



# A Practical Guide to Keeping Shabbat

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## How to use this guide

This guide is intended for those who desire to honour God's Shabbat but are unsure how to do so or where to begin. It is crucial to differentiate between God's commandments and human traditions. This guide presents a list of activities strictly forbidden on the Shabbat in accordance with God's commandments.

The chapters are structured according to the Friday night Shabbat service, which can be rearranged at the reader's discretion. Only God's unequivocal instructions for observing the Shabbat are non-negotiable. This guide aims to inspire families to celebrate this weekly feast of the Lord.

Shabbat Shalom!

## Introduction to Shabbat

As per the teachings of the Bible, days commence at sunset, as mentioned in Genesis 1:1-34. The Shabbat, a significant day on God's calendar, holds great importance for us as His children. It begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday.

Observing and commemorating the Shabbat is a believer's means of acknowledging the existence of a Creator who rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and made it holy.

### *Genesis 2:2-3*

#### *Complete Jewish Bible*

*<sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God was finished with His work which He had made, so He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all His work which He had created, so that it itself could produce.*

The weekly Shabbat is deemed as the most significant among God's holy days, even surpassing the feast days. Its essence lies in three aspects: rest, holiness, and joy. During this day, we bond with our loved ones, pray, read, and recharge.

Although many traditions are associated with the Sabbath, we must always remember that God's commandments are of utmost importance and take precedence over man-made traditions and customs. Nevertheless, we can learn valuable lessons from these traditions if we exercise discernment and knowledge to differentiate between what is tradition and what God has commanded.

There are three primary traditions that form part of the Shabbat observance:

- Lighting the Sabbath candles
- Blessing the wine
- Blessing the bread or challah

It is a weekly occasion to celebrate, share stories with family and friends, and sing songs. This feast fosters a time of jubilation and connection with loved ones and our heavenly Father.

## *Exodus 20:8-11*

### *Complete Jewish Bible*

<sup>8</sup> *“Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God. <sup>9</sup> You have six days to labour and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Shabbat for Adonai your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work — not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property. <sup>11</sup> For in six days, Adonai made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day He rested. This is why Adonai blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for Himself.*

The term "Shabbat" refers to the day of rest and remembrance. The Hebrew word for "remember" is "zakhor," which denotes the act of recollecting and renewing past events and experiences in the present moment. When we remember Shabbat, we enter a state of re-creation where the Lord ministers to us through His Word, prompting a transformation in our identity and way of living.

To commemorate this special day, we must set it apart from the rest by refraining from treating it as an ordinary day. This entails abstaining from work and commercial activities and dedicating the entire day to family, the Word of God, rest, and prayer.

In Deuteronomy this commandment about the Shabbat is repeated:

### *Deuteronomy 5:12*

#### *English Standard Version*

<sup>12</sup> *“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.*

The term "keep," as translated in the context of Shabbat, originates from the word "shamor," which implies safeguarding, protecting, and closely observing something. It is not solely about remembering the Sabbath but also about preserving and protecting its sanctity, as though safeguarding something of great worth.

## What does God Command and Forbid on the Shabbat

The Shabbat is a sacred day of rest that is important to God and is called a sign between Him and His people. In Exodus 31:13, God says, *"You must observe My Sabbaths. This will be a sign between Me and you for generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy."* The Shabbat is a day set apart for rest and worship, where we can focus our attention on God and His goodness.

God commands that no work should be done on the Shabbat day (Exodus 20:8-10). This includes not only physical labour but also business transactions and pursuing our own pleasure. However, certain activities are permissible on the Shabbat, such as preparing food (Exodus 16:23) and performing acts of mercy (Matthew 12:11-12).

Keeping the Shabbat is a powerful statement of faith, as it acknowledges the existence of a Creator and our dependence on Him. In Genesis 2:2-3, God rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and made it holy. By observing the Shabbat, we honour God's work of creation and acknowledge Him as our Provider. This is exemplified in Exodus 16:22-30, where the Israelites were commanded to gather a double portion of manna on the sixth day, as they would not work on the seventh day. The Shabbat also serves as a sign of our commitment to God and our readiness for the return of our Bridegroom, as stated in Ezekiel 20:12 and Exodus 31:13. Finally, the Shabbat serves as a sign of God's authority over our lives, and it is a commandment that should not be taken lightly.

What are you allowed to do and not allowed to do on the Shabbat according to God's Law?

