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Report No. 301

The Jewish Sabbath

The Sabbath (“*Shabbat*”) is considered the most important of all Jewish Holy days. The Sabbath is considered a sign to bear witness that, “In six days G-d made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day.” See Exodus 20:11. This belief, that G-d is the creator of the universe, is the foundation of the Jewish faith. CODE OF JEWISH LAW (“C.J.L.”) ch. 72 §1.

The Sabbath begins 18 minutes before sunset on Friday night and ends approximately one hour after sunset on Saturday night. C.J.L. chs. 75; 96.

Preparing For the Sabbath

It is a prevailing custom among Jews to bake some loaves of bread specifically in honor of the Sabbath. Observant Jews are mandated to procure meat, fish, dainties, and good wine (or grape juice, as necessary) for the Sabbath, in accordance with one’s means. It is proper to eat fish at every Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 72 §7.



No regular work should be done from late afternoon on Friday. Casual work is permitted until the advent of the Sabbath (approximately 18 minutes before sunset). C.J.L. ch. 72 §9.

On Friday, observant Jews will bathe in preparation for the Sabbath, preferably in warm water. C.J.L. ch. 72 §12.

One should try to wear their finest clothes on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 72 §16.

Candle-Lighting at the Start of the Sabbath

The Sabbath (and all Biblically-mandated festivals) is sanctified by the lighting of candles at its start and end. C.J.L. chs. 75 (start of Sabbath); 96 (end of Sabbath).

Observant Jews must put all work aside and light the Sabbath candles at least one-half hour before the stars emerge, *i.e.*, eighteen minutes prior to sunset. C.J.L. ch. 75 §1.

In no event should less than two candles be lit. The candles should be large enough to burn at least until after the evening Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 75 §2

Generally the women in the household light the Sabbath candles. Men are equally obliged to light Sabbath candles when there are no women in the household to light them. C.J.L. ch. 75 §5.

The Sabbath candles preferably should be lit in the room where the meals are served, in order to indicate that they are lit in honor of the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 75 §8.



The Sabbath Prayers

Prayer services commence on Friday evening before sunset and also are held on Saturday morning, afternoon and evening. C.J.L. ch. 76. A portion of the Torah is read at each prayer service held on Saturday morning and afternoon. C.J.L. ch. 78.

About the Aleph Institute

In 1978, and on many additional occasions, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, called for attention to the Jewish population in prisons. Rabbi Schneerson, who was the first religious leader in history honored with the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, spoke publicly and published entire treatises dedicated to the moral, ethical, spiritual and educational needs for men and women in those and other institutional environments. For example, a person going through prison with meaning and growth—though very difficult—leaves as a better, more productive and balanced citizen. Thus, the creation of the Aleph Institute.

Since 1981, the Aleph Institute, under the direction of Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar, has provided valuable services to assist chaplains and institutional staff in meeting the legitimate religious needs of Jewish men and women in their care. The Aleph Institute provides answers to questions about mandated religious practices and ritual materials for daily and holiday observances. Aleph’s staff, affiliated Rabbis and rabbinical students provide visitations to Jews in institutional environments around the country and to military bases around the world. Over the years, Aleph has also supplied hundreds of thousands of religious texts and ritual items for use by individuals and chapels.

The Jewish Sabbath • Page 2

The prayer services held on Friday night and Saturday morning are far longer than on weekdays, containing as they do special additional prayers for the Sabbath.

“Work” Proscriptions On the Sabbath

Institutional staff should develop an awareness that, for the observant Jew, weekday pursuits such as work, travel, smoking, shaving and the use of writing instruments, fire or electrical appliances (lights, cooking equipment, elevators, automobiles, radio/tv, telephones, machinery, etc.) are forbidden on the Sabbath.

The specific prohibitions of the Sabbath are numerous, complex and beyond the scope of this report. They are comprised of 39 major categories of forbidden activities and hundreds of derivative activities. *See, e.g.*, C.J.L. chs. 80 (listing some of the generally-unknown forbidden activities); 88 (objects forbidden to be handled on the Sabbath).

It is forbidden to write or draw a picture on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 80 §62. It is forbidden to sweep floors, even if they are made of stone or wood. C.J.L. ch. 80 §73. It is forbidden to make a “tent” (*i.e.*, a roof that shelters even from only the sun or from rain) on the Sabbath, even if it is only a temporary tent. C.J.L. ch. 80 §77. One is not permitted to make a bed on the Sabbath to be used at the conclusion of the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 80 §93.

In a public area, it is forbidden to carry, throw or hand over any object for a distance of more than four cubits (approximately 6 feet). C.J.L. ch. 82 §1. It is forbidden to carry, throw or hand over any object from a private to a public domain (*e.g.*, from inside a building to the street or courtyard). C.J.L. ch. 82 §2.

