# INTRODUCTION TO SHABBAT

## Goal of Creation

*Shabbat* was the goal of Creation. Just as God completed the world's creation on the sixth day and ceased His work on the seventh, so Jews are supposed to imitate God and not do any creative work on the seventh day. Everything we need for living through *Shabbat* must be prepared ahead so that we do not do any creative activities on *Shabbat*.

Our observance of *Shabbat* thus testifies that God created the world. In the *Shabbat kiddush*, we mention the *Exodus* from Egypt, too, to testify to the world that God is continuously involved in our lives.

By ceasing our normal efforts to dominate the physical world, we can appreciate the spiritual aspects of our existence.

On *Shabbat*, all observant (*shomer Shabbat*) Jews receive an extra "soul."

*Zachor* and *Shamor* Remember *(Zachor)* the Sabbath day to make it holy—*Exodus/Shmot 20:8*
Observe *(Shamor)* the Sabbath day to make it holy—*Deuteronomy/Devarim 5:12*
*Shabbat* has two dimensions:

- *Zachor* "Remember," encompassing positive ("to do") commandments, and
- *Shamor* "Observe," encompassing negative ("refrain from") commandments.

NOTE Women, who are normally exempt from positive, time-dependent commandments, must do both positive and negative *Shabbat* commandments since, according to tradition, God said both words simultaneously. This is unlike *Jewish festivals*, when women are often exempt from positive, time-dependent commandments.

### *Zachor*: Positive *Shabbat* Commandments

What Are Positive *Shabbat* Commandments
Positive *Shabbat* commandments include:

- Lighting candles,
- Making *kiddush* evening and morning,
- Making *havdala*,
- Honoring *Shabbat (Kivod Shabbat)*, and
- Enjoying *Shabbat (Oneg Shabbat)*, including eating three meals on *Shabbat*.

### Honoring *Shabbat:* Special Food and Clothes

Honoring *Shabbat* includes eating tasty food and wearing nice clothes.

### *Shamor*: Negative *Shabbat* Commandments

### *Shabbat* Laws from the *Torah* (*Shabbat D'Oraita*)

### What Are *Melachot*

On the Jewish day of rest, we refrain from 39 creative activities (*melachot*) that had been used to build the *Tabernacle* in the wilderness. These 39 *melachot*, prohibited by the *Torah*, are listed in the *mishna* of *Shabbat* and in later *halacha* books.

The word *melacha* is frequently mistranslated as "work," but work has nothing to do with the Jewish concept of *melacha*. Some *melachot* are physically strenuous (plowing, grinding wheat, skinning an animal) and some are easy to do (drawing, baking). The defining point is whether the activity is one of the 39 creative, value-adding labors. Emptying your pockets before leaving an *eruv* (so you are not "carrying") may seem confusing to someone who thinks that resting on *Shabbat* means refraining only from hard physical labor!

**What Are Toldot**

*Toldot* are variations of the 39 *melachot*. These types of *melacha* are also prohibited by the *Torah*.

**Intention and Other Considerations**

Most *Torah* (*d'oraita*) prohibitions of *melacha* on *Shabbat* are for cases in which you:

1) **Intend a permanent change**.
   Often, actions that may be forbidden when they cause permanent change, will be permissible by *Torah* law if the result is only temporary. Or
2) **Intend or act for a specific purpose**.
   Random or unintended actions are generally not prohibited by *Torah* law. (However, actions that are not prohibited by the *Torah*, may be prohibited by *Chazal*.)

Whether you may benefit from a *melacha* done on *Shabbat* depends on intention:

- A Jew who intentionally does a *melacha* on *Shabbat* may never benefit from that *melacha*.

  NOTE Any other Jew may benefit from that *melacha* as soon as *Shabbat* is over.

- A Jew who does *melacha* on *Shabbat* by mistake (*shogeg*) may benefit from that *melacha* immediately after *Shabbat* ends.

In order to violate a prohibited *melacha d'oraita*, the *melacha* must be done as follows. If any of these do not apply, then the *melacha* is forbidden *d'rabanan* but not *d'oraita:*

- ***K'darko***--The action must be done in a normal way.
- ***Tzorech tikun*—**The action must be done for a constructive purpose.
- ***Tzricha l'gufa***--*Y*ou must need the normal result of that action.
- ***Asiya b'yachid*—**The action must be done by one individual (if commonly done by just one person).
- ***Mit'aseik***--You must realize that you are doing a *melacha*.

***Shabbat* Laws from *Chazal* (*Shabbat D'Rabanan*)**

*Chazal* instituted additional restrictions, such as:

- Activities that might lead directly to violating a *Torah* prohibition.
- Use of items not designated for *Shabbat* use (*muktza*). For a good explanation of *muktza* from the TorahTots website, please click here.
- Activities that might lead one to think that a prohibited activity is permissible (*mar'it ayin*--the appearance of the eye).
- Activities that are not appropriate for *Shabbat*, even though they are technically permissible according to the *Torah* (“*uvda d'chol”*).
- *Tircha*--Exerting a physical effort to accomplish a result that is not required for *Shabbat*.

**Enjoying *Shabbat*/*Oneg Shabbat***

*Chazal* instituted laws to engender a positive *Shabbat* atmosphere and experience. Beyond the actual *halachot* of *shamor* and *zachor*, we have a concept of enjoying *Shabbat* (*oneg Shabbat*)—of enhancing our experience of *Shabbat* by doing whatever each person finds to be enjoyable and relaxing--as long as it is neither destructive nor violates the laws of *Shabbat*. The criteria are subjective. To fulfill the idea of honoring *Shabbat*, do things you would not do just for yourself if it were not *Shabbat*. Take essential life activities such as eating and sleeping and do them more and better and make them especially enjoyable.

**Meals as *Oneg***

On *Shabbat*, we eat better foods and more types of food than we would normally do on weekdays.

The main idea behind meals for *Shabbat* is enjoyment (*oneg*; by contrast, the main idea for *Jewish festivals* is joy--*simcha*), so on *Shabbat* you should eat bread and either fish, poultry, or meat (but only if you enjoy them).
In order to have a special appetite for our *Shabbat* evening meal, we don't eat a full meal with bread on Friday afternoon.

**Special *Shabbat* Songs (*Zmirot*)**
Special songs (*zmirot*) are sung at the various *Shabbat* meals. Some *zmirot* have an aspect of prayer to them.

**Studying *Torah***
Studying *Torah* on *Shabbat* is another way of increasing our spiritual experience. It honors the *Shabbat* and should bring about enjoyment of *Shabbat*.

***Shabbat* and *Muktza***
For information on *Shabbat* and *muktza*, see section below, *Shabbat: Muktza*.

**Weekday Talk**
Don't talk about subjects that are forbidden to do on *Shabbat* (weekday subjects); for example, don't talk about what you will do after *Shabbat* is over. There is no prohibition about discussing actions from the past as long as no planning is discussed.

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