- Remember it, set it apart, keep it holy (Ex 20: 8).
- You are not to do any kind of work. Not you, your livestock, your slave, your son or daughter, or any foreigner inside your gates or property (Ex 20: 10).
- Rest on the Shabbat (Hebrews 4:9).
- Do not kindle a fire (Ex 35:3).
- Do not do evil on the Shabbat (Isaiah 56:2).
- Do not buy and sell on the Shabbat (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

- Do not do your own pleasure on God's holy day (Isaiah 28:13-14).
- Call it a delight and honour it (Isaiah 28:13-14).
- Do not speak idle words on the Shabbat (Is 28:13-14).
- Do not treat it as ordinary (Ex 31:14).
- It is a perpetual commandment (Ex 31:16).
- It is a holy convocation (Lev 23:3).

This is what God commands us to do and forbids us to do on His Shabbat, and it should be our primary focus when we begin to honour the Shabbat of the LORD. The rest of the traditions are man-made, and we should always prioritize God's commandments over tradition. For instance, while lighting the Shabbat candles is a beautiful tradition, it is important to do so before sunset since God prohibits kindling a fire on the Shabbat. Therefore, do not prioritize the tradition over honouring God by lighting the candles after sunset.



## Preparing for Shabbat

The only way we can truly make Shabbat a time of rest, holiness and joy, we need to take care to make proper preparations for this weekly feast.

### Planning for Shabbat

The first step in preparing for Shabbat involves planning the meal, ensuring you have enough time to shop for both Friday and Saturday meals. Additionally, sending out invitations to friends and even inviting the less fortunate to share in the festivities is customary.

To spiritually prepare for Shabbat, set aside time to read that week's Torah Portion. This way, you can share what you have learned with loved ones as you spend time together on this holy day.

### Setting the Shabbat Table

As Shabbat is an extraordinary day, it calls for special preparations, including dressing elegantly and setting the table with the finest tableware. A typical Shabbat table features the following items:

- Candle holders for the Shabbat candles
- Fresh flowers or decorations
- The Kiddush cup (cup for the wine)
- Wine or grape juice
- Challa / Kitke loaf (on a challa plate with a challa cover)
- Salt (to sprinkle on the challah before eating)
- A hand washing basin with decorative towel
- The Shabbat prayer book (included in this manual)

It is customary to have the Shabbat table ready and the entire meal prepared before sunset on Friday evening.

## Charity and Shabbat

On Shabbat, it is a common practice to give to charity. As part of my pre-Shabbat preparations, I make sure to withdraw some cash to have on hand for giving to beggars and those in need.

Other families choose to have a Tzedakah box (charity box) on the Shabbat table, where each member can contribute to be later distributed to the less fortunate. When placing charity in the box, it is customary to recite the following blessing:

### *Tzedakah Box Blessing*

*Blessed are you, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us to care for the poor and needy. Amen.*

## Lighting the Shabbat Candles

The lighting of candles during Shabbat holds significant meanings. Firstly, God's Word is described as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Secondly, it symbolizes the light of the Torah. Thirdly, Yeshua is the Light of the world who drives away darkness. Fourthly, we are called to be a light unto the world. Finally, according to Torah, a matter is decided based on the witness of two or three. Therefore, the two candles represent the lamp, the light, the Messiah, and the two witnesses.

Shabbat candles are usually lit by the eldest woman in the house, usually at least 20 minutes before the sun sets on the Friday night (before the Shabbat begins). After lighting the candles, she recites the following blessing:

### *Blessing over the lighting of the candles*

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, who sanctifies us with Your commandments, and commanded us to be a light to all the nations and Who gave us the Messiah, Yeshua, the light of the world! Amen.*

## Blessings

On Shabbat, it is a common practice to give blessings to one's children. The traditional blessing involves mentioning the names of Joseph's sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) as well as the names of the matriarchs (Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and Rebecca), and includes the priestly blessing that is found in Numbers 6:22-27.

### **Blessing for sons:**

*Father:* May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he cause His face to shine upon you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.

*(Yevarechecha Adonai veyeeshmerecha! Yaer Adonai panav eleycha veechoonecha! Yeesa Adonai panev eleycha vayasem lecha ahalom!) (Yesimcah Elohim le Ephrayim vechi Menashe.)*

*May the Lord always be with you. May He bring you home unto the land prepared for you. May God bless you and grant you long life.*

*Mother:* May the Lord fulfil our Sabbath prayer for you. May God make you good husbands and fathers.

*Father:* May He prepare and send a holy wife for you. May the Lord protect and defend you. May His Spirit fill you with grace. May our family grow in happiness, please hear our Shabbat prayer, Amen.

