



Havdalah

made easy


interfaithfamily

Supporting Interfaith Families Exploring Jewish Life

Havdalah



A beautiful ceremony marks the end of Shabbat on Saturday evening.

This ending ritual is called **Havdalah** which means separation or distinction in Hebrew. The Torah teaches that God

created the world by making distinctions, first between light and darkness, next between water and empty space, then between earth and water. The final distinction made in that week of creation was between regular time and holy time.

Just as candles, wine and challah begin Shabbat, a braided candle, wine and spices mark the end of Shabbat. We use all five of our senses in a short ritual. Even if you haven't spent the day celebrating Shabbat, Havdalah is a lovely time to gather family and friends together before you move into the week of errands, chores and work. The Havdalah ceremony consists of blessings over wine, fragrant spices, the braided candle and, lastly, acknowledging distinctions. There are also two simple songs that conclude the ceremony.



How To Make Havdalah

The Four Blessings: Background

Shabbat officially ends when you can see three stars in the night sky. In order to watch the light fade from the sky, turn off your lights. You may wish to hold your Havdalah ritual by the fading light shining through your windows.

You will need a braided candle, a full cup of wine and a container of fragrant spices.

Why a braided candle? The blessing refers to “lights of fire.” The braided candle gives us several wicks to represent those lights.

Braided candles can be purchased at Jewish bookstores where you will find many variations, from two candles twisted together to multiple, multicolored braids. In a pinch, you can hold two Shabbat candles together or even two matches. Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin interprets the braiding of the candles saying,

We tend to enter Shabbat with our souls unraveling, pulled as we are in so many directions by the demands of the week and the many roles we play. On Shabbat, we have time to weave together those disparate strands of our lives. We may begin the day like the Shabbat candles, apart, pieces of ourselves separated from one another. But through the peace of Shabbat, we emerge whole once again, woven together like the wicks of the Havdalah candle.

[From *The Tapestry of Jewish Time: A Spiritual Guide to Holidays and Life-Cycle Events*, Behrman House, 2000, page 44.]

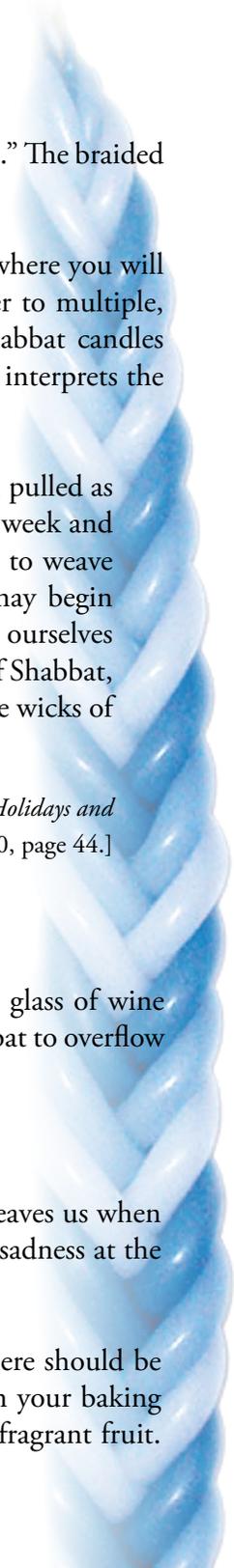
Why A Full Cup Of Wine?

Wine is a symbol of the sweetness of Shabbat. The full glass of wine that we use symbolizes our wish for the blessings of Shabbat to overflow into the coming week.

Why Spices?

We are thought to have a second soul on Shabbat that leaves us when Shabbat ends. The sweet smell of the spices reduces our sadness at the departure of Shabbat.

There is only one rule about the fragrant spices: that there should be more than one. You may use cloves and cinnamon from your baking cupboard or any other sweet smelling herbs, flowers or fragrant fruit.



It is easy to make your own spice container or use any open dish or container. If you insert whole cloves into an orange, you will have a “spice box.” You may also purchase elegant silver or pottery versions to hold your spices.



First Blessing

Light the braided Havdalah candle, but don't say a blessing yet. The first blessing that we say is over the wine. Lift the cup of wine and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
BO-REY P'RI HA-GA-FEN.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

[A traditional translation.]

Holy One of Blessing,
Your Presence fills creation,
forming the fruit of the vine.

[An alternative translation
from Vetaher Libenu, a prayerbook created by
Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley.]

Second Blessing

The second blessing is over the spices. Lift the spices and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיַּי בְּשָׂמִים.

BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
BO-REY MI-NEY V'SA-MIM.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Who creates species of fragrance.

[A traditional translation.]

Blessed are You, God, our God,
Sovereign of the universe,
who creates various kinds of spices.

[An alternative translation from A Limmud
Shabbat, limmud.org.]

After saying the blessing, inhale the sweet smell. Pass around the spice box so that everybody can inhale the scent deeply.

Third Blessing

The third blessing is over the lights of the candle, which we have already lit. We say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.

