


ONETABLE 

# SHABBAT DINNER GUIDE



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You're having a bunch of people over to your house for dinner. And now you're supposed to stand up and bless things in a foreign language? It's a lot. So where do you start when it comes to Shabbat ritual?

**Start with you.**

What's going on in your life that you can connect to light, wine, and nourishment? Maybe you want to choose one ritual to elevate this time, and another the next time you host. Have questions? Need some audio guidance? Reach out to a OneTable team member and check out [onetable.org/shabbat-sounds](https://onetable.org/shabbat-sounds). Questioning and experimenting with Jewish practice is part of what it means to be Jewish.

Remember: Shabbat happens every week. There will be another chance to host and many more opportunities to expand your ritual repertoire.

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

In Jewish tradition, the world is created in an evolution of seven days: six days of work that culminate in the seventh day, Shabbat, a day of rest. Shabbat is not a postscript, it is as important a part of bringing the world into being as any of the days of active creativity. Judaism teaches that we, human beings, are responsible for continuing the work of creation to make the world a better place, day after day, week after week. **The essence of Shabbat isn't what we can't do on this one day, it's what we can do on the other six if we take the time to end our week with intention on Friday night.**

This guide is about finding yourself in Shabbat. We offer readings and blessings, a combination of tradition and innovation that we hope inspires you and your friends and family, regardless of your faith background. The texts we bring are "God optional" and invite you to explore meaning-making in a context that does not require any particular belief system or theology.

The traditional Jewish blessings presented here are just that, blessings. They are part of the Oral Torah, passed down from generation to generation beginning in the first century of the common era, and committed to writing much later, some not until the early medieval period. But they are not "prayers." A prayer is meant to reflect inward, while blessings help us shape gratitude outward using language as our tool; we hope that over time you add your own language to these blessings and create a Shabbat practice all your own.





# MEDITATION TO WELCOME SHABBAT

*Begin this optional exercise by inviting everyone to relax in a quiet, preferably dimly lit space.*

Welcome. Take a moment to get comfortable, whether sitting or lying down. Focus on your breath and your body. Allow yourself to relax, to inhale (one-two-three) and exhale (three-two-one) as you settle into place.

We've joined to share Friday night together, to transition from the hectic demands of work and our daily routines into the rest and relaxation of Shabbat. You are invited to leave the week behind.

Let go of what has been, let go of what will be, and enter a place of stillness, a sacred space and time. Envision the sun beginning to set, slipping behind the horizon out of view. Breathe in the glow of the sunset, and pause, breathe out the stresses of the week; breathe in the calm of nightfall, and pause, breathe out and feel a sense of release. Breathe in the radiance of the moon and stars, and pause, breathe out all thoughts of doing, and become one with this present moment.

Feel the warmth of relaxation wash over you. Breathe in the radiant light, and pause, feel your mind become open and free. Breathe out and invite your soul to soar to new heights; breathe in the calm, and pause, feel yourself let go; breathe out everything and focus only on Now. Feel your body, mind, and soul become whole and at peace.

Now we are finally ready, to graciously accept this present, to embrace the gift of rest, to turn our complete attention toward Shabbat, to savor all that Shabbat provides, and become enveloped by holiness. As we breathe in and out once more, we pause, and welcome Shabbat.

*By Evette Nan Katlin at [ritualwell.org](http://ritualwell.org) modified by Rabbi Jessica Minnen*

# Light



# THE RITUAL

**Create light to begin Shabbat.** In Jewish tradition, lighting candles at sundown on Friday is the last act of the workweek, the literal spark that carries us into the weekend. While you will find no verse in the Torah instructing you to light two candles at dusk, the rabbinic sages over the centuries linked the practice to the concepts of *shamor Shabbat* and *zachor Shabbat*, the commandments to keep and remember Shabbat.

The beauty of Jewish tradition is not its certitude but its ambiguity; even the rabbis disagree on what exactly it means to keep and remember Shabbat.

**What might it mean for you?** While it's heartening that the rabbis took the time to create a text-based conceptual framework around the practice of creating light, it is possibly more remarkable — and in its way even more spiritually moving — to recognize that the ritual of candle lighting is first and foremost a practical exercise. Before there was electricity, an embedded candle lighting ritual ensured that you and your friends would not be celebrating Shabbat in the dark. In fact the Jewish legal sources clearly state that if you can only afford to buy one thing for Friday night it should be candles, because if you can't see your table, your wine, your food, your guests, it's impossible to enjoy Shabbat.

Many Jewish celebrations begin with the lighting of candles to separate the holy from the mundane. By lighting candles, one is reminded of God's first act of creation. Just as creation began with "let there be light" so does the celebration of Shabbat.

This is the moment when Shabbat begins. By lighting the candles, we begin the transition from the week to Shabbat, from the mundane to the holy.

## The Goods

### CANDLES AND CANDLESTICKS

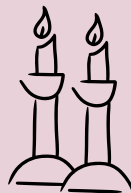
Try for at least two, but this is a place to experiment; some folks like to light two candles per home, others light two per person.

### MATCHES

A lighter also works, but we prefer matches for the olfactory effect.

### SAFE PLACE TO LET 'EM BURN

Ideally your Shabbat candles will burn out on their own over the course of the evening, but do blow them out if you're heading out after dinner.



## BLESS

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher  
kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that makes us holy through our  
actions and honors us with the light of Shabbat.

*or*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who  
commands us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

### Reflection

On Shabbat, the light within everyone and everything is  
revealed. We need only the will to see it.

— Sfat Emet (1847-1905, Poland)







## **CANDLE LIGHTING MEDITATION**

Light your Shabbat candles, preferably two, in any way you feel comfortable. This is an open-eye meditation that focuses attention on the candlelight, letting go of the week that was, and welcoming Shabbat.

Bring your attention to the flame. Draw in a long, slow breath through your nose, and as you slowly exhale through your mouth let the busyness of the day drop away. Take in another long, slow, deep breath through your nose, and as you slowly exhale through your mouth, let go of the worries that may have been troubling you this week. Take a third long, slow, deep breath, breathing all the way down into your belly. As you slowly breathe out through your nose, allow yourself to sink comfortably into your posture, to settle into Shabbat. Whether you are sitting or standing, become aware of your back and gently straighten it, allow your shoulders to gently slope downwards, let your face be smooth and serene.

Now allow your breathing to come naturally, keeping your focus on the candle flame. Hear these words and let them go, just being aware of the guidance but not holding onto the words. Gaze softly at the flame, and as you continue to do so if you feel you are starting to stare at the light, ever so gently blink and refocus your eyes, gazing softly at the candlelight once more and allowing your mind to quiet down, allowing the thoughts that enter your mind to be there, but like these words just letting them drift by. As you softly gaze at the flame, you will notice that thoughts will come into your mind. Just allow them to be there, and allow them to float out of your mind like passing clouds. Just as Shabbat rest takes time to enter your night, your mind takes time to rest, to come to a place of quiet. When your mind influences you with thoughts, bring it gently but firmly back to the flame. This is a meditation practice, this is a Shabbat practice, and it takes time and patience to change.

Continue to gaze gently at the flame. Keep your awareness on the flame, gently gazing at the flame, remaining aware, remaining focused, remaining concentrated, aware, focused, and at rest. Remain aware, letting all thoughts pass through your mind like clouds in the sky.

Allow time for silence.

And now when you are ready, gently lower your gaze from the flame. Bring your consciousness back into the room. Give thanks for having been able to spend this time in meditation. Give thanks for the gift of Shabbat. Slowly turn your head from side to side. Become aware of the temperature in the room. Become aware of your body. Become aware of your thoughts. When you are ready, take a deep and clearing breath.

**Option 1)** Close with the blessing over the candles:

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.* Blessed are you, Infinite One, who makes us holy through our actions and honors us with the light of Shabbat. Amen. Shabbat Shalom.

**Option 2)** Close with Shabbat Shalom.

*By Elisabeth Blaikie, modified for Shabbat by Rabbi Jessica Minnen*

## THE BREAKDOWN

There's no right or wrong way to approach ritual; there are simply options. As a host, you might have already lit Shabbat candles before your friends arrive. Others might want to wait and light with or for your guests.

If you light with your guests, you can set the table with multiple tea lights and matchbooks, and as you take your seats invite everyone to light one or two and say the blessing or share a reflection together.

If you light for your guests, you as the host or an invited guest can light one set of candles on behalf of everyone present, and lead the blessing or offer an intention.

Because lighting candles can be understood as the last act of work we do on Friday, there exists a custom in many homes to light the candles and draw your hands toward yourself three times in a circular motion before covering your eyes and reciting the blessing. When you open your eyes, the light has been transformed from light of the week into the light of Shabbat.

## A LITTLE EXTRA

Because of its home-based nature and Judaism's patriarchal roots, candle lighting has, over the centuries, become one of the few ritual practices traditionally dominated by women. However, as the great 12th century rabbi and scholar Maimonides writes in his legal compendium *Mishneh Torah*, "Both men and women are obligated to ensure that a candle is lit in the home, and obligated to bless before lighting."

So, by whatever gender you may identify, if any... let's get lit.

# Sanctify





# THE RITUAL

Pour a glass of wine or grape juice and sanctify Shabbat before drinking.

Pretty much all Jewish ceremonies and celebrations involve wine, and Shabbat dinner is no exception. But ritual doesn't exist for the sake of itself, it exists to accomplish something, almost like an ancient form of technology.

While it's tempting to imagine that our sages simply decided to sweeten celebratory practices from births to weddings with wine because, well, wine, they actually do it because the wine itself is like a switch: flip it, and we've set time apart, made it special, holy, other. It's not about the wine itself, it's about what it has the power to do when we raise our glass with intention.

That's the magic of kiddush, from the Hebrew word for holy — our ability to demarcate time, to say that this Friday night, this Shabbat dinner, this exact moment, which has never occurred before and never will again, is special. Cheers to that.

Through the blessing of the wine (*kiddush*), one acknowledges two of God's greatest gifts: creation of the world and the exodus from Egypt. Kiddush also creates a moment to express gratitude for Shabbat. It is composed of two blessings: to bless the wine and to sanctify the day.

In Judaism, wine represents joy. By taking a moment to bless the wine, we acknowledge joy as a value onto itself, not as it serves something else.

## The Goods

### TASTY BEVERAGE

The traditional go-to is the fruit of the vine, wine or grape juice. If you don't have wine or grape juice, or just feel like experimenting, use a beverage you don't normally drink throughout the week, perhaps another type of juice, a mocktail, or maybe beer or whiskey (depending on what kind of week you had).

### KIDDUSH CUP

Your favorite cup, a cup reserved for this purpose, not your everyday cup. At some point, people got the idea that a kiddush cup has to be a chalice or a goblet or something. Nope. As long as it holds about four ounces of liquid or more, what matters about the cup is that it's different, special, other.

## BLESS

Traditional kiddush in its entirety is pretty long, as it includes an introductory passage taken directly from the book of Genesis, a one line blessing (*borei pri ha'gafen*) that acknowledges the wine itself, and a closing passage that evokes both the creation narrative and the exodus from Egypt. It's the final line of that closing passage (*mikadesh ha'Shabbat*) that makes the wine a symbolic conduit for marking this time as sacred.

There are two main approaches to a traditional kiddush, one short and sweet, sort of like a light bodied Pinot Noir, the other full and robust, more like a Bordeaux. In other words, you can't make a bad choice.

If you're going for a Pinot Noir vibe...

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן.  
ברוך אתה יי מקדש השבת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.*  
*Baruch Atah Adonai mikadesh ha'Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed is the Oneness that sanctifies Shabbat.

or

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Lord our God, Who sanctifies Shabbat.



If it's a Bordeaux kinda night...

וְיֵהִי עָרֵב וְיֵהִי בֶקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי.  
וְיִקְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם.  
וְיִכַּל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
וְיִשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.  
וְיִקְרָה אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְיִקְדָּשׁ אֹתוֹ  
כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְנִבְרָאָה כְּנוֹ  
וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשׁוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצּוֹן הַנִּחִילָנוּ זָכְרוֹן לַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְרִשִׁית.  
כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ זָכָר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם.  
כִּי כְּנוֹ בְּחִסָּד וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְשָׁבַת קִדְּשׁוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצּוֹן הַנִּחִלָּתָנוּ.  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשָּׁבָת.

Va'yih erev va'yih voker yom ha'shishi  
Va'yichulu ha'shamayim va'ha'aretz v'chol tziva'am.  
Va'yichol Elohim ba'yom ha'shivi'i milachto asher asah  
va'yishbot ba'yom ha'shivi'i mi'kol milachto asher asah.  
Va'yivarech Elohim et yom ha'shivi'i va'yikadesh oto  
ki vo shavat mi'kol melachto asher bara Elohim la'asot.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'ratzah vanu  
v'Shabbat kodsho b'ahavah uv'ratzon hinchilanu zikaron l'ma'aseh v'reishit.  
Ki hu yom tehilah l'mikra'ei kodesh zeicher litziat Mitzrayim.  
Ki vanu vacharta v'otanu k'dashta mi'kol ha'amim  
v'Shabbat kodshicha b'ahavah uv'ratzon chinchaltanu.  
Baruch Atah Adonai mikadesh ha'Shabbat.

There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. And the heavens and earth and all their components were completed. God completed by the seventh day the work that God had done, and God rested on the seventh day from all of the work that God had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it God rested from all of the work that God had created to do.

Blessed is the Oneness that creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed is the Oneness, Source of the universe  
Whose love allows us to become holy through our actions.  
With that same love You made the sanctity of Shabbat our heritage  
and a reminder of the work of creation.  
As first among our sacred days, it recalls liberation from Egypt.  
We seek to be holy to You, to embrace this sacred potential among all  
people, for out of love You have passed down to us Your holy Shabbat.  
Blessed is the Oneness that sanctifies Shabbat.

*or*

It was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. So the heavens and the earth were finished, with all their complement. On the seventh day, God had completed the work that God had undertaken, and rested on the seventh day from all the work that God had been doing. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God ceased from all creative work that God had brought into being to fulfill its purpose.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who made us holy with commandments and favored us, and gave us this holy Shabbat in love and favor to be our heritage as a reminder of Creation. It is the foremost day of the holy festivals marking the Exodus from Egypt. For out of all the nations You chose us and made us holy, and You gave us Your holy Shabbat in love and favor as our heritage. Blessed are You God, Who sanctifies Shabbat.





### **Reflection**

During the week...we lose some of the light in our eyes;  
it is restored to us by the reflection of light in our kiddush cup.  
— *Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 113b*

All of creation comes closer to its origin on Shabbat.  
That moment, that movement, begins with kiddush.  
— *Likutei Moharan*

# DRINKING MEDITATION

Let's start by taking a few breaths, quieting and slowing ourselves down, breathing in and breathing out. Sit how you'd like to feel. Feel your feet on the ground, and feel grounded. Sit upright, and feel uplifted. Notice what it feels like to breathe. You can remind yourself, "Oh right, this is breathing. This is what it feels like to be alive." Close your eyes. See if you can feel where your body ends and the air begins. Notice when you get distracted from simply feeling your breath in your body and gently return to paying attention to your next inhale.

Open your eyes and pick up your glass of wine. Don't drink yet. Feel the weight of the cup in your hand, feel the temperature on your skin. Look at your hand holding the glass. Notice all of the colors you see in the wine. Pay attention and see if you notice more colors as you keep looking. Now, smell your drink. Again, don't drink yet! Notice what you smell and if you can notice more nuances as you keep smelling. Close your eyes, and see if that makes a difference.

Think about what brought your drink to your hand. Start at the very beginning. Imagine seeds plants, grape vines growing. Picture the soil, water, sun that nourished the grapes that created the wine in your glass. Think of the people, the farmers, who cultivated those grapes. The journey from grape, to wine, to bottle. Imagine the people and machines and materials and miracles that worked together to create a bottle of wine. Think of the bottles transported from farm to store to table. Imagine the people who made that happen - the truck driver, the workers, the people who stocked the shelves, the cashier who rang up the bottle at the register, the person who might have poured your drink or handed you your glass. Think of all that went into the glass of wine you're holding, and take a moment to feel gratitude, to feel blessed, and to bless.

Remind yourself of what brought you to this moment. Think way back to what nourished you, who cultivated you, all of the happenings and crazy coincidences that led up to you being right here in this moment holding this particular glass of wine. Think about your life, the past year, the past week, today. Again, take a moment to feel gratitude for being right here, right now, holding this glass. Slowly bring your drink to your lips. Don't drink yet! Feel the desire to drink. Take a breath. Bless.

Alison Laichter, [alisonlaichter.com](http://alisonlaichter.com)

# THE BREAKDOWN

Often one person recites or chants kiddush on behalf of everyone present. Short or long, that's a tall order. It is undeniably intimidating to stand up in front of your guests to make kiddush.

The words are hard enough. Then there's the choreography. In some circles, everyone remains seated for kiddush, in others everyone stands, and in still others you stand while reciting the kiddush but sit down to drink the wine. What about the wine itself? Does the person who chants kiddush pass their cup around the table for everyone to taste? Or do you invite your guests to pour wine from the bottle into their own glasses before kiddush, recite the blessing, then everyone drinks their own?

The short answer is yes. There are as many ways to make kiddush as there are words in the kiddush itself. Some hosts recite on behalf of everyone present. Some people sit during kiddush and others stand. Women can make kiddush according to some interpretations, while in others kiddush is always recited by men. Some people even have nifty wine fountains that allow the host to divide their own glass of wine into servings for their guests in a single pour.

There are also ways to use wine as a conduit to sanctify Shabbat without the formal recitation of kiddush. In fact, the best part about kiddush might be its parallels to a modern ritual everyone can relate to: making a toast.

Framing kiddush in terms of toasting is a perfect way to step into ritual without feeling stepped on. Every language has a different word for cheers — in Hebrew it's *l'chaim*, "to life" — and your guests will most probably bring to the table some expertise in this regard. Another approach is to explain the purpose of kiddush, to use wine as a conduit to sanctify time, then go around the table and invite each guest to say, as they raise their glass to the weekend, what they're putting down from the week. At the end, you can raise your glasses and toast together, *l'chaim*.





# Cleanse





## THE RITUAL

Wash your hands before the meal.

The practice of hand washing dates back, all the way back to the time of the first and second Temple period when the Israelites made special offerings on Shabbat. In order to make these offerings, they needed to cleanse their hands with fresh water then raise up their hands and recite a blessing.

## The Goods

### FRESH TAP WATER

Head to the kitchen

### A CUP FOR WASHING

Ideally one with two handles, although any cup with a handle works

## BLESS

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יְדַיִם.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu  
b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al netilat yadayim.*

Blessed is the Oneness that makes us holy through our actions  
and honors us as we raise up our hands.

*or*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who  
sanctifies us with commandments and commands us to raise  
up our hands.



## THE BREAKDOWN

Ritual hand washing isn't for everyone, and you shouldn't feel any pressure to try it out until you're ready to, um, get your hands wet.

Invite your guests to the kitchen sink. Even if you're familiar with the blessing, it's a good idea to have a copy of it by the sink as a prompt for your guests. Fill your cup with fresh water from the tap. Take the cup in your left hand and cleanse your right hand with three splashes of water. Pass the cup directly to your right hand and cleanse your left hand with three splashes of water. Put the cup down, raise your hands up, and as the water trickles down recite the blessing. Dry off, you're good to go.

## A LITTLE EXTRA

Two splashes or three? They're both correct, according to Jewish tradition. As long as you're generous with your splashes, even one splash is enough, especially in cases when water is scarce. The Kabbalists, who wanted every ritual to be imbued with as much intention as possible, opted for three splashes, a practice followed by many today.

As a mark of hospitality, many people will place the empty cup back under the tap and begin to refill it for the person behind them in line. Similarly, it is common to hold the towel after drying your own hands, and pass it directly to the person behind you.

You may notice that it gets quiet around the Shabbat dinner table around the time of ritual hand washing. This practice comes from the idea that you shouldn't interrupt yourself between rituals. Because the cleansing of hands is understood as directly connected to the blessing of the bread, many have the custom of not speaking between hand washing and eating the first piece of challah to connect the two rituals as seamlessly as possible.



# Nourish





## THE RITUAL

Bless (then eat) the challah.

## The Goods

### **BREAD**

Preferably challah because it's delicious in every conceivable way. But don't stress — any bread will do. Two full loaves is ideal. Small crowd? Waste not! Serve up two pitas or two dinner rolls. Whatever kind of bread you use, take it out of its packaging and place it on its own plate on the table.

### **CHALLAH COVER**

Any kind of cover to place over your bread, from a napkin on short notice to an ornate embroidered cloth.

### **SALT or HONEY**

Celebrating something special like a birthday or a wedding? Skip the salt and add honey to your challah instead.

## BLESS

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam  
ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed is the Oneness that brings forth bread from the earth.  
*or*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.

### Reflection

Challah is one of the three things for which  
God created the world.  
— *Bamidbar Rabbah 15*

On Shabbat, challah represents a taste of *tikkun olam*, the  
possibility of the world restored.  
— *The Maharal of Prague*





# CHALLAH MEDITATION

*This is an open-eye mindful eating meditation that can be done after motzi, the blessing over the challah or whatever bread you use to nourish your table, or in its place. Make sure everyone at the table has a piece of challah or bread before beginning.*

Find a comfortable position in your seat. Come into the present of this Shabbat gathering by taking a few breaths, noticing how you feel physically. Take a piece of challah in your hand. Notice the impulse you might have to pop it in your mouth right away. Look at the challah, examining it with curiosity as if you've never seen bread before. Notice how it feels in your hand – the texture, shape and weight. You may want to close your eyes while doing this. Notice the color of the challah and if it has any unique features. Imagine where the challah came from before arriving at this Shabbat dinner table, how it started as ripe stalks of wheat in a field. Picture the workers on the farm harvesting the wheat and another set of workers transporting the wheat to a mill. Imagine the process of grinding the wheat into flour, and that flour being mixed with water, oil, and eggs, and baked into bread. Slowly bring the challah to your nose to learn what it smells like. Notice the natural motion of your arm as it moves to do this. Continue to notice any thoughts of like or dislike you might have as you observe the bread. Notice whether you're anticipating what it will taste like. Perhaps you're starting to salivate or feeling an impulse to eat it. Now, place the challah in your mouth without biting into it. Keep it in your mouth without chewing for at least 10 seconds and explore what it feels like. Notice what it's like to take this time before eating the bread. When you are ready, slowly and softly bite into the challah. Notice what it tastes like, how its flavor and texture changes as you chew. Notice your natural impulse to swallow it. Let it nourish your body as you enter Shabbat. Sit quietly and notice what you are feeling.

And now, let's eat.

*By Jon Kabat-Zinn, modified for Shabbat by Rabbi Jessica Minnen*

## THE BREAKDOWN

In the ancient near east, if there wasn't bread on the table it wasn't a meal, and as a result the Jewish sages viewed bread as the primary source of nourishment, both literally and spiritually. Challah, the slightly sweet, braided bread many enjoy at modern Shabbat dinners, comes from a commandment in the Torah requiring the Israelites to set aside a portion of dough every week as an offering; that donation was called challah. The practice of braiding the bread evolved over time, some with three strands, others six, each with their own referential symbolism to Temple times.

On many tables you will find two loaves of challah. On Shabbat, we revel in possibility and abundance. We have a double portion of everything just as the Israelites received a double portion of manna on Shabbat during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Also, challah French toast is the best, so don't feel pressure to make it through both loaves in one sitting.

Why cover the bread? In general when faced with more than one food, Jewish tradition dictates that the first blessing offered should be on the species that comes first in the list of the Seven Species (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates) mentioned in the Torah. As such, you would say the blessing on the bread (wheat) before wine (grapes). But since you definitely say *kiddush* to sanctify Shabbat before blessing the bread, there is a dilemma of precedence. So, the sages (in the Jerusalem Talmud, redacted around ca. 400 CE) suggest covering the challah to hide it while we drink the wine first.

No one wants a jealous challah.

Once we uncover the challah, the blessing over the bread connects us to the work that brought the challah to our table. The possibility and abundance of Shabbat comes with the responsibility to work to make a better world the other six days of the week.

Pass it, rip it, cut it, tear into it like you mean it. There's no right or wrong, as long as the bread makes its way around the table.

Lastly, it is common to add some salt to the pieces challah before sharing. While this practice has its roots in, you guessed it, Temple times, it also has a more mystical explanation. According to Isaac Luria, the great 16th century Kabbalist, both bread (לחם) and salt (מלח) are representations of the divine; salt is divine severity and bread is divine kindness. We seek to overpower the severity of the salt with the kindness of the bread. Therefore, when you salt your challah, do not sprinkle the salt on top the bread, but instead to touch the bread to the salt — kindness over severity.

And with that, we head mouth-first into dinner.



## THE ONETABLE CHALLAH RECIPE

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups lukewarm water
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  packages active dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  heaping cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup olive or vegetable oil
- more oil for greasing bowl
- 5 eggs + 1 for the top
- 1 overflowing tablespoon salt
- 8 to 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups all-purpose flour
- 2-3 tablespoons of honey (optional)

**[1]** In a large bowl, dissolve yeast and 1 tbsp sugar in 1 3/4 cups lukewarm water.

**[2]** Whisk oil into yeast, then beat in 4 of the eggs, one at a time, with remaining sugar, salt, and honey if using. Gradually add flour. When dough holds together, it's ready for kneading. (You can also use a mixer with a dough hook for mixing and kneading.)

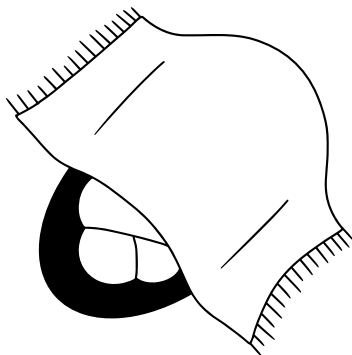
**[3]** Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead until smooth. Clean out bowl and grease it, then return dough to bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place for 1 hour, until almost doubled in size. Punch down dough, cover and let rise again in a warm place for another half-hour.

**[4]** Split dough into two sections, one for each challah. Braid dough using a standard braid, get fancy with a 6-braid challah (look up a YouTube tutorial), or get creative with your own designs.

**[5]** Place loaves on a greased cookie sheet with at least 2 inches in between. Beat the remaining egg and brush it on loaves. Let rise another hour in refrigerator.

**[6]** Preheat oven to 375 degrees and brush loaves again. Add poppy seeds, sesame seeds, sprinkles, cinnamon, or anything your heart desires.

**[7]** Bake in middle of oven for 30 to 35 minutes, or until golden. Try to let loaves cool before devouring.







**Appreciate**



# THE RITUAL

Many faiths and cultures have a grace before meals, not quite as many have a grace after meals. The blessing after the meal, or *Birkat ha'Mazon* in Hebrew, like all Shabbat dinner rituals, evolved over time. We do however have a source text for this practice in the Torah, from Deuteronomy 8:10: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, bless."

It's actually pretty radical that in Judaism, the ritual of grace after meals isn't about expressing gratitude for food itself, but for food and a full feeling. To say grace therefore requires a sense of intention around the act of consumption, nourishment, and feeling good as a result.

The traditional grace after meals is long. So long it makes the long version of kiddush seem short. It's long because the sages kept finding more and more things to be grateful for. Food, the earth, God, dinner hosts, parents, Shabbat, Torah, the exodus from Egypt, the list goes on.

At OneTable, we are grateful that there is also a succinct grace after meals recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Brachot 40b) that serves precisely the same purpose in seven words of beautiful second century Aramaic. Way to show up, sages.

## The Goods

All you need is the intention to end your Shabbat dinner with gratitude.

## BLESS

בְּרִיד רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא דְעֻלָּמָא מְרִיה דְהַאי פִּיתָא.

*Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita.*

We are blessed with compassion by the Oneness that  
sustains us with bread.

*or*

Blessed are You, Merciful One, Ruler of the universe,  
Who sustains life with bread.

*or*

You are the Source of life for all that is, and Your blessing  
flows through me.

### Reflection

What shifts in your experience of gratitude at the Shabbat dinner table?

What else nourishes you, besides food itself?



## THE BREAKDOWN

Shabbat dinner doesn't end with the food runs out or the drinks stop flowing. Shabbat dinner doesn't even end with grace after meals. Shabbat dinner ends when you walk your guests to the door. It's a last act of ritual hospitality, and one that makes hosting on Shabbat so deeply rooted in Jewish practice.

As Maimonides wrote: "The reward you receive for accompanying guests on their way is greater than for all other *mitzvot*. Our sages teach that showing hospitality for guests is the greatest expression of gratitude, greater even than study or prayer. Accompanying guests on their way is greater still."

Shabbat shalom.

# CONVERSATION STARTERS

What foods remind you of home?

If you weren't afraid, what would you do?

What is the most important lesson you've been  
taught by a family member?

You have been tasked to redesign society. What's your first move?

How would you spend a million dollars if you only  
had 24 hours to do it?

You have to live the rest of your life in a TV show.  
Which do you choose and why?

What happened on your most memorable birthday?

When/where do you most feel like you "belong"?

What accomplishment are you most proud of in your life?

Do you believe in some kind of Power greater than yourself?

Is who you are now who you wanted to be  
when you were growing up?

What's the most important thing you've learned about  
yourself from a past relationship?

What was your most recent adrenaline rush?

What is your biggest pet peeve?

If you could tell your 12-year-old self one thing, what would it be?

What's the greatest risk you've ever taken?

What is your biggest irrational fear?

When was the last time you cried?

Who is the person, where is the place,  
what is the thing that feels like home to you?

What, if anything, happens after we die?

What are your thoughts on intelligent extraterrestrial life?

How have your values changed over the past ten years?

What inspires you to better yourself?

Would you rather spend a week in the past or a week in the future?

You can be any inanimate object for 24 hours.

What do you want to be and why?

If you could fix a deep systemic wrong in modern society,  
what would you choose?

What was the first major purchase you made for yourself  
with your own money?

If you could take a year-long paid sabbatical, what would you do?

What do you miss most about being a kid?

Would you rather have 10 extra hours every day or  
\$100 deposited in your bank every day?

What song is 10/10 yet hardly anyone has heard?

If writers could “cover” books in the same way that musicians cover  
songs, what “cover novel” would you read first?

What do you know now that you really wished your  
parents taught you growing up?

What sense of purpose/mission guides you in your life?

What gives you the most hope about the future?

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*We chose to write out the full name of God in both English and Hebrew in this guide because we want you to encounter Jewish text without placeholders or abbreviations. In Jewish tradition, we honor texts that contain the name of God in Hebrew by not throwing them away. We therefore conclude with an invitation: When you're ready to move on, consider welcoming another Jewish tradition into your life by either recycling this guide or dropping it off at your community's local geniza.*





## **ABOUT ONETABLE**

**OneTable invites people in their 20s and 30s to connect:  
to each other, to ritual, to wellness, to Shabbat.**

**Sign up at [OneTable.org](https://onetable.org) to find open dinners in your city, or create  
your own. A more traditional dinner? A rooftop soirée? Karaoke  
Shabbat? You do you. However you Shabbat.**

### **Ready to host?**

Create the Shabbat dinner you want to see in the world, we'll help make it happen. OneTable provides you with Nourishment Credits to elevate your dinner with options like groceries, table decor, Jewish learning resources, or local options in your city. Invite your friends, and maybe even meet some new ones. ENJOY, then host again!

### **New to Shabbat?**

Find an open dinner in your city to attend, or let us answer your questions and offer you a little guidance. Plus, gain instant access to our online resources with tips, tricks, rituals, and awesome recipes from our community.

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SHABBAT TOGETHER

