

# THE MEANING OF SHABBAT

“THE SABBATH IS A QUEEN WHOSE COMING CHANGES EVEN THE HUMBLEST HOME INTO A PALACE.”

TALMUD *SHABBAT* 119A

Tonight we turn Allen Hall into a palace, if only for an hour. By welcoming the Sabbath Queen, we bring in holiness. Shabbat is the day of rest given to the Jewish people to commemorate the day that God rested from the work of creating the earth. On Shabbat, beginning on Friday at sunset and ending on Saturday at sunset, we rest from the work of the week to celebrate creation with observance and remembrance.

## SHABBAT RITUALS

The first ritual of Shabbat is the lighting of the candles. Traditionally, candles are lit by the women of a household before sunset. We light two candles for the two commandments related to Shabbat—observe, and remember. Whoever lights the candles brings her hands from the flames toward her three times, signifying the drawing in of the spirituality and holiness of Shabbat. The number three represents commitment and strength.

The next ritual is the blessing of the wine or grape juice, which is called Kiddush. Kiddush is the Hebrew word for sanctification, and the Kiddush is the prayer with which we sanctify Shabbat.

The ritual of washing the hands is not related to cleanliness. Instead, the washing and the silence that follows is a lead-in and connection to the next blessing, the Hamotzi, or blessing over the bread.

For the Hamotzi, we bless two loaves of bread that are covered with a cloth. The two loaves are reminders of the Jewish people's history. After God brought the Jewish people out of Egypt, they spent many years in the desert on their way to the Land of Israel. For food there was "manna," a crystal-like substance that fell from the skies each day. The Jews had to scoop up the manna to eat it. So that there would be no need to work on the Sabbath, God said that on Friday afternoon, before Shabbat, a double portion of manna would fall from the sky. The challah is covered after the blessing is recited. Similarly to the way Shabbat is seen as a queen, it can also be seen as a bride. The cover represents the veil of the Shabbat bride.

**SHABBAT SHALOM! – SABBATH PEACE!**