore, use any wine for Kiddush. In the interest of historic

continuity, others choose to use traditional kosher wine. Out of a desire to support Israel, all of whose wines are kosher, some Jews also opt for making Kiddush with Israeli wine.

### **Should the full text of the Kiddush be said in Hebrew?**

Ideally, the Kiddush should be recited in Hebrew. However, English is definitely acceptable. If you possess at least some knowledge of Hebrew, you should be able to do the blessing over the wine in Hebrew while leaving the blessing sanctifying Shabbat in English. As time goes by, you could work towards doing the second blessing in Hebrew by adding a Hebrew sentence or phrase each week.

### **Why does the Kiddush refer to Shabbat as a reminder of both the Creation of the world *and* the Exodus from Egypt?**

The Kiddush contains these two references to the past because the Torah refers to first one and then the other as the historic underpinnings for Shabbat.

In Exodus 20, where the Ten Commandments are proclaimed from Mount Sinai, Jews are called upon to “remember” Shabbat as the day on which God rested after creating the world. Responding to that biblical phrase, the Kiddush mentions creation as a reminder that on Shabbat we follow God’s lead and step back from creating and manipulating the world.

In Deuteronomy 5, where Moses repeats the Ten Commandments, the emphasis of the Shabbat commandment is different. There the fourth Commandment calls on Jews to observe Shabbat as a reminder of the Exodus from Egyptian slavery.

According to this understanding of the seventh day, Shabbat calls to mind the experience of liberation. It returns every seven days to help Jews liberate themselves personally from the burdens of the week.

With its focus on liberation, Shabbat ideally achieves even one more purpose. It has the possibility of sensitizing Jews to societal issues of deprivation and injustice. By raising the themes of slavery and freedom, Shabbat can become the gateway to social action during the rest of the week.

### **What is the significance of the greeting “Lechayim?”**

The classic Jewish toast before drinking wine or other beverages is “Lechayim,” which means “To life.” The toast has talmudic roots insofar as it was the custom during that period to give wine to bereaved persons who were sitting in mourning.<sup>10</sup> When wine was then used in joyous settings, the mood was, of course, very different. To make the distinction clear, the drinking of wine in these settings was accompanied by the hope that it should only be *lechayim* (for life)—for reasons of joy and gladness rather than for grief.

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# Motsi

## *Blessing over the Bread*

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### Introduction

*(You may read one of the following)*

When the world was created,  
God made everything a little bit incomplete.  
Rather than making bread grow out of the earth,  
God made wheat grow so that we might bake it into bread.  
Rather than making the earth of bricks,  
God made it of clay  
so that we might bake the clay into bricks. Why?  
So that we might become partners  
in completing the work of creation.



Before Rabbi Simcha recited the blessing for bread, he would first look at the bare ground. He wanted to be inspired by an appreciation of the contrast between the dust of the earth and the fine bread which it brought forth.

### The Blessing

♫ See page 113

*The leader places hands on the challah as everyone says the blessing.*

*Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai*

*E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,*

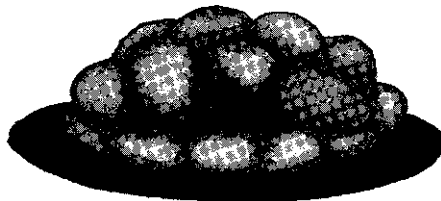
*ha-mo-tsi le-chem min ha-a-rets.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Slice or tear the challah and distribute it around the table to be eaten.  
Dinner is served.*

*(Birkat Hamazon, the blessing after the meal, can be found on page 34.)*



### **What is the origin of the term “challah”?**

The word “challah” originally referred to the dough offering set aside for the priests during the time of the Jerusalem Temple. After the destruction of the Temple, Jews continued setting aside part of their dough when they baked Shabbat and holiday breads. Eventually, the term “challah” was also applied to these loaves themselves.

### **Why is a blessing said over the challah?**

When we pause to recite the Motsi before a meal begins, our goal is to sensitize ourselves to the fundamental blessings that surround us. We thank God for creating the world in such a way that life can sustain itself.

### **Why are two loaves used in some homes?**

The two loaves represent the double share of manna which, according to the Torah (Exodus 16:22), fell each Friday in order to feed our ancestors on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. Collecting the double portion of manna on Friday meant that the Israelites did not have to collect food when Shabbat arrived.

If you want to have a double share of bread on your table but feel that the two loaves of bread might be wasted in your household, you can use a regular challah with a small roll beside it or simply use two smaller braided challah rolls.

### **Why is the challah covered until the Motsi in some homes?**

Since bread is a basic part of almost every meal, some people keep the challah out of sight in order to highlight the Friday evening ceremonies of candlelighting and Kiddush. Once it is clear that the meal is not an ordinary one but in honor of Shabbat, the challah is uncovered and the Motsi is recited.

Another explanation for this custom is based on the challah’s symbolic representation of the manna. The cover over the challah and the plate or platter which is usually placed underneath the challah are said to represent the two layers of dew between which the manna fell, protecting it from the sand of the Sinai desert below and the heat of the sun above.<sup>11</sup>

A popular explanation for children is that the challah is covered in order not to embarrass the bread when the candles and wine are dealt with first. When covering the challah on your table, a napkin can suffice. You can also purchase or even make special challah covers to add to the beauty of your evening.

### **What is the significance of the handwashing ceremony that precedes the Motsi in some homes?**

The custom of washing hands before the Motsi was developed by the talmudic rabbis because of their belief that the family table was as holy as the altar in the Jerusalem Temple where the priests conducted ancient Jewish worship. Just as the priests ritually cleansed their hands before beginning their duties, the rabbis maintained

that we ought to wash our hands symbolically before our meals.

Those who wish can participate in this ceremony by going to the sink before the Motsi. Each person grasps a cup or pitcher of water and pours some water from the cup over each hand two or three times. The cup is refilled for the next person until everyone has had a chance. At that point the following blessing is said and the hands are dried.

*Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai*

*E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam*

*a-sheer ki-de-sha-nu be-mits-vo-tav,*

*ve-tsi-va-nu al ne-ti-lat ya-da-yim.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,  
וַיְצַוֵּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with commandments and commanded us to cleanse our hands.

The Motsi is said as soon as everyone returns to the table.

#### **How is salt used after the Motsi?**

After the blessing is said over the challah and the bread has either been cut or broken into pieces, some Jews sprinkle salt on the bread. This is done as a way of comparing the household table to the altar in the historic Jerusalem Temple. As salt was sprinkled on the offerings in Jerusalem, salt can be used on the challah when the meal begins.

#### **When is the word "amen" said?**

The word "amen" is first found in the Torah as a response of affirmation. After hearing a series of pronouncements by the Levites (Deuteronomy 27), the Israelites indicate their endorsement of the Levites' words by responding "amen."

"Amen" is used in the same way today. It is said when a person hears someone else say a blessing and then expresses agreement with the sentiments of the blessing by responding "amen."