

Preparation Day and Traditions of Shabbat

Days of the Week

Sabbath is like the aroma of a scented candle. Even after it is extinguished the fragrance still lingers in the air. After we close Sabbath with the Havdalah service (discussed in a separate article) the blessings and emotion don't just stop, and they are not meant to. It is to carry us onward into the new week, refreshed and blessed by our Creator.

The entire week from Sunday to Friday can be viewed as preparation for the Sabbath. Indeed the names of the days in Hebrew are only numbered, the English translation being, "the first day" (Sunday), "the second day" (Monday), and so on. The exception is Sabbath, which in Hebrew is Shabbat. We are counting towards the pinnacle of the week. The more that you keep you Sabbath, the more you will notice that the days of the week revolve around it, and it becomes the focal point of your week. Friday, the day leading up to sunset, is known as preparation day. It is the day that we do most of our cleaning, cooking and spiritual preparation for Shabbat.



The following is just an example of how our family prepares for Sabbath. It is a guide only. Every family is different and has different needs. Because I do not work outside the home, and homeschool, this is a schedule that works best for me.

On Wednesday, the fourth day we begin to start looking towards the upcoming Sabbath. We decide what our Sabbath meal is going to be, making a shopping list and other plans. It is wonderful to have guests for Sabbath, so you may consider inviting over friends to share your Sabbath meal. This is also the day I begin the weekly laundry. Our family is large, so it takes more than one day to do it all. To ensure that it is done before Friday sunset, I start on Wednesday.

Thursday (the fifth day) is usually the day I go food shopping for Sabbath, and anything else we may need through that day. I also plan and purchase for lunch as well; usually meals that don't have to be cooked, such as lunch meat, salads, etc. I also make sure that I cook enough for Erev Shabbat dinner that we can eat leftovers on Saturday night. On Thursday night, after dinner the kitchen is thoroughly cleaned - counters scrubbed, floor washed, etc. This way I am not waiting for the kitchen to be cleaned before I can begin cooking. I also have the children do their weekly room cleaning, freeing up their time on Friday to concentrate on the rest of the house.

On Friday, (the sixth day) I begin all the cooking and cleaning the rest of the house, and finish up the dreaded laundry. There is much excitement because Sabbath is coming and we need to be ready. All cooking, work, everything we need to carry us over until the end of Sabbath needs to be accomplished. Everyone works together towards this goal. About an hour before sunset the table is set, (the Erev Shabbat table is discussed later.)

Tips

1. Try to get your shopping done before Friday. It is almost impossible (at least for me) to shop on Friday and still expect that every thing will be completed on time. Invariably something doesn't get done if I hold off shopping till the last minute. On Friday everyone else is out trying to shop. A 45 minute shopping trip could take double that time or more because the stores are crowded.
2. If you have children assign chores so everyone knows what is expected of them. Don't try to do it all yourself. Be sure to involve them. Give them fun things to do as well. My daughters enjoy helping with the challah. By involving your children, you are not only creating memories that will last a lifetime, but also good habits in preparation.
3. Allow enough time for the unexpected - and to get everything done.
4. Do invite guests!
5. It is most appropriate to discuss the week's parasha at the Shabbat table. This day is to be elevated above the others, so we try not to discuss ordinary topics. It is Yahweh's day, so we speak His words. Have your children prepare something from the parasha to discuss at dinner.
6. If you can, cook some of your meal during the week and freeze it. It will save lots of time.

What to wear

Some families get dressed up for Shabbat and some don't, but whatever your preference, everyone should be dressed appropriately to convey the uniqueness of the day. In my house the rule is clean and no tee-shirts or shorts.

The Erev Shabbat Table



The Shabbat table is different from the dinner table on any other day of the week, and we do special things to make the table beautiful. Again, it is your preference, and all of the things mentioned are traditional - not required. Sabbath will come irregardless of whether you have fresh flowers, silver, or china on the table. In fact, we used to use the Chinet disposable plates to reduce clean up after dinner. Then we got a dishwasher, and I found that I really enjoyed having the table set with real dishes. We now use the beautiful china that belonged to my mother, of blessed memory.

Besides having the table set for family and invited guests, you will need candlesticks, candles, a cutting board and bread knife for the challah bread, wine glasses, wine (or grape juice). In regard to candles, some families have two candlesticks, representing the two commandants - to

remember AND keep the Sabbath. Some light three candles, representing creation, redemption, and restoration. Others light a candle for each member of their family, or light the seven branched menorah on Sabbath. Whichever you choose, remember the candles must be lit before sunset, as the Torah prohibits any kindling of flame on the Sabbath. Candles specifically for Sabbath and that burn for four hours, can be purchased in the kosher section of your grocery store, or anywhere Judaica is sold. A box holds 72 candles, and the average price is between \$3-4.

The challah bread is the traditional braided bread for Erev Shabbat dinner. Most families have two loaves, (home made or purchased) for Erev Shabbat. I have a lot of fun making challah for Erev Shabbat dinner, and if you have the time, I highly recommend it. It can be something that you and your daughters could do together. My personal recipe is below. It yields 4 small-medium loaves, 3 medium loaves, 2 large loaves, or 1 super huge wedding special, depending on how you divide it before you braid. A little trick I learned is when it is time to divide the dough, divide it in half as if you were making 2 large loaves. Then put one of the halves in a freezer bag. Place it in the freezer. You now have your challah dough for next week's Sabbath.* Divide the remaining dough in half again, then braid each half. These will be two small-medium loaves for the present Sabbath.

Challah Recipe from

2 cups of lukewarm water
3 packages of yeast
8 cups of flour
1.5 cups of sugar (this can be adjusted. If you like sweeter challah add a little more sugar)
1.5 teaspoons of salt
2 sticks of butter or margarine (softened)
5 eggs beaten, (reserve 1 egg for glaze)

Mix water and yeast in an extra large bowl. Add three cups of flour and 1 cup of sugar. Stir with a fork and let rise a half an hour in a warm place. In another bowl measure 5 cups of flour, salt, and half a cup of sugar. Add butter/margarine and cut in with a knife until the mixture resembles coarse meal. At the end of half an hour, add 4 beaten eggs to the yeast mixture and stir well. Add flour/butter mix to yeast mixture and work in bowl. If sticky add up to two more cups of flour. Knead well on floured surface until smooth and elastic. Place in an oiled bowl and cover with a towel. Put in a warm place and let rise for two hours, or until doubled. Punch down, and knead lightly for a few minutes. Divide the dough into parts, depending on how many challot you want. This recipe makes 4 small-medium loaves, 3 medium loaves, 2 large loaves, or 1 super huge wedding special. One trick that I learned which saves me time the following Friday is to divide the dough in half, and place one of the halves in a freezer bag, and put in your freezer. Now you have your dough for next week.* Then divide the other half that wasn't frozen in two, and then braid. You now have two braided loaves for the present Shabbat.

Place the loaves on oiled baking pans, cover and allow to rise in a warm place for as long as possible. (3-5 hours). The longer you let them rise, the lighter your bread will be. Brush with the beaten egg that you set aside. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, (which symbolizes the manna in the

wilderness). Bake at 350 degrees for 30 -45 minutes. Bread will be golden brown, and will have a hallow sound when tapped if it is done.

*The following week remove the frozen dough, and put in an oiled bowl in a warm place, allowing it to thaw completely. When it has thawed, kneed it on a floured surface for a few minutes, then divide in half for two loaves and braid them. Follow the rest of the recipe from here.

Braiding and other recipes

There are other wonderful challah recipes which can be located in the Fall 2006 issue of Sarah's Tent <http://www.sarahstent.info/fall2006.html> There is also a You Tube demonstration on braiding there, and this link as well, which is a six strand braid. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22p3wIHLupc>

As far as the menu for Sabbath, in each issue of Sarah's Tent, we have a Kosher Kitchen section with wonderful ideas, and recipes for your Sabbath table. There are traditional Ashkenazi as well as Sephardic recipes. In the Summer 2006 issue, you will also find instructions on how to prepare your meat, (kasher) if you don't have access to a kosher store.

Cooking on the Sabbath

Is it permissible to cook on Shabbat? No. This is what I believe based on Scripture, discussion with my rabbi, and my own research. Does Yeshua speak to us on this issue? In Matthew 12:1-8, the disciples were hungry and were plucking grains of wheat to eat. The Pharisees saw them and accused them of breaking the Sabbath. However, our Messiah said they had condemned the guilty. I believe this Scripture is telling us there is nothing wrong with simple food preparation. Reheating food already prepared would be fine. As I mentioned before I make plans ahead of time for what I am going to have and arrange meals so that nothing has to be cooked during the Sabbath day. It just takes a little planning and organization, but it can be done. If our ancestors could do it without all of the wonderful modern conveniences we have today, then certainly we can as well.

I would like to close with an article on this subject. It is from the website <http://scripturalhelps.org>

COOKING ON SABBATHS

Sabbath	do no work	Leviticus 23:3
Feast of Unleavened Bread first day	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:7
Feast of Unleavened Br seventh day	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:8
Feast of Weeks	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:21
Feast of Trumpets	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:25
Day of Atonement	do no work	Leviticus 23:28

Feast of Tabernacles first day	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:35
Feast of Tabernacles eighth day	do no customary work	Leviticus 23:36

So we see that there are two days on which no work may be done and six others on which no customary work may be done.

Just what is the difference?

Is there a kind of work that may be done on those six days but not on the other two?

We can find a part of the answer in Exodus chapter twelve where Yahweh is giving directions about keeping two of these same days. He says the same thing as he later said in Leviticus 23:7&8 but in slightly different words which make it a little clearer,

“No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat; that only may be prepared by you.”

Exodus 12:16

So that is what is meant by the phrase ‘do no customary work.’ It means that all the normal work must be suspended for those days except the work of preparing the Feast meal. The one annual Holy Day when Yahweh says, “Do no work,” is the day of atonement when there is no meal to be eaten because it is a day of total fasting. For the weekly Sabbath this is just a clarification of the original commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 to do no work on the Sabbath day.

Yahweh made this crystal clear when he was giving manna to the Israelites in the desert.

Exodus 16:5 "And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

Exodus 16:21 So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need.

And when the sun became hot, it melted. 22 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 Then he said to them, "This is what Yahweh has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to Yahweh. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'"

24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. 25 Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to Yahweh; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none."

27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. 28 And Yahweh said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? 29 "See! For Yahweh has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

It took our fathers a while to finally get the message. No work on the weekly Sabbath! That includes no work to prepare food. Verse 23 gives the instructions for the day of preparation. If we want to eat cooked food on Sabbath then we must do any cooking or baking of that food on the sixth day.

Further collaboration is found in Exodus 35:

Exodus 35:2 "Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to Yahweh. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day."

Some have said that this command pertained only to building the tabernacle because that subject is discussed immediately afterwards in Exodus 35.

While the prohibition against building a fire on Sabbath would certainly have applied to the construction work too, it seems that the commandment is general.

The construction tasks which would have required fire are mentioned only as part of the long list of tasks and no allusion to the use of fire on Sabbath is made while discussing the construction work.

The command being in the same chapter is no indication because the chapter and verse divisions were a MUCH later addition. (Long after the time of the Messiah.)

One of the Israelites got into trouble after he knew that there was to be no cooking on Sabbath. He was doing some work in preparation to building a fire:

Numbers 15:32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. 34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. 35 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."

The death penalty is still in effect for disobeying the commands of Yahweh. We are still required to observe these commandments, statutes and judgments. Of course, if we do disobey, we can come before Yahweh in repentance and ask that Yahshua's sacrifice be applied to cover that sin. In that case Yahweh will not execute us for the sin. But is that what we want to do? Do we want to apply Yahshua's sufferings just so we can have a fresh-cooked meal on Sabbath? Certainly not! Also; If we truly repent then how could we cook again on the next Sabbath?

This is a small commandment which is easy to obey and we have no need to violate it.

It is really a matter of whether we decide in our heart to obey Yahweh or not.

The man gathering sticks was executed because he defied Yahweh.

Will we be so bold? I pray not.

Br Tom