### **Blessing for daughters:**

*Father:* May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He cause His face to shine upon you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

*(Yevarechecha Adona veyeeshmerecha! Yaer Adonai panav eleycha veechoonecha! Yeesa Adonai panev eleycha vayasem lecha shalom! Yesimech Elohim ke Sarah Rivka Rachel ve Leah.)*

*May the Lord always be with you. May He bring you home unto the land prepared for you. May God bless you and grant you long life.*

*Mother: May the Lord fulfil our Sabbath prayer for you. May God make you good mothers and wives.*

*Father: May He bring you a husband who will love, cherish and care for you. May the Lord protect and defend you. May His Spirit fill you with grace. May our family grow in happiness, please hear our Shabbat prayer, Amen.*

***Blessing over the wife:***

**Husband:** *Lord, thank you for giving me a wife.*

*Proverbs 31:10-31*

- <sup>10</sup> *Who can find a capable wife?  
Her value is far beyond that of pearls.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Her husband trusts her from his heart,  
and she will prove a great asset to him.*
- <sup>12</sup> *She works to bring him good, not harm,  
all the days of her life.*
- <sup>13</sup> *She procures a supply of wool and flax  
and works with willing hands.*
- <sup>14</sup> *She is like those merchant vessels,  
bringing her food from far away.*
- <sup>15</sup> *It's still dark when she rises to give food to her household  
and orders to the young women serving her.*
- <sup>16</sup> *She considers a field, then buys it,  
and from her earnings she plants a vineyard.*
- <sup>17</sup> *She gathers her strength around her  
and throws herself into her work.*
- <sup>18</sup> *She sees that her business affairs go well;  
her lamp stays lit at night.*
- <sup>19</sup> *She puts her hands to the staff with the flax;  
her fingers hold the spinning rod.*
- <sup>20</sup> *She reaches out to embrace the poor  
and opens her arms to the needy.*

- <sup>21</sup> *When it snows, she has no fear for her household;  
since all of them are doubly clothed.*
- <sup>22</sup> *She makes her own quilts;  
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Her husband is known at the city gates  
when he sits with the leaders of the land.*
- <sup>24</sup> *She makes linen garments and sells them;  
she supplies the merchants with sashes.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Clothed with strength and dignity,  
she can laugh at the days to come.*
- <sup>26</sup> *When she opens her mouth, she speaks wisely;  
on her tongue is loving instruction.*
- <sup>27</sup> *She watches how things go in her house,  
not eating the bread of idleness.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Her children arise; they make her happy;  
her husband too, as he praises her:*
- <sup>29</sup> *"Many women have done wonderful things,  
but you surpass them all!"*
- <sup>30</sup> *Charm can lie, beauty can vanish,  
but a woman who fears Adonai should be praised.*
- <sup>31</sup> *Give her a share in what she produces;  
let her works speak her praises at the city gates.*

*May your heart meditate on the power and the glory of the Lord and may your hands perform good deeds, as you do the work of Yeshua.*

*May you (insert wife's name) be blessed as you rise while it is yet night to see about the ways of our household and may you be blessed as you see about the daily care and education of our children. May your mouth be filled with wisdom and kindness. Amen.*

## **Blessing over the husband**

**Wife:** *Lord, thank you for giving me a husband.*

*Psalm 1*

*1 How blessed are those  
who reject the advice of the wicked,  
don't stand on the way of sinners  
or sit where scoffers sit!*

*2 Their delight  
is in Adonai's Torah;  
on his Torah they meditate  
day and night.*

*3 They are like trees planted by streams —  
they bear their fruit in season,  
their leaves never wither,  
everything they do succeeds.*

*4 Not so the wicked,  
who are like chaff driven by the wind.*

*5 For this reason the wicked  
won't stand up to the judgment,  
nor will sinners  
at the gathering of the righteous.*

*6 For Adonai watches over  
the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked  
is doomed.*

*May you (insert husband's name) be blessed as you rise and as you labour for the good of  
our household. And may you be blessed as you lead our family in the ways of the Lord.  
May your mouth be filled with wisdom and kindness. Amen.*

## Shabbat Kiddush (blessing over the wine)

Kiddush means sanctification, and this is the blessing that is said over the wine or grape juice on Shabbat or on the feast days. Normally this blessing is recited by the father of the house, while holding the cup of wine. This blessing begins with a reference to Genesis 1:31-2:3.

The wine in the cup symbolizes the covenant and the atonement that was made by Messiah's blood, which paid the ultimate price for our sins, so that we may be passed from death to life. As part of the covenant, we are responsible for keeping the commandments set out in the word of God.