One who is fettered with chains (*e.g.*, handcuffs or leg irons) may walk out with them on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 84 §6.

It is forbidden to handle anything that is unfit for any use on the Sabbath, such as money, writing instruments, electronic items, wood, feathers, skins, wool, flax, living animals (even those that are domesticated), the shells of nuts and eggs, and fragments of broken vessels that are not fit for any further use. All these and similar things are called “*Muktzeh*” and may not be handled on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 88 §2.

There are certain things forbidden on the Sabbath although they neither have any resemblance to “work” nor do they in any way lead to the performance of work. For example, the manner of walking on the Sabbath should not be the same as on a weekday. Therefore, it is forbidden to run on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 90 §1.

On the Sabbath or on a festival, one is forbidden to walk from the place where one spends the Sabbath or festival a greater distance than approximately three thousand feet. But, for purposes of this rule, if one is in a city the entire city is considered one’s “abode,” and one may not travel approximately 3,000 feet from the city’s boundaries. C.J.L. ch. 95 §1.

The “Kiddush”

The Sabbath meal on Friday evening is ushered in with the recital of *Kiddush* (the sanctification blessing). It is meritorious to say the Kiddush over aged and perfect wine, but grape juice is accepted in the institutional setting. An effort should be made to procure wine that is red. C.J.L. ch. 77 §3. When wine or grape juice are unavailable, the Kiddush may be recited over two loaves of bread or whole matzot.

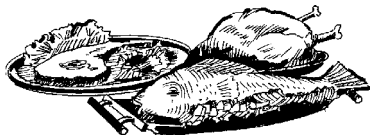
Women, too, are obligated to say the Kiddush. C.J.L. ch. 77 §4.

The Kiddush should also be recited over a cup of wine or grape juice at the start of the Sabbath morning meal. C.J.L. ch. 77 §13.

The Kiddush may be recited by one person for all present. All who hear the blessings respond: “Amen.”

**Sabbath Meals**

Every Jew is duty-bound to eat three meals on the Sabbath, one on Sabbath eve and two during the day. C.J.L. ch. 77 §16.



According to Jewish law, a “meal” consists of wine (or grape juice), bread, fish and meat. *Id.* Blessings must be recited over wine (or grape juice) at the Friday night and Sabbath morning meals, *see* C.J.L. ch. 77 §§1-14, and over two loaves of bread (the “*hamotzi*”) at each of the three Sabbath meals. *Id.* §§17-18. Blessings must be made over two loaves of bread (or whole matzot or dinner rolls) at every meal, even if many meals are eaten during the day. C.J.L. ch. 77 §17.

It is forbidden to abstain from food on the Sabbath, even for the purpose of fasting. *Id.* §20. Fast days that fall on the Sabbath are usually observed on the preceding Thursday, or the following Sunday, depending on the fast day involved. *See* C.J.L. ch. 121 §6. The only exception to the no-fasting-on-Sabbath rule is Yom Kippur. When Yom Kippur falls on the Sabbath, the fast is observed even on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 133.

To comply with Jewish law, meal plans for Friday evening and Saturday’s lunch should provide for kosher grape juice, two whole loaves of bread (or matzo/roll), fish and meat. Fish and meat are not required for the third Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 77 §16.

Observant Jews may not eat foods that are cooked on the Sabbath, or even reheated by Jews on the Sabbath. *See, e.g.*, C.J.L.

chs. 80 (listing some of the generally-unknown forbidden activities on the Sabbath); 88 (objects forbidden to be handled on the Sabbath). Accordingly, work schedules may need to be rearranged to insure that no Jewish residents (or staff) actually even reheat any pre-cooked foods (*e.g.*, instant grits, hot cereal, beef or chicken entrees) on the Sabbath.

The “*Havdalah*” Service At the Conclusion of the Sabbath

Just as it is mandatory to sanctify the Sabbath when it is ushered in, so is it mandatory to sanctify its departure by performing the “*Havdalah*” ritual. This ritual is a solemnization of the Sabbath’s parting by a blessing over wine or grape juice, the sniffing of cloves or other aromatic incense and the lighting of a twined, multi-wicked candle or two flames from any source brought together to form a single “torch” for the duration of the ceremony. C.J.L. ch. 77 §1.

When wine cannot be procured, the *Havdalah* may be recited over other beverage, including grape juice, beer, or a beverage that is a national drink, except water and soda. C.J.L. ch. 96 §3.

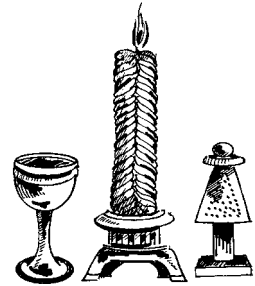
One person may recite the *Havdalah* on behalf of the group present. All who hear the blessings say “Amen” at the appropriate places. Women, too, must recite the *Havdalah* when there are no men to recite it for them.

As soon as the sun sets on the Sabbath, it is forbidden to eat or drink anything before reciting the *Havdalah*. C.J.L. ch. 96 §4.

No work may be done before the *Havdalah* is recited. C.J.L. ch. 96 §5.

Preferably, the *Havdalah* candle should be of wax and consist of several strands twisted together so as to form a torch. But if one does not have a *Havdalah* candle made of paraffin, one should use two ordinary candles, holding them close together so that both flames merge in one like a torch. C.J.L. ch. 96 §9. In extreme circumstances, two matches may be used. The flame is required to burn only for the duration of the blessing, and is extinguished afterwards.

If possible, one should partake of bread and warm food at a “*Melaveh Malkah*” meal held on Saturday night, after the *Havdalah* service. One should set a good table in honor of the departure of the Sabbath, and one who is unable to partake of bread should at least eat some cake or fruit. C.J.L. ch. 96 §13.



Citations to Jewish Law

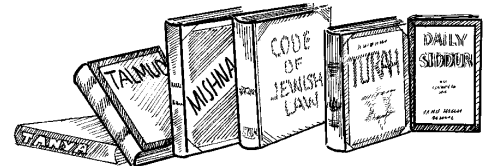
Citations to Jewish law throughout this report are to Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, CODE OF JEWISH LAW: KITZUR [ABRIDGED] SHULHAN ARUKH, A COMPILATION OF JEWISH LAWS AND CUSTOMS (translated by Hyman E. Goldin, LL.B., annotated revised edition, Hebrew Publishing Company 1993) (“C.J.L.”), a copy of which can be ordered through the Aleph Institute or from any Jewish Bookstore. Jewish law frowns upon the use of the actual word representing the Creator’s name. Accordingly, references in this report to the Creator are indicated as “G-d.”

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Ritual Items Required For the Jewish Sabbath

The following items are required for Jews to observe the Sabbath (females do not require the last two items):

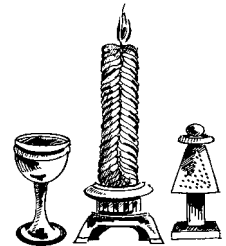
- (1) **Prayer Book** (the “*Siddur*”): generally contains all prayer services for the Sabbath;
- (2) **Bible** (the “*Tanach*”): The Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, which contains the Torah readings for the Sabbath and is also generally used for religious study;
- (3) **Calendar** (the “*Luach*”): identifies the precise times of the start and end of the Sabbath observance;



- (4) **Candles**: used to sanctify the arrival and departure of the Sabbath;

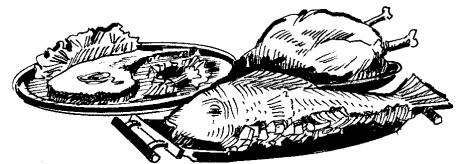
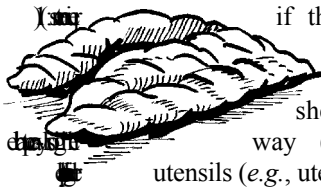


- (5) **Kosher Wine** (or kosher grape juice): used to sanctify the Sabbath through blessings made before two meals, on the eve and day of the Sabbath;



- (6) **Bread** (usually “*Challah*” (braided bread)): used to sanctify the Sabbath (except on Passover) through blessings made over two loaves (or other kosher rolls or a ~~at~~ each Sabbath meal;

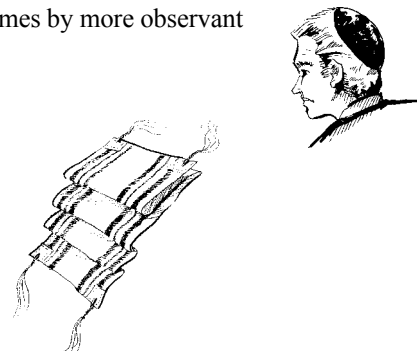
- (7) **Kosher Food**: food that complies with three essential religious if the food contains any animal products, those products must derive from a religiously-acceptable animal (e.g., no pork products or shellfish); (2) all food must be prepared in a way (e.g., meat ritually slaughtered) and with utensils (e.g., utensils used for non-kosher food may not be used); and (3) meat and dairy products may not be consumed together or prepared with the same utensils.



- (8) **Skullcap** (the “*yarmulke*”): worn by males at all prayer services (and at all times by more observant Jews); and



- (9) **Prayer Shawl** (the “*Tallit*”): a garment with fringes on each of the four corners, worn by males at morning prayer services (a smaller version is worn at all times under outer garments by more observant Jews).



All ritual items listed in this report are readily available from Jewish book stores, local synagogues, Jewish community organizations or the Aleph Institute.

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