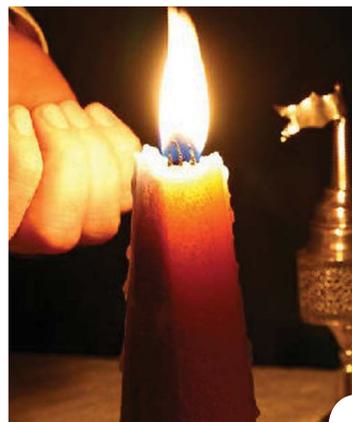
BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
BO-REY M'O-REY HA-ESH.

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

[A traditional translation.]

Blessed are you, THE RADIANCE,
our God, the sovereign of all worlds,
who creates the light of fire.

[An alternative translation from Kol
Haneshamah, the Reconstructionist siddur.]



After the blessing, hold up your hands to feel the warmth of the braided candle. To make use of the light, some people look for the reflection of the candle light in their fingernails. Another custom has people start with fingers cupped toward their palms and slowly opening them to see the light on their palms.

Fourth Blessin

The last blessing marks the separation of Shabbat from the rest of the week. We say:

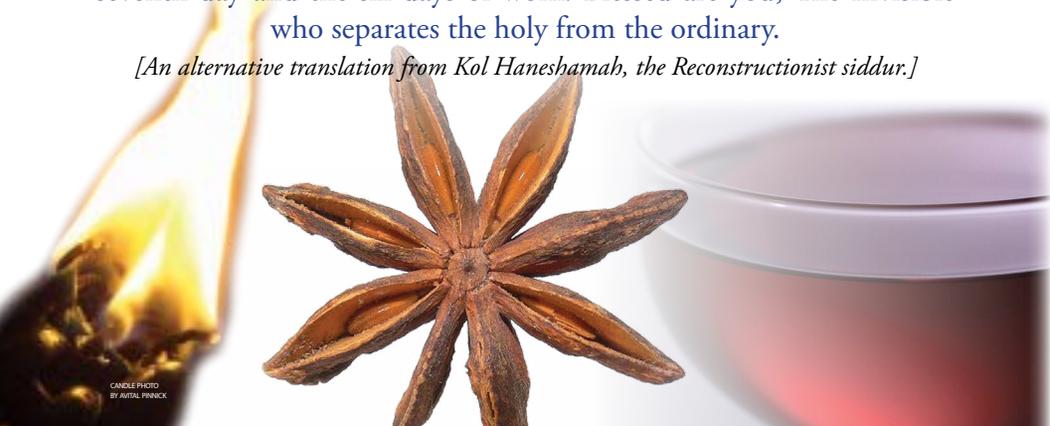
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'	BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
אֱלֹהֵנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	EL-O-HEY-NU MEL-EKH HA-O-LAM
הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין-קֹדֶשׁ לְחַל	HA-MAV'DIL BEIN-KO-DESH L'CHOL,
בֵּין-אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ	BEIN-OR L'CHO-SHEKH,
בֵּין-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים.	BEIN-YIS'RA-EL LA-A-MIM.
בֵּין-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי	BEIN-YOM HASH'VI'I
לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה	L'SHE-SHET Y'MEY-HA-MA-A-SE.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'	BA-RUKH A-TA A-DON-AI
הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין-קֹדֶשׁ לְחַל.	HA-MAV'DIL BEIN-KO-DESH L'CHOL.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who separates between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and other peoples, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are You, Lord our God, who separates between holy and secular.

[A traditional translation.]

Blessed are you, The Many-Named, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who separates between holy and ordinary, light and dark, the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are you, The Invisible who separates the holy from the ordinary.

[An alternative translation from Kol Haneshamah, the Reconstructionist siddur.]



We then sip the wine and extinguish the candle in the remaining wine. Many have the custom of singing “Eliyahu Ha’Navi” while slowly lowering the Havdalah candle into the wine so that the candle is extinguished as the song ends.

El-i-ya-hu ha’Na-vi
El-i-ya-hu ha’Tish-bi
El-i-ya-hu ha-Gi-la-di
bim’hey-ra, v’ya-mey-nu,
ya-vo El-ey-nu
im Mash-i-ach ben Dav-id

The song is translated as,
“Elijah the Prophet, Elijah of Tishbe in Gilead, come to us speedily,
in our days, with the Messiah, son of David.”



Conclusion

It is customary, at the ritual’s conclusion, to sing “*Shavua Tov*” (which means “a good week” in Hebrew) and turn on the room’s lights as it ends.

Shavua tov. (8x)

*A good week, a week of peace,
may gladness reign and joy increase. (2x)*



InterfaithFamily's mission is to empower people in interfaith relationships— individuals, couples, families and their children— to make Jewish choices, and to encourage Jewish communities to welcome them.

InterfaithFamily offers consultation and resources for synagogues, agencies and schools of all affiliations to assist them in their welcome and engagement of interfaith families and all those who are interested in exploring Judaism.

You can join the InterfaithFamily Network or
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