### Friday Night Kiddush

*And evening and the morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.*

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and was pleased with us, and His holy Shabbat in love and in favour, He gave us a heritage, a memorial of the work of creation. For this is the day beginning for holy convocations, a memorial of the exodus from Egypt. For You chose us and sanctified us from all the nations. And Your holy Shabbat with love and favour You gave us as a heritage. Blessed are You, ADONAI, Who sanctifies the Shabbat. Amen.*

### Blessing over the wine

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.*

After this blessing is recited, it is customary to give each person present some of the wine from the Kiddush cup.



## Washing of Hands

Immediately after reciting the Kiddush, it is customary for everyone to wash their hands before blessing the bread. This ritual hand washing symbolizes purification and renewal, as if cleansing with the Word of God and removing the old to make way for the new. It represents being washed clean by the Living Waters so that we may enter into a place of intimacy with God.

There are various ways to perform the symbolic hand washing before blessing the bread. One common approach is to use a flask filled with water, washing one hand and then the other over a basin or bucket.

### Blessing recited while washing hands

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, teaching us about clean and unclean, holy and profane. As we wash, may it be symbolic of the old being washed away, thank You for Your Living Waters that cleanse and renew. Amen.*

## Blessing the Bread

After the handwashing, the head of the household lightly draws a knife across the challah, making a slight indentation to indicate the place for cutting, then raises the loaf and recites the blessing.

The act of slightly cutting the challah bread on Shabbat symbolizes the manna that the Israelites consumed in the wilderness, which was said to be ready to eat and already cut. For those who believe in Messiah Yeshua, who is the Bread of Life, the cutting of the bread holds an even deeper significance. Yeshua's body was lashed, pierced, and died for us so that we may have eternal life, and the cutting of the bread serves as a reminder of this sacrifice.

### Blessing over the bread

*Blessed are You, Oh LORD our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Amen.*

The head of the household cuts a piece of the challah for himself, and then either dips it in salt, or sprinkles salt over the slice. He or she then cuts and distributes the rest of the challah to those around the table.

The salt on the challah during the Shabbat meal is symbolic of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Just as salt never spoils, the covenant between God and the Jewish people is eternal. It also represents the idea that our actions should be seasoned with the "salt" of good deeds, kindness, and righteousness. Additionally, the salt on the challah may serve as a reminder of the salt that was used in the Temple sacrifices.

## The Shabbat Meal

After these blessings and rituals are completed, it is time to enjoy the Shabbat meal. This meal is special, and usually consist of fish, soup, chicken and meat. During the meal, the conversation is usually around commentary about the weekly Torah portion.

*Deuteronomy 8:10*

*Complete Jewish Bible*

*<sup>10</sup> So you will eat and be satisfied, and you will bless Adonai your God for the good land He has given you.*

The Word of God commands us to eat, then bless Him for the food. It is for this reason that “grace” is said after the meal. This should be a model for us to follow not just on Shabbat, but with every meal we partake of.

### Grace after the meal

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, Who nourishes the whole world in goodness, with grace, kindness, and compassion. He gives bread to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever. And through His great goodness we have never lacked, nor will we lack food ever, for the sake of His great Name. For He is God, who nourishes and sustains all, and does good to all, and prepares food for all His creatures which He created. Blessed are You, LORD, who nourishes all. Amen.*

### Blessing God for Salvation

*Blessed are You, oh LORD our God, King of the universe, Who gave us the way of salvation through Messiah Yeshua, blessed be He. Amen.*

## Shabbat Day Activities (Saturday)

The morning of Shabbat typically begins with communal Bible study and prayer. This is also the time when most congregations come together for the Shabbat teaching, which includes a summary of that week's Torah portion and related readings.

Following the Shabbat service, lunch is served. The remainder of the day is spent in the company of loved ones, taking leisurely strolls, or simply resting. Torah study is encouraged throughout the day until sunset.

## Havdalah

Havdalah means separation, it is a ceremony that is done to mark the end of the Shabbat on a Saturday night when the sun has set. The idea of this ceremony is to make a clear distinction between the sacred day of Shabbat and the ordinary weekday that begins when the sun sets on a Saturday.

This ceremony is usually celebrated at home with family and friends and involves the lighting of a Havdalah candle.

## Shabbat Songs

[Joshua Aaron - Shabbat Shalom](#)

[Joshua Aaron Shabbat Play List](#)

[The Blessing in Hebrew](#)

[Joshua Aaron - Messianic Praise Playlist](#)

[Joshua Aaron - Immanuel Playlist](#)

[Paul Wilbur - Messianic Praise Playlist](#)

[Messianic Shabbat Songs and Blessings](#)

[Dance with me](#)

## For the kids

[Shabbat Songs for Kids](#)

[Torah Portions for Kids](#)

Join the WhatsApp group: Little Olive Tree for weekly Torah Portions for kids, click on the link below to join:

<https://t.me/littleolivetree>