

# A Teacher's Guide to Judaism

## Shabbat

### Shabbat

Shabbat (the Sabbath), is observed for 25 hours each week, starting just before sundown each Friday and ending after nightfall on Saturday. Shabbat has its origins in the Torah, where it is most notable as a day of rest, reflection and no work. Festive meals and ceremonies also occur as part of the day.

### Shabbat At Home

One constant theme in Shabbat observance at home is spending time with family members and guests. Preparation for Shabbat begins as early as mid-week in some households, and its arrival is marked by a candle-lighting ceremony. There are three Shabbat meals, two begun with a special Kiddush (blessing) said over wine. Family meals are occasions for singing, studying, and celebrating together, as well as for consuming distinctive Shabbat foods – foods more special than those eaten at weekday meals.

A Jewish religious ceremony called Havdallah is made, marking the end of the Sabbath.

### Shabbat at Synagogue

Shabbat observance in the public sense is focused on the synagogue, from the lively welcoming service, Kabbalat Shabbat, to the thoughtful farewell ceremony, Havdalah. The daily round of prayer services has a unique atmosphere. Special melodies and rituals are used, and the familiar prayers are enhanced with passages in prose and poetry thanking G-d for the gift of the Shabbat. At the major worship service on Saturday morning, a portion of the Torah is read aloud as part of a year-long cycle, supplemented by a passage from one of the Prophets books (called a haftarah).

### Biblical relevance:

“In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

For six days G-d created. “G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good; it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. The heavens and the earth were completed, and all their host. G-d completed on the seventh day His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

“G-d blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because in it He rested from all his work which G-d had created, to make.” (Genesis 1:31–2:3)

**Greeting:** Shabbat Shalom – good Sabbath  
Shavuah tov – good week



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These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.

## DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY

**Kiddush** - literally, means "sanctification," and is a blessing recited over wine or grape juice to sanctify the Shabbat and Jewish holidays. Additionally, the word refers to a small, tasty snack held on Shabbat or festival mornings after the prayer services and before the meal.

**Torah** – the five books of Moses from the Jewish Old Testament Bible



**Kabbalat Shabbat** - Shabbat services begin on Friday evening with the weekday Mincha (afternoon prayers). It is like an "introduction" to Shabbat. This Hebrew term literally means "Receiving the Sabbath"

**Havdalah** – a ceremony that marks the symbolic end of Shabbat and ushers in the new week. The ritual involves lighting a special havdalah candle with several wicks, blessing a cup of wine and smelling sweet spices. Shabbat ends on Saturday night at dusk.

**Havdalah candle, spice box and wine goblet**



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**Haftarah** - a series of selections from the books of Prophets of the Hebrew Bible that is publicly read in synagogue as part of the Shabbat prayers. The Haftarah reading follows the Torah reading on each Sabbath and on Jewish festivals and fast days. Typically, the haftarah is linked to the portion of the Torah being read that Shabbat that precedes it. The haftarah is sung in a chant. Related blessings precede and follow the Haftarah reading